ABSTRACT

To Become Transfigured:
Reconstructing Søren Kierkegaard's Christological Anthropology

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Examinations of Kierkegaard's anthropology have largely overlooked its deeply Christological dimension, especially as developed in his narrations of the human's relation to Christ in the late theological discourses. Current treatments of Kierkegaard's anthropology fall into two broad categories: (1) If a theological dimension is recognized, it is only the vaguely theistic notion of "before God"; or, (2) an a-theological philosophy of the self is extracted from Kierkegaard's works. These approaches distort Kierkegaard's anthropology by either relativizing the role of Christ, or eliding Christ altogether. Kierkegaard insists, however, that the human being can only become a self (properly speaking) in the peculiarly Christian dialectic of existence initiated by Christ, who is both the human exemplar and the divine redeemer who vicariously atones and forgives. Therefore, my goal is to provide a much-needed reconstruction of Kierkegaard's highly contextualized Christological anthropology. In short, I contend that when we add the oft-overlooked voice of the late theological works, a clearer, more robust understanding of Kierkegaard's polyphonous anthropology emerges—an anthropology best characterized as Christological. Thus, my reconstruction includes: (1) establishing the basic contours and terminology of Kierkegaard's anthropology; (2) contextualizing Kierkegaard's polemically-conditioned anthropological writings and illuminating his critical appropriation of select idealist and

Romantic anthropological categories pervasive in nineteenth-century Copenhagen; and (3) analyzing the ways in which Christ and Christology eventually come to condition and determine Kierkegaard's anthropology. The reconstruction proceeds by showing that Kierkegaard's late anthropological writings constitute a logical development of his earliest philosophical and theological intuitions about human existence. Despite particular shifts and developments in Kierkegaard's thought, a fundamental coherence within the development of Kierkegaard's anthropology is also evident—a traceable trajectory from the earliest writings to the latest. Put another way, while Christ figures absolutely decisively in Kierkegaard's anthropology, there remains a sense in which the parameters of the issue are still dictated by Kierkegaard's polemical engagements with then-current anthropological ideas and concerns. My reconstruction complete, I end the dissertation with a brief assessment of Kierkegaard's Christological (yet deeply contextualized) anthropology, and suggestions for further study.

To Become Transfigured:
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by

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A Dissertation

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Page bearing signatures is kept on file in the Graduate School.

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SIGLA

The following abbreviations for references to Kierkegaard's works are used throughout the text. Each citation takes the following form: volume and page numbers of the Danish critical edition (the *SKS* whenever possible, *SV1* when the *SKS* is not yet available), followed by the appropriate abbreviation and pagination for the English translation: For example, *SKS* 16, 168 / *JFY*, 113.

All English translations come from *Kierkegaard's Writings*, ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978–2000. See list below for abbreviations, translators, and publication dates.

Danish Critical Editions

SKS Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Joakim Garff, Jette Knudsen, Johnny Kondrup, and Alastair McKinnon. Published by Søren Kierkegaard Forskningscenteret. Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 1997–.

SV1 *Samlede Værker*, ed. A. B. Drachmann, Johan Ludvig Heiberg, and H. O. Lange, vols. 1–24. Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag, 1901–6.

English Translations

BA *The Book on Adler* (Hong and Hong, 1995)

CA *The Concept of Anxiety* (Reidar Thomte in collaboration with Albert B. Anderson, 1980)

CD *Christian Discourses* and *The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress* (Hong and Hong, 1997)

CI *The Concept of Irony* and "Notes on Schelling's Berlin Lectures" (Hong and Hong, 1989)

CUP *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, 2 vols. (Hong and Hong, 1992)

DODE *Johannes Climacus* or *De omnibus dubitandum est* (see *PF*).

EO *Either/Or*, 2 vols. (Hong and Hong, 1987)

EPW *Early Polemical Writings* and *From the Papers of One Still Living* (Julia Watkin, 1990)

EUD *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* (Hong and Hong, 1990)

FSE *For Self-Examination* and *Judge for Yourself!* (Hong and Hong, 1990)

FT *Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition* (Hong and Hong, 1983)

JFY *Judge for Yourself!* (see *FSE*)

JP *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, 7 vols. (Hong and Hong, assisted by Gregor Malantschuk, 1967; vol. 2, 1970–78)

MLW *"The Moment" and Late Writings* and Newspaper Articles, 1845–1855 (Hong and Hong, 1998)

NSBL "Notes on Schelling's Berlin Lectures" (see *CI*)

PC *Practice in Christianity* (Hong and Hong, 1991)

PF *Philosophical Fragments* and *Johannes Climacus* (Hong and Hong, 1985)

PV *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*, "The Single Individual," *On My Work as an Author*, and "Armed Neutrality" (Hong and Hong, 1998)

R *Repetition* (see *FT*)

SLW *Stages on Life's Way* (Hong and Hong, 1988)

SUD *The Sickness unto Death* (Hong and Hong, 1980)

UDVS *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits* (Hong and Hong, 1993)

WA *Without Authority* (Hong and Hong, 1997)

WL *Works of Love* (Hong and Hong, 1995)

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Stewart stands out especially; a research project born of our conversations eventually became the basis for chapter seven of this dissertation.

Finally, my most heartfelt thanks to my family. I am especially thankful to my parents, whose love and guidance instilled a lasting love of learning; to my wife's parents and sister, whose amazing support over the past year gave me time and space to finish writing the final chapters; to my baby daughter, who since her arrival has brought many distractions—and many more joys. And most of all, I am thankful for my wife. Carrie, through the challenging years of graduate school you have been my constant companion, my sweetest support, my dearest friend, my happiness.

For Carrie

Ældes sammen med mig, det bedste er endnu ikke.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Thesis

For Søren Kierkegaard, anthropology was inseparable from Christology. This claim is neither obvious nor unproblematic. Some interpreters have sought to detect a Christologic or Christocentrism in Kierkegaard's authorship or theological project,[1] but the central question of how Kierkegaard's Christ informs or conditions his anthropology has remained largely ignored.[2] And yet, Kierkegaard's (and his many pseudonyms') descriptions of the human person—in terms of concrete existence, relationality, and the task of becoming a self—consistently converge upon the individual's all-important relation with Christ. From Vigilius Haufniensis' and Johannes Climacus' decisive critiques of idealist notions of time and history through the category of "the moment," to the non-pseudonymous treatments of prayer in the early and late theological discourses, Kierkegaard's meditations on what it means to be an existing human person turn again and again toward his distinctive vision of Christ: the Absolute Paradox, the sign of offense,

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[1]For example, Tim Rose, *Kierkegaard's Christocentric Theology* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2001); Paul Sponheim, *Kierkegaard on Christ and Christian Coherence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

[2]For a significant exception to this statement, see Mark C. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood: Hegel and Kierkegaard*, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy 14 (New York: Fordham University Press, [1980] 2000), 106ff. Taylor argues that the differences in Hegel's and Kierkegaard's theological and philosophical projects are ultimately a matter of their having mutually exclusive Christologies. Although "the anthropologies of Hegel and Kierkegaard are thoroughly Christocentric," Hegel reads Christ in terms of mediation and identifies him as the revelation of the original unity of God and humanity, or better, the preestablished harmony between God and creation; conversely, Kierkegaard emphasizes Christ as paradox, whose individual existence as the exemplar (*Forbillede*) reveals not the original unity of humanity and divinity, but the eternal difference between the Holy God and sinful humanity. This is not the place for an in-depth interaction with Taylor's argument; suffice to say that Taylor's book does not so much show how Kierkegaard's anthropology is Christological, but rather how the manner in which Christ functions in his project simply reflects or maps onto his prior philosophical commitments. This is a good insight, as far as it goes—Kierkegaard's Christology certainly is shaped by his philosophical impulses—but the fact remains that Taylor does not demonstrate what he quite rightly claims: that Christ determines Kierkegaard's anthropology.

the exemplar, the redeemer, the Holy One. I contend that in order to gain a robust understanding of Kierkegaard's anthropology—which he often describes in terms of the ceaseless pursuit of "transfiguration" (i.e., the task of bringing something ideal, divine, or transcendent into actuality)—we must listen to the many voices of Kierkegaard's authorship. And in particular, we must attend to certain oft-overlooked late theological discourses, in which Christ figures determinatively in Kierkegaard's anthropological vision. Despite these discourses' brevity and apparent simplicity, their rich, evocative descriptions of the human encountering Christ bring together the various philosophical and theological threads to form a concrete, narrative account of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology.

Several factors complicate this project. Kierkegaard's anthropology has fascinated, frustrated, and befuddled his many interpreters. Indeed, the particular question that frames my current interpretive attempt—i.e., how Christ and Christology shape Kierkegaard's anthropology—takes its place within a larger set of questions and concerns regarding Kierkegaard's understanding of finite human existence in relation to temporality. On one hand, Kierkegaard would seem to be the consummate proponent of viewing the human person existentially, arguing as he does that each person must remain concretely engaged in the pursuit of ethical selfhood before God. Dietrich Bonhoeffer praises Kierkegaard's this-worldly approach to anthropology—for attempting "to grasp reality concretely in his notion of the person," contra the forgetfulness of concrete existence evident in certain strands of idealism.[3] On the other hand, elements of Kierkegaard's anthropology, especially his emphasis on the individual, the call to infinite resignation,

[3]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, ed. Clifford J. Green, trans. Reinhard Krauss and Nancy Lukens (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 57n12. Significantly, in spite of the early Bonhoeffer's appreciation of Kierkegaard's project, he concludes that Kierkegaard failed to escape entanglement with the targets of his critique: "For [Kierkegaard], becoming a person is an act of the self-establishing I—to be sure in a state of ethical decision. Kierkegaard's ethical person, too, exists only in the concrete situation, but his is not in any necessary relation to a concrete You. His person is self-established rather than being established by the You. In the last analysis, then, Kierkegaard remained bound to the idealist position. Thus he lays the foundation for an extreme sort of individualism in which the significance of the other for the individual is no longer absolute but only relative."

the increasing focus on lonely suffering and death, and the juxtaposition of the spiritual and the social in the late theological writings, seem to some interpreters to undermine not only sociality (not to mention the church) but even temporal, finite existence as such. Paradoxically, in spite of Kierkegaard's clarion call away from philosophical speculation and aesthetic abstraction, many interpreters fear that something about his specific brand of individualism tends toward other-worldliness, and inevitably results in asociality or even acosmism. Aside from these tensions internal to Kierkegaard's authorship, there also remains the complex question of how best to situate Kierkegaard in relation to the philosophies of the day—ranging from his engagement with thinkers such as Hegel, Fichte, and Schelling, to his immediate polemical context in Copenhagen in which various versions of post-Kantian idealism and Romanticism permeated the universities and other literary, philosophical, and theological circles.

Additionally, any identifiable "Kierkegaardian anthropology" is at once ubiquitous and elusive in his authorship:[4] it subsists in a scattered, plurivocal collection of psychological investigations, devotional calls to prayer, philosophical thought experiments, and poetic fragments. On several occasions he talks about the relation between the soul, body, and spirit. He famously emphasizes the ethical task that accompanies human existence, eschewing speculative approaches that forget the concretely existing subject. He cryptically describes each individual as both "himself and the race." He offers an account of the self as spirit, as a synthesis established by God. The sheer variety of these elements, strewn as they are across more than a decade of Kierkegaard's prodigious, multi-perspectival authorship, calls for a reconstruction. In order to attain a robust account of Kierkegaard's anthropology, the hopeful interpreter must weave together the many ingredients, concerns, and polemics, reconstructing them into a coherent whole.

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[4]Cyril Lansink attests to the sheer ubiquity of anthropology in Kierkegaard's authorship when he describes the entire *œuvre as* "an ethic of self becoming"—an attempt to describe, outline, and engender the task of becoming oneself. See Cyril Lansink, *Vrijheid en ironie: Kierkgaards ethiek van de zelfwording* (Leuven: Peeters, 1997).

Central to my project is the contention that the difficulties described above with interpreting Kierkegaard's anthropology have been compounded by a general failure to attend adequately to Kierkegaard's insistence that the human only becomes a self in the peculiarly Christian dialectic of existence initiated by Christ. Examinations of his anthropology have largely overlooked this deeply Christological dimension, especially as it is narrated in certain later (explicitly theological) writings. Currently, treatments of Kierkegaard's anthropology fall into two broad categories: (1) those that do recognize a theological dimension to Kierkegaard's anthropology fail to move beyond the vaguely theistic notion of "before God";[5] (2) other treatments neglect the theological dimension entirely and extract an a-theological philosophy of the self from Kierkegaard's works.[6] These approaches distort Kierkegaard's anthropology in two ways, either relativizing the role of Christ, or eliding Christ altogether.

My task in this dissertation is to offer a reconstruction of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology—a reconstruction that not only provides a coherent account of Kierkegaard's anthropology by bringing together the various anthropological claims and concepts scattered across Kierkegaard's plurivocal authorship, but also makes sense of the tensions internal to the authorship (as described above) and illuminates Kierkegaard's understanding of the human person against the backdrop of the idealist and Romantic philosophy that conditioned Kierkegaard's polemically developed stance. Attending to the way in which Kierkegaard's Christ determines his approach to central anthropological

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[5]Examples include Gregor Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard's Concept of Existence*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2003); James Collins, "Kierkegaard's Imagery of the Self," in *Kierkegaard's Truth: The Disclosure of the Self*, ed. Joseph H. Smith, vol. 5, Psychiatry and the Humanities (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 51–84; Paul Holmer, "Post-Kierkegaard: Remarks about Being a Person," in *Kierkegaard's Truth: The Disclosure of the Self*, ed. Joseph H. Smith, vol. 5, Psychiatry and the Humanities (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 3–22; John W. Elrod, *Being and Existence in Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Works* (Princeton University Press, 1975) (though as we shall see, the extent to which Elrod's interpretation even counts as "theological" is up for debate).

[6]Arne Grøn, *The Concept of Anxiety in Søren Kierkegaard*, trans. Jeanette B. L. Knox (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1994); Alison Assiter, *Kierkegaard, Metaphysics and Political Theory: Unfinished Selves* (London: Continuum, 2009).

questions not only clarifies his anthropology; it also reveals how his late writings can be seen as developing and solidifying the anthropology latent in his earliest philosophical and theological impulses, and illuminates the manner in which Kierkegaard critically appropriates select idealist and Romantic categories pervasive in nineteenth-century Denmark.

1.2 Some Remarks Regarding the Significance of This Study

The significance of this study is threefold. First, and most directly, it addresses a lacuna in the field of Kierkegaard studies by developing a critical reading of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology that (a) attends to the unique polemical context of nineteenth-century Copenhagen and (b) takes seriously the distinctively Christological descriptions of human existence found in later works. While various aspects of Kierkegaard's anthropology have been examined over the years, these treatments have been partial or flawed, in ways that I describe more fully in the "Background" section below.

Second, this project embodies an interpretive approach to Kierkegaard's notoriously elaborate authorship, an approach that contextualizes Kierkegaard's theological and philosophical notions and suggests a degree of continuity throughout his writings and across the many pseudonyms. This is not to suggest that there is simply a static, underlying principle or notion that handily explains all of Kierkegaard's work. Rather, I argue that the developments and changes in Kierkegaard's emphases throughout the authorship reveal that Kierkegaard is himself in the process of teasing out the implications and ramifications of certain theological and philosophical intuitions, sharpening these intuitions and clarifying his conclusions over time. Aside from the still-contested "authorial voice" question, in which interpreters attempt to negotiate the interplay between Kierkegaard's pseudonymous and direct writings (not to mention the vast collection of personal notebooks and journals), debate continues regarding the increasingly antisocial, acosmic rhetoric of the late writings, with many interpreters positing a decisive break between the early and late Kierkegaard (this will also be addressed in greater depth in the

"Background" section). Thus, although the late theological writings have begun to receive serious scholarly attention, confusion remains regarding their relation to Kierkegaard's earlier work. My reconstruction of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology rejects the bifurcation of the early and late work, seeking to demonstrate that we can see in the late theological discourses the outworking of intuitions that Kierkegaard developed in his earliest writings. Thus, in addition to providing an original reading of Kierkegaard's distinctively Christological anthropology, this dissertation suggests (and performs) an interpretive approach to Kierkegaard's corpus, one which draws together the early and late writings into a coherent framework.

Third, and finally, although this study is primarily historical-interpretive, it takes its place within the larger discourse of theological anthropology. While my purpose is not specifically to address the so-called mind-body debate that has exploded in philosophical and theological circles over the past two decades, or to discuss the Christological turn in the broader field of theological anthropology, this study does have bearing on those questions. Indeed, Kierkegaard's work prefigures many current trends and debates in both philosophical and theological anthropology, in ways that are still being discovered. This investigation into Kierkegaard's anthropology, in addition to interpreting the historical, contextual development of his thoughts, performs a critical and evaluative function: arriving at an understanding of Kierkegaard's polemically conditioned, distinctively Christological understanding of human existence can help clarify the current discourse, shedding light on both the promise and the potential pitfalls of attempting to imagine the human person in a way that takes Christ and Christology to be significant or determinative.

1.3 Background

As noted above, a constellation of problematic interpretive tendencies plagues the current discourse surrounding Kierkegaard's anthropology. In the following paragraphs I outline in further detail these interpretive tendencies—which range from specific interpre-

tations of Kierkegaard's anthropology, to overall approaches to his complex authorship. Although I will continue to interact with these and other secondary sources in subsequent chapters, my purpose here is simply to clarify my own approach against the backdrop of the main features of the discourse as it currently stands.

1.3.1 The Non-Theological Approach

One prevalent tendency in the secondary literature has been to neglect the specifically "theological" aspect of Kierkegaard's anthropology—a tendency surprisingly common even amongst those interpreters who recognize the theological character of Kierkegaard's work more generally. For instance, Arnold B. Come opts, in his initial investigation of Kierkegaard's understanding of the human person, to "leave out any consideration of the relation of [Kierkegaard's] anthropology to his theology," as if a purely philosophical notion underlies or precedes whatever additional determinations or insights can be gained once theological considerations have been factored in.[7] Thus, although Come will elsewhere affirm the important role of Christ for Kierkegaard's anthropology, Christological considerations do not fundamentally inform the shape of human existence; rather, they simply ground Come's unbounded optimism about "the potentiality of selfhood . . . with the help of God."[8] This approach might more fairly be called an "insufficiently theological" approach: theology factors in at some point, but not in a determinative manner. Against this approach, I hope to show that Kierkegaard's anthropology is theological—and more specifically, Christological—all the way down, and that attempts to extract a fundamentally philosophical Kierkegaardian anthropology prior to theological considerations is misguided.

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[7] Arnold B. Come, *Kierkegaard as Humanist: Discovering My Self* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 107.

[8] See Arnold B. Come, *Kierkegaard as Theologian: Recovering My Self* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 283, cf. 374.

Another treatment of Kierkegaard's anthropology that neglects the theological dimension in favor of a merely philosophical "structure" of the person includes Alison Assiter's attempt to use Kierkegaard's assertion that the human being becomes a person in and through relating to an other to fund her reimagining of politics.[9] Assiter affirms that she consciously selects texts that "play down the specifically Christian dimension of [Kierkegaard's] thought."[10] Emphasizing this purely philosophical structure of the self obviously ignores Kierkegaard's insistence on describing the self in terms of the relation to God, and especially, to Christ.

We encounter a far more interesting version of the non-theological approach in Arne Grøn's work. In an essay on the structure of the human person as developed by the pseudonymous Vigilius Haufniensis in *The Concept of Anxiety*, Grøn proceeds without any reference whatsoever to Christ—or even to God or the divine more generally.[11] One could charitably chalk up this oversight to the strictly limited scope of his essay; indeed, although he exclusively focuses upon the "human as synthesis" in *Concept of Anxiety*, he ends the essay by gesturing toward the possibility that Kierkegaard's most conclusive anthropological vision can be found in *The Sickness unto Death*, written by the pseudonymous Anti-Climacus: Grøn hints that in this later text the investigation of the human synthesis involves the crucial question of "whether or not a human being is self-determined."[12] In *Sickness unto Death*, Anti-Climacus does affirm that the human as a personal synthesis is "established by an other," and interpreters have traditionally supposed that this "other" is God. If anything, many suspect that Anti-Climacus' particular vision of the person as "established by an other" might actually relativize and even negate the

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[9]Assiter, *Kierkegaard, Metaphysics and Political Theory*.

[10]ibid., 85.

[11]Arne Grøn, "The Human Synthesis," in *Anthropology and Authority: Essays on Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. Poul Houe, Gordon D. Marino, and Sven Hakon Rossel (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 27–32.

[12]ibid., 32.

need for any relationship *aside* from the individual God-relation, thereby undermining or even negating sociality. However, already in this essay, Grøn has effectively ruled out a truly theological dimension to Kierkegaard's anthropology. In his interpretation of Kierkegaard's spin on the traditional notion that the human is an "intermediate being," Grøn argues that Kierkegaard sees the human as "an intermediate being situated between *himself* as finite and *himself* as infinite. He is an intermediate by relating to himself as finite and infinite."[13]

Where many interpreters suppose that Kierkegaard's talk of being related to the infinite refers to the God-relation, Grøn insists that in this context, the finite-infinite aspect of the human synthesis is purely a matter of self-relation. This seems plausible, for reasons I will outline in chapter two. But to anticipate the more detailed account in the next chapter, *Concept of Anxiety* and the later *Sickness unto Death* carefully differentiate between the infinite-finite synthesis (which could be construed as relating primarily to the human's immanent experience of freedom and possibility) and the eternal-temporal synthesis, which more precisely describes the relation between the person and God and opens up within the causally determined successiveness of spatiotemporal existence the very "possibility of possibility," the possibility of freedom.[14]

Grøn himself notes this differentiation—and yet, when he moves into an analysis of the eternal-temporal synthesis, he again carefully avoids any mention of God, describing "the eternal" as a correlate of temporality that posits temporal existence as a task. On Grøn's account, "the eternal" names nothing more than the human's subjective experience of time as having a future, which brings with it possibility, freedom, and anxiety. Most importantly, eternity engenders the sense that existence entails a task and a responsibility:

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[13]Grøn, "The Human Synthesis," 28, emphasis in original.

[14]For an excellent analysis of the role of the transcendent-eternal in Kierkegaard's anthropology, see Louis Dupré, "The Sickness unto Death: *Critique of the Modern Age*," in *The Sickness unto Death*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, vol. 19, International Kierkegaard Commentary (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), 85–106.

"The synthesis becomes a synthesis in time, and the definition of man as a synthesis is affirmed as a code for the fundamental experience of oneself as an other."[15]

Grøn's steadfast reduction of Kierkegaard's notions of the infinite and the eternal to phenomena of human self-consciousness finds further expression in his book-length study of Kierkegaard's vitally important category of anxiety.[16] Admitting that Anti-Climacus, in *Sickness unto Death*, explicitly asserts that the human being is established not through a pure self-relation but through the prior relation to the other—and that this relation would appear to be specifically the God-relation—Grøn argues that for Kierkegaard, "God" is simply a "man-made" concept; moreover, "the God-relation" indicates nothing beyond a particular perspective on inter-human relationships: "If the conception of God is man-made, it is natural to understand the other (in relation to which a human being is a self) as other people or humanity in general."[17] Just as "the eternal" for Grøn names something immanent to human consciousness, "God" names a conceptual strategy for shaping human perceptions of each other: namely, that each individual, prior to social relations and mutual comparisons and judgments, is an individual. "The equality of the eternal means, therefore, a universal likeness of all people, a human-equality or humanity . . . Thus Kierkegaard's assertion is that the fundamental of human-equality or humanity is deeply rooted in the God-relationship by virtue of which each individual is

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[15]Grøn, "The Human Synthesis," 31.

[16]Grøn, *The Concept of Anxiety in Søren Kierkegaard*.

[17]ibid., 153. Grøn provides a remarkably facile argument for Kierkegaard's supposedly reductionistic understanding of God. The argument consists of just one paragraph: "[F]aith does not come automatically. On the contrary, faith is a daring venture. That God is something totally different that falls outside of any human yardstick means that God has no characteristics. But if there are no characteristics, how can Kierkegaard then determine the difference between God and man? He poses the question in *Philosophical Fragments* and adds a further comment: 'But this difference cannot be grasped securely. Every time this happens, it is basically an arbitrariness, and at the very bottom of devoutness there madly lurks the capricious arbitrariness that knows it itself has produced the god'" (153). Without further ado, Grøn immediately proceeds to speak as if it has been established that Kierkegaard's God is nothing more than the *concept* of God that Climacus critiques in *Philosophical Fragments*. However, it strikes me as a gross error to suppose that the god (or the concept of god) Kierkegaard dismisses in *Philosophical Fragments* is the *only* God operative in Kierkegaard's thought.

distinguished as an individual."[18] In short, God is merely a human concept, or perhaps a Kantian "as if," that makes possible the priority of the individual *in spite of* the (rather Hegelian) recognition that every self can only have its identity in, from, and through the other; this, in turn, serves as a primary condition for protecting individual dignity under the rubric of humanity's eternal equality, beyond the realm of finite differences and relationships.[19]

Reasons to reject the non-theological approach to Kierkegaard's anthropology abound, most of which will become clearer in subsequent chapters. For now, suffice to say that there is enormous textual evidence that Kierkegaard, for all of his scathing critiques of philosophical ascents to the knowledge of God and his rendering of human existence in terms of immanent psychological phenomena, sought to describe and understand human existence "before God" in a way that took seriously not only an abstract conception of a transcendent God, but the historicity of the Incarnation and the possibility of contemporaneity with the Incarnate Christ. Against the "insufficiently theological" approaches exemplified by Come and Assiter, my goal is to show that for Kierkegaard theological considerations are not only helpful additions to a basically philosophical anthropology or, as Elrod would have it, to an "ontology of the self," but rather that God, and more to the point, a specific understanding of Christ, informs and determines his anthropology from the start. Overlooking or marginalizing this aspect of Kierkegaard's thought can only lead to misconstruing his project.

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[18]Grøn, *The Concept of Anxiety in Søren Kierkegaard*, 154.

[19]Grøn cites a comment from Kierkegaard to support this claim: "There are people who have inhumanly forgotten that everyone should fortify himself by means of the universal divine likeness of all people, have forgotten that therefore, whether a person is man or woman, poorly or richly endowed, master or slave, beggar or plutocrat, the relationships among human beings ought and may never be such that the one worships and the other is the one worshiped." Quoted in ibid., 154.

1.3.2 The Generally Theistic Approach

Other interpreters, rather than neglecting the theological dimension, affirm the deep significance of the divine for Kierkegaard's anthropology, but in a way that I believe fails to take full account of the ways in which Christ determines Kierkegaard's theological anthropology. C. Stephen Evans argues that Kierkegaard posits "individuality . . . grounded in a relation to the divine," which initiates a "life of devotion to the good of others" and allows one to "stand up against evil when that evil becomes pervasive"; this is a "message that Socrates and Jesus understood and practiced."[20] From this perspective, the God-relation grants the existing individual a moral anchoring not subject to the relativities of temporal existence—but which simultaneously informs and guides temporal relations. There is a sense in which Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms do suggest these kinds of hopeful anthropological insights. Significantly, in this schema Christ exemplifies ideal human life in a manner not qualitatively different from Socrates. Although Evans strongly affirms that Kierkegaard's Christ is *also* the vicarious atonement for our ethical failures (thus far exceeding Socrates), Evans does not seem to be concerned that the divine, salvific aspect of Christ never intersects substantially with Christ's role as the prototype. Rather, Christ's uniquely gracious function appears at the point of human failure, covering over that failure so that the struggling person, rather than being crushed by the strenuous requirement, can continue with the challenge of living faithfully. Evans takes from this basic framework a generally optimistic account of human existence (at an individual and social level) in relation to Christ's example and grace. My concern is that this interpretation does not take full account of the eventual ramifications of Christ's status as the unique, un-followable prototype—Kierkegaard's increasingly severe emphasis on the sheer impossibility of being like Christ implies a profound judgment of temporality, sociality, etc., and the purely substitutionary notion of Christ's grace, while perhaps providing

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[20]C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard on Faith and the Self* (Waco, TX: Baylor Press, 2006), 275.

psychological space to continue attempting to approximate Christ's example even after repeated failures, still leaves the fully human existence of Christ radically beyond the reach of every mere human. To put the matter bluntly, I am concerned that Kierkegaard's Christology does not support—and in fact, severely undermines—the hopeful account of human life in the world that Evans would like to affirm. I contend that naming and attending to this disturbing aspect of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology gives us a better vantage point for a critical but ultimately constructive engagement with Kierkegaard's valuable insights about becoming a self before God.

Gregor Malantschuk also provides what I take to be an overly optimistic account of Kierkegaard's vision of human existence in relation to God: for human beings who have faith, "the eternal is truly incorporated in the temporal, whereas in all other human beings the eternal can manifest itself only imperfectly in their existence."[21] Malantschuk describes the task of becoming human in terms of a three-stage movement of irony, resignation, and repentance, with resignation standing as "the first condition not only for relating relatively to the relative but for coming into an absolute relation to the absolute."[22] Resignation, in passing through suffering toward hidden inwardness, finds its apex in "the cessation of immediacy and the death warrant of annihilation," which grants "the negative freedom that consists in a person's giving up his own cravings and his own desires in order to make room for God."[23] However, according to Malantschuk, resignation as self-annihilation, hidden inwardness, and the cessation of entanglement in the cares of temporality is an intermediate stage: "As early as in *Fear and Trembling* we met another example of hidden inwardness; a 'knight of faith' lives in temporality

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[21]Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard's Concept of Existence*, 192–3. This phrasing—that for those with Christian faith the "eternal is truly incorporated in the temporal"—is much more in line with H. L. Martensen, Kierkegaard's Hegelianizing nemesis than with Kierkegaard's own view. See H. L. Martensen, *Grundrids til Moralphilosophiens System* (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1841), §§104–7.

[22]Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard's Concept of Existence*, 96.

[23]ibid., 101.

without anyone's being able to detect that he lives at every moment on the basis of innate resignation . . . after resignation through faith the light of faith attains a complete repetition within temporality, whereas the religious person in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* is continually striving toward the eternal goal as he simultaneously attends to his daily duties . . . the very relationship to the eternal as the goal gives existence a new dimension."[24] Malantschuk supposes that Kierkegaard saw the appropriation of the religious and personal aspects of becoming a single individual as "precisely the condition" for being able to enter into the civic and social aspects: "Therefore it was Kierkegaard's objective, after working out the category of the single individual, to proceed with deliberations on the civic and social side of life." Thus, Malantschuk argues that Kierkegaard sees the God-relation as a prerequisite grounding that enables an individual to become a self, who, in moving beyond infinite resignation into faith, is able to reenter temporality with the eternal in tow; the relation to God ultimately renews the person's relation to temporality, rather than pressing toward a decisive break.

Malantschuk, I believe, relies too heavily on the pseudonymous *Fear and Trembling* when he identifies its "knight of faith" as an early but especially precise expression of the kind of existence the Kierkegaardian "stages of existence" are meant to culminate with. Malantschuk argues that every person, "through a personal relationship to God" is meant to "express the eternal within the temporal"; he adds, "This is eminently true of him who was the revelation of God and who therefore, as the 'ultimate paradox,' is the source and foundation for all Kierkegaard's thought on paradox."[25] In other words, to be a human person means to live in a unique kind of relationship with God—faith; and through faith, the temporal human paradoxically "gains qualities of the eternal." The requirement of human existence, then, is to accomplish just what Christ accomplished:

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[24]Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard's Concept of Existence*, 103–4.

[25]ibid., 192.

bring eternity into temporality. Presumably, for Malantschuk, what was "eminently true" of Christ can also be true of Christ's followers. But this, as we shall see, is just what Kierkegaard denies: the requirement of Christlike selfhood before God is *unconditional*, not a matter of "to a certain degree."[26] And thus, Christ proves to be utterly un-followable in Kierkegaard's anthropology, since the unconditional requirement is, by definition, an all-or-nothing requirement—approximation simply will not do. Christ's incorporation of the eternal in temporality is a function of his unique status as the God-man, not a real possibility for existing human generally. This thread of Kierkegaard's thought renders Malantschuk's optimistic interpretation of Kierkegaard's theological anthropology deeply problematic. For Kierkegaard, faith in Christ may well train us for eternity, but only at the eventual expense of temporality. Describing and supporting my disagreement with the kind of interpretation exemplified by Malantschuk constitutes a significant portion of this dissertation's argument, coming to the foreground especially in chapters five through seven.

Pia Søloft represents a slightly different version of the generally theological approach to Kierkegaard's anthropology. Picking up on the perennial concern that Kierkegaard's anthropology tends toward radical individualism and the utter privatization of the God-relation, she claims that Kierkegaard's anthropology is rooted in intersubjectivity, a stance she marks out against a subjectivity interpreted "exclusively in terms of the self-relation and its transcendent determinant." Søloft argues that "it is not *only* the transcendent determination (i.e., the relation to God), but *also* the intersubjective obligation (the ethical relation to 'the Other') that constitutes the concreteness and the continuity of the Self."[27] Here again, I find myself in general agreement with this interpretation, as

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[26] *SKS* 26, 128–9, NB32:16 / *JP* 4, 4911 (1854).

[27] Pia Søltoft, "Anthropology and Ethics: The Connection between Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity as the Basis of a Kierkegaardian Anthropology," in *Anthropology and Authority: Essays on Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. Poul Houe, Gordon D. Marino, and Sven Hakon Rossel (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 41–48, 41.

far as it goes. I would never argue that Kierkegaard simply dismisses every inter-human relationship in favor of the God-relationship. Certainly the concrete ethical relation with other people factors significantly in Kierkegaard's anthropology. My concern is that these other relationships are not ultimately constitutive of the human self, but are rather concessions to our weakness, our inability to stand before God. In other words, according to Kierkegaard's framework, social life is a temporary grace granted by God in his patience, but not a fundamental constituent of fully human life in communion with God. I formulate this critique in chapter eight, in the context of spelling out the ramifications of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology for ecclesiology and the nature of Christian hope.

1.3.3 The Bifurcation of Kierkegaard's Authorship

Stepping back for a moment from particular conceptions of Kierkegaard's anthropology, there are also broad interpretive approaches to Kierkegaard's authorship as a whole that tend to yield what I see as truncated versions of his anthropology. One such tendency involves either *dismissing* the late theological writings as the bitter ravings of a sick man[28] or strictly *subordinating* them to the early writings, using the early writings to over-determine a reading of the authorship that softens Kierkegaard's increasingly harsh attitude toward temporal existence. This attitude about the later works often funds both the a-theological and generally theistic interpretations of Kierkegaard's anthropology described above. For example, Gregor Malantschuk, whose optimistic account of Kierkegaard's anthropology we just witnessed, relies upon a subordination of the late writings to early writings—especially the pseudonymous *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* and *Fear and Trembling*, but also the non-pseudonymous religious discourses that Kierkegaard

[28]N. H. Søe, "Søren Kierkegaard og kirkekampen," in *Søren Kierkegaards kamp mod kirke*, ed. Gregor Malantschuk and N. H. Søe (Copenhagen: Munksgaards Forlag, 1956), 48, 63–70; Otto Bertelsen, *Den kirkelige Kierkegaard og den "Antikirkelige"* (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1999), 79–81.

published simultaneously with the pseudonymous works.[29] In short, Malantschuk's argument is that Kierkegaard's authorship up to *Practice in Christianity* represents a cohesive, systematic program for becoming a self before God, in which the the Knight of Faith described in *Fear and Trembling*, as one who relinquishes *and* receives back temporality and sociality, remains the gold standard for Kierkegaard's vision of the truly human. [30]

Thus, Kierkegaard's harshest comments about the social sphere, marriage, temporality as such, etc., can be safely marginalized as an example of overwrought rhetoric, or relativized and subordinated to earlier texts.[31] It should be noted, therefore, that many interpreters that I see as falling within this interpretive category *do* admit a continuity of sorts between Kierkegaard's early and late works. However, they accomplish this reconciliation by softening the perceived excesses of Kierkegaard's late writings, labeling them as extreme forms of corrective rhetoric rather than allowing them to stand as potentially decisive expressions of Kierkegaard's developed views. *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844) and *The Sickness unto Death* (1849) are usually identified as the key anthropological texts, from which a synthetic Kierkegaardian concept of the person's "structure" is constructed, as noted above. *Sickness unto Death*—a rather late theological text—seems to articulate the human self's identity solely in terms of the dyadic self-God relation: this version of a theistic anthropology maps all too well onto concerns that Kierkegaard leads us into asociality since the human self *is* this self in inward consciousness of God, *against* and in contrast to temporal sociality. Sympathetic interpreters usually argue that Kierkegaard, in *Sickness Unto Death*, never intended to exclude other relations: "It is by no means clear

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[29]These early religious discourses are translated and collected in Søren Kierkegaard, *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, vol. V, Kierkegaard's Writings (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

[30]"The books that were published after *Practice in Christianity* do not belong to the step-by-step advancing authorship." Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard's Concept of Existence*, 185.

[31]For example, see Gregor Malantschuk, "Søren Kierkegaards angreb paa kirken," in *Søren Kierkegaards kamp mod kirke*, ed. Gregor Malantschuk and N. H. Søe (Copenhagen: Munksgaards Forlag, 1956), 7–9; Niels Thulstrup, *Kierkegaard and the Church in Denmark* (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1984), 258–9.

that Kierkegaard thinks God is the only 'other' who is significant in forming the self's identity."[32] Similarly, Søltoft, whom we discussed above, grounds her argument for the intersubjectivity of Kierkegaard's anthropology in her reading of *Works of Love* (1847), arguing that this earlier work solves the difficulty of bringing together the private and the social, the spiritual and the temporal. Alternately, some see *Sickness unto Death* as a transitional work, marking the beginning of a significant break between the early and late Kierkegaard. Come argues that the triadic self-God-neighbor relation of *Works of Love* simply gives way to the dyadic self-God relation in *Sickness unto Death*, thereby laying the groundwork for Come's decision to bracket out the later authorship. He bluntly contrasts the early writings with "Kierkegaard's later tendency to speak of the life of 'spirit' as a denial of and withdrawal from social life."[33] All of these interpreters, in spite of their differences, share some significant common ground: namely, they seek interpretations of Kierkegaard's anthropology that allow the early writings' perceived optimism about human life as the effective synthesis of eternity and temporality—with the inwardness of faith finding expression in temporality and sociality—to remain unchallenged by the late writings. The less palatable aspects of the later authorship are either mitigated through appeals to earlier texts, or dismissed outright as a substantial and fatal shift from Kierkegaard's earlier insights.

1.3.4 The De-Contextualization of Kierkegaard's Anthropology

Lastly, dominating the background of this discussion concerning contested interpretations of Kierkegaard, one can discern differing approaches to handling Kierkegaard's

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[32]C. Stephen Evans, "Kierkegaard's View of the Unconscious," in *Kierkegaard in Post/Modernity*, ed. Martin J. Matuštík and Merold Westphal (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 76–97, 83. Cf. Sylvia Walsh, *Living Poetically: Kierkegaard's Existential Aesthetics* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 258 n38: "Kierkegaard's position [is] unclear and ambiguous on the matter."

[33]Arnold B. Come, "The Implications of Søren Kierkegaard's View of Sexuality and Gender for an Appraisal of Homosexuality," in *Anthropology and Authority: Essays on Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. Poul Houe, Gordon D. Marino, and Sven Hakon Rossel (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 33–40, 34.

polemical context—both the general intellectual landscape in which Hegel, Schelling, and Fichte loomed large[34] and more specifically the conversations about human existence that occupied philosophical and literary luminaries in Copenhagen. Briefly stated, the question of human existence and the structure of the self as somehow related both to empirical reality and the transcendent (the noumenal, the absolute, etc.) was a hotly contested topic, one with which Kierkegaard, along with his contemporaries, was deeply absorbed. Although substantial attention has been given to various aspects of Kierkegaard's relation to Kant, Hegel, Schelling, and Fichte, as well as certain immediate contemporaries such as J. L. Heiberg and H. L. Martensen, assessments of how Kierkegaard's anthropology relates to his selective critique and appropriation of idealist and Romantic concepts and categories are wildly divergent. John Elrod, in his sweeping study of Kierkegaard's "ontology of the self" asserts that the finer details of Kierkegaard's polemical context are not substantially relevant to his anthropology.[35] Alison Assiter intentionally and consciously de-contextualizes and co-opts Kierkegaard's concept of the self's fundamental relationality to support her focus on embodiedness and dependence in a bid to overcome the Kantian noumenal (i.e., non-spatiotemporal) self; unfortunately, she sets up Kierkegaard's complex relation to Kant as a simple opposition and effectively sidesteps rather than engages what Kierkegaard saw to be a crucial issue—namely, how a non-spatiotemporal self can find coherent expression in embodied social existence.[36]

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[34]See especially Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen* (Berlin: Vossischen Buchhandlung, 1800); F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*, trans. James Gutman (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1989 [1809]); G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, vol. 3, Werke in 20 Bänden (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969–86 [1807]).

[35]Elrod, *Being and Existence in Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Works*, 14–15, 41.

[36]Assiter, *Kierkegaard, Metaphysics and Political Theory*, 48, 72–8.

1.3.5 An Alternative Approach

My thesis—that Kierkegaard's anthropology is profoundly Christological, and is revealed as such when we take seriously the voice of the late theological discourses in concert with the rest of the authorship—utilizes an alternative approach that allows for a more robust picture of Kierkegaard's distinctive position than has previously been available. Additionally, I believe that increased attentiveness to the Christologically-conditioned anthropology of the late writings makes several contributions to the field of Kierkegaard interpretation: (1) it helps make sense of the evolution of Kierkegaard's anthropology (and his thought in general) within his polemical context; and (2) it illuminates a deep coherence and continuity, extending diachronically from the the nuanced, multi-perspectival polemics of the early writings to the increasingly negative conclusions about temporal human existence in the late writings, thus offering possibilities for a reading of Kierkegaard's authorship as a coherent whole.[37]

1.4 Methodology (And a Word about the Pseudonyms)

My reconstruction of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology involves a threefold methodology. The first movement is to develop a vocabulary for and basic definition of a broadly "Kierkegaardian" anthropology. This first phase of the reconstruction, while admittedly general, prepares the way for and anticipates my specific conclusions. By providing consistent definitions for key terms (such as body, soul, spirit, and self), and in identifying the basic contours of an anthropology that readers familiar with Kierkegaard will hopefully recognize as Kierkegaardian, I intend to provide readers with the tools to hear and assess the interpretive work that follows.

The second movement in my methodology involves contextualization. As noted above, my desire to attend to the anthropology found in the late, theological texts should

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[37]Timothy Dalrymple, "On the Bronze Bull of Phalaris and the Art and Imitation of Christ," in *The Moment and Late Writings*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, vol. 23, International Kierkegaard Commentary (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 165–98.

not be taken as a desire simply to prioritize those texts.[38] Nor do I want to suggest anything so blunt as the notion that Kierkegaard's "true" anthropology is contained only (or even especially) in the late texts. Rather, while I do believe that the voice of the late, theological texts tells us something determinative for our understanding of Kierkegaard's anthropology, I am also convinced that we cannot really hear that voice unless we have also been listening—very carefully—to what has been said by Kierkegaard and his many pseudonyms in the texts that come before.[39] And further, the significance of Kierkegaard's earlier treatments of anthropology, especially in the seminal *Concept of Anxiety*, can only be seen clearly against the backdrop of his polemical engagement with certain Romantic and idealist trends and arguments about human existence. Thus, my contextualization involves not only contextualizing Kierkegaard's many voices in relation to one another, but also contextualizing the anthropological discussion itself within a well-documented set of peculiarly idealist concerns and arguments about anthropology that exercised Kierkegaard and his contemporaries.

Third and finally, my methodology involves a two-pronged reading strategy. In short, I engage in (a) close readings of particular texts in combination with (b) general, topical treatments of multiple texts. Indeed, I usually will supplement the former type of reading by calling attention to general resonances with other texts in the authorship. This twofold reading method reflects my thesis—that a polyphonous (rather than merely cacophonous) anthropology can be reconstructed from Kierkegaard's writings. Attending to distinct works (and voices, pseudonymous or otherwise) must be conditioned by a feel for the whole, and vice-versa. In this dissertation, I largely bracket questions of authorship

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[38]Cf. Sylvia Walsh, *Living Christianly: Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Christian Existence* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 160.

[39]To a large extent, I resonate with the measured and nuanced recognition of continuity in the authorship described in Paul Martens and Tom Millay, "'The Changelessness of God' as Kierkegaard's Final Theodicy: God and the Gift of Suffering," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 13, no. 2 (2011): 170–89, especially 182ff.

and pseudonyms and read each text on its own merits. And yet, throughout these close readings, I am also engaged in highlighting resonances with other Kierkegaardian voices the text while taking into account things like pseudonymity (particularly the ironic distance between Kierkegaard and a pseudonym, or their proximity, as the case may be) and chronology. In the course of moving between these close and more contextualized readings, a kind of harmony emerges. Yes, each text and each pseudonym remains distinct; and yes, chronological developments in emphasis, tone, and content are readily apparent. But what I find most striking is the continuity and coherence of Kierkegaard's authorship, a coherence so striking that Kierkegaard went so far as to claim that it was not the result of personal genius or fully-laid out plan on his part, but rather the workings of divine Governance.[40]

This two-pronged reading strategy also corresponds with what I take to be the various functions of pseudonymity in Kierkegaard's work. One important function of pseudonymity is precisely to let the text stand on its own, with the author (and the "author's author") receding from the reader's grasp, at least for a time. Additionally, pseudonymity offers "a certain freedom for the author as well as for the reader."[41] The author is free to say things without really saying them—allowing Kierkegaard to give full-throated, richly-textured voices to people as diverse as the degenerate whose creepy exploits appear in "The Seducer's Diary," as well as the extraordinary Christian who can write *Practice in Christianity* without embarrassment. Readers similarly find themselves free in relation to the text, in at least a couple of ways: On one hand, as I noted above, there is a sense in which the notion of the author dissipates, allowing the reader to engage fully with the text. On the other hand, the pseudonyms free the reader in the sense that

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[40] *SKS* 13, 19 / *PV*, 12; cf. *SKS* 16, 52, 65 / *PV*, 73, 86. For a helpful commentary on Kierkegaard's comments about the role of Governance in his authorship, see Keith H. Lane, *Kierkegaard and the Concept of Religious Authorship*, vol. 45, Religion in Philosophy and Theology, 21–2.

[41] Clare Carlisle, *Kierkegaard: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 39.

she puts her guard down, only to be wounded quite suddenly by the recognition of herself in the text. We see this in Kierkegaard's use of avowedly non-Christian pseudonyms to get behind the blinding prejudices of of those who would normally be immune to any attempt to call their status as Christians into question. These functions of pseudonymity support a reading that allows a text to stand on its own, bracketing at least temporarily the caveats we might be tempted to introduce by relativizing the pseudonym or the pseudonym's perspective.

And yet, Kierkegaard never seriously intended to hide the fact that he was the source of his many characters and works. And even despite the fact that some pseudonyms obviously express ideas or opinions that are not Kierkegaard's "own" (in the sense, minimally speaking, that Kierkegaard would not want to identify himself with their ideas in the public square) while others apparently give voice to things Kierkegaard avowedly believes but feels inadequate to say (i.e., Anti-Climacus)—despite all of this, these works are after all the product of one man's life and mind. Indeed, Kierkegaard speaks of his work as an author not *only* as a cohesive religious message to Christendom. Though early on he may supposed his authorship would merely be a preliminary expulsion of the poetic—a prelude to his work in ministry—by 1848 he had begun to see that his work was (and would continue to be) religious; indeed, he was himself being transformed by Governance through the task of writing:[42] "This is how I *now* understand the whole [of my authorship]. From the beginning I could not quite see what has indeed also been my own development."[43] The "illusions of Christendom have been Kierkegaard's as well, and the authorship has had the effect of rooting them out of himself."[44] Thus the authorship has enacted upon Kierkegaard its intended effect on his fellow Danes. I believe it is not

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[42]*SKS* 16, 65 / *PV*, 86: "In a certain sense, it was not at all my idea to become a religious author. My idea was to empty myself of the poetic as quickly as possible—and then out to a rural parish."

[43]*SKS* 13, 19 / *PV*, 12.

[44]Lane, *Kierkegaard and the Concept of Religious Authorship*, 22.

going too far to say that the entire authorship functions as a lengthy exercise in confession and self-examination. Kierkegaard confesses his own tendencies, desires, temptations, hopes—and by giving them full expression he is able to achieve an astonishing level of honesty and insight about the sin that infests his (and his readers') aesthetic games, ethical self-righteousness, or religious pretensions. Thus, the pseudonyms function both to free the text from the author while at the same time signaling that the authorship as whole constitutes an exercise in a many-faceted individual's confession and self-examination in the pursuit of becoming a unified self.

Because of these considerations, throughout this dissertation I refer to individual pseudonyms by name during my close readings of key texts (rather than dissolving every pseudonym into Kierkegaard himself) while also stepping back occasionally to comment on what "Kierkegaard" thinks, intends, etc. This can be valid only because (a) the texts (and their pseudonyms) can stand by themselves, and (b) each text is a moment in Kierkegaard's personal development as well as a step in his larger project. A rather obvious example of what I am talking about can be seen in the case of Judge William. Arguing that a person can bring transfigured realizations of ideals (such as love) into actuality through ethical decision, Judge William illustrates this ethical feat as follows: "Resolution is the triumphant victor who, like Orpheus, fetches the infatuation of falling in love to the light of day."[45] The Judge no doubt believes in the power of the resolution, and the text's argument can and should be read first on its own merits. And yet, the text itself is profoundly self-undermining—it cannot have been accidental that Kierkegaard has Judge William illustrate his central thesis with Orpheus' ill-fated attempt to rescue Eurydice from the underworld. Even without placing Judge William in the larger context of Kierkegaard's authorship or thinking about Judge William as a pseudonym, careful readers will get the sense that those who attempt to fetch ideality

[45] *SKS* 6, 111 / *SLW*, 117.

into actuality through sheer decisiveness will in the end be no more a "triumphant victor" than was Orpheus, whose attempt to fetch Eurydice from Hades resulted in losing her forever. And, in fact, contextualizing Judge William's pseudonymity in relation to Kierkegaard's other works and authorial voices confirms this limitation of the ethical. The same kind of thing occurs throughout the authorship, and supports my decision to avoid simply prioritizing or discounting various works based on a presupposed hierarchy of pseudonyms; rather, each work, when read carefully on its own terms, *places itself* in relation to Kierkegaard's larger project.

1.5 Narrative Summary

A brief narrative summary of each of the remaining chapters of this dissertation will help readers track my argument. Chapters two through four are primarily philosophical-anthropological, moving from basic definitions to an in-depth contextualization of Kierkegaard's anthropology in relation to idealism. The primary goal in chapter two to is to establish a basic vocabulary for and definition of a broadly Kierkegaardian anthropology. Drawing upon *Concept of Anxiety*, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, *De Omnibus Dubitandem Est*, and *The Sickness unto Death*, along with brief references to *Either/Or* and certain theological discourses, this chapter spells out the key concepts and categories that factor into Kierkegaard's notion of the self as both a *gift* and a *task*. Each person is called to the lifelong project of *becoming* a full-fledged self, and this dynamic nature of selfhood is rooted in Kierkegaard's version of a tripartite anthropological structure—the complex synthesis of body-soul/spirit. To clarify, there are two sets of syntheses here: Kierkegaard initially describes the human as a synthesis of soul (*psyche*, denoting mental processes and animal vitality) and body—but this is "not yet a self" and exists merely as a determined aspect of the natural world. This body-soul animal must be qualified as spirit.[46]

[46]Throughout the dissertation, I use "body-soul/spirit" to denote this anthropological structure.

Thus, this synthesis is unstable by design: each human being is structured with a view toward moving from an animal-like state of dreaming immediacy toward increasing levels of consciousness and freedom. Every human being starts out as a latent or minimal self, a body-soul creature whose spirit is asleep. But the experience of various existential dissonances (reality-ideality, necessity-possibility, and especially temporality-eternity) prod the dreaming spirit until it awakens and becomes aware of itself. In becoming self-conscious, a human also becomes conscious of her own freedom—and hence, realizes that she *could* and perhaps *should* become something more. It is this basic restlessness, anxiety, and sense of responsibility at the foundation of Kierkegaard's anthropology that engenders the notion that a spirit or "self" is not a static reality, but something to be won, a task to embark upon. Whatever further specifications and developments we discover in Kierkegaard's anthropology, this basic understanding of the tripartite human tasked with *becoming* spirit at the intersection of eternity and temporality holds true throughout the authorship.

Armed with this basic knowledge of Kierkegaard's anthropological terms and categories, as well as a general outline of what I take to be a fairly uncontroversial account of a Kierkegaardian anthropology of "becoming a self," I move in chapter three to the task of contextualization. I contend that the key features of Kierkegaard's anthropology—namely, the emphasis on freedom, the task of becoming a self at the intersection of temporality and eternity, and the attendant emphases on ethics (as a fundamental aspect of the self's actualization) and sin (as the challenge that greets the anthropological task at every turn)—should be read as part of a larger discourse that exercised philosophical anthropologists from Kant onwards.

For the sake of brevity (and taking cues from Michelle Kosch's excellent work on this topic[47]), I sketch the broad features of this discourse in terms of a continuous

[47]Michelle Kosch, *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling, and Kierkegaard* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

line of argumentation that begins with Kant culminates with Schelling. Kant initiated the peculiar challenge of unraveling the mystery of a transcendentally free (and thus ethically responsible) spiritual self who yet remains embedded within the empirical world governed by strict, deterministic causality. And if Kant set the parameters of the discussion, Schelling more than any of Kant's philosophical successors understood the available options and potential pitfalls. In short, Kant and Schelling both ran up against the paradox that an account of human freedom sufficient for ethics (i.e., a "transcendental freedom" which, by ascribing human action something other than natural causality, can support the imputability of those actions) eventually *undermined* the very possibility of ethics (by only being able to comprehend evil actions as the result of ignorance, and thus neither the result of freedom nor fully imputable).

This dilemma was well known to Kierkegaard. As Kierkegaard's Anti-Climacus writes: "If sin is ignorance, then sin really does not exist, for sin is indeed consciousness. If sin is being ignorant of what is right and therefore doing wrong, then sin does not exist."[48] In an attempt to preserve both ethically significant freedom and a coherent account of evil, Schelling sought to preserve human freedom by turning eventually toward a highly complex, speculative account of divine personhood to ground his anthropology.

In chapter four I situate Kierkegaard in relation to the discourse described in chapter three. Schelling served as both an inspiration and a foil for Kierkegaard's early anthropological musings in *Concept of Anxiety*; while the pseudonymous Vigilius Haufniensis echoes Schelling's emphasis on freedom and the dizzying vertigo experienced by an awakening spirit, he was suspicious of Schelling's attempt to "explain" human beings' spiritual selfhood in relation to a highly speculative account of the divine life. By outlining Kierkegaard's (and particularly Haufniensis') polemical engagement with (and selective ap-

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[48] *SKS* 11, 203 / *SUD*, 89. Anti-Climacus makes this comment in the context of equating Kant's ethics of autonomy (the mutuality of law and freedom in the transcendental self) with the Greek notion that intentional action is always directed toward the good. Cf. *SKS* 19, 388, Not13:15.

propriation of) Kant's and Schelling's central anthropological ideas, I am able to accentuate the significance of Kierkegaard's unique contributions to the discourse—particularly, his astonishing reconfiguration of history as a distinctively anthropological category and his insights about the mutual coinherence of each individual and the human race as a whole.

The anthropology in *Concept of Anxiety* contains what I believe is most promising about Kierkegaard's anthropology: by attempting to grasp historical reality concretely within his notion of the person (particularly in his account of the awakening of the spirit in *the Moment*, understood as eternity's active intersection with temporality), Kierkegaard's Haufniensis offers up a set of powerful resources for tying together temporality and eternity in terms of human existence before God, at both an individual and social level. And yet, *Concept of Anxiety* also contains a troubling undercurrent—a somewhat truncated Christology that on one hand positively informs Kierkegaard's polemical engagement with idealist anthropologies, but on the other hand foreshadows the possibility of a deeply negative assessment of temporality. Drawing upon Dietrich Bonhoeffer's interaction with *Concept of Anxiety*, I end this chapter by identifying the aspects of Kierkegaard's anthropology (as it appears early in the authorship) that I find most promising, and most troubling. Put briefly, I believe that Kierkegaard's notion that the human spirit/self develops only when eternity intersects with temporal existence is very promising. When combined with Haufniensis' fascinating account of the coinherence of the individual and the race and his insistence that "history" names not the deterministic sequentiality of time but rather the dynamic interplay of freely responsible humanity in relation to the eternal God, this anthropological account seems to me to contain vast resources for imagining and valuing human life in the world. And in fact, at this early moment in Kierkegaard's anthropology, Christological notions shape and inform this promising anthropological vision. However, in ways that I explain more fully in subsequent chapters, specific aspects of the way Christology functions in *Concept of Anxiety* already indicate a fundamental relativization and rejection of temporality.

Chapter five marks a shift from the primarily philosophical-anthropological contextualization that occupied chapters two through four. In the fifth and sixth chapters, I move entirely into the Christological issues raised at the end of chapter four. Chapter five offers my account of Kierkegaard's Christological dialectic of existence. Up to this point, we have seen how the general structure of the human being is geared toward the development of spirit. And yet, Kierkegaard has already made it clear that the development of spirit is not a natural, causally-predetermined outgrowth of body-soul existence. Rather, there is something about the prior activity of the eternal intersecting with temporality that "awakens" the dreaming spirit and initiates the distinctively human existential task characterized by freedom and ethical responsibility. In this chapter, I show that this dynamic anthropology of becoming a self is, for Kierkegaard, *uniquely initiated by Christ*. Christ *is* the entrance of the eternal in time, and it is the fact of the Incarnation that, in the highest sense, calls forth the human spirit into the ethically strenuous task of becoming a self before God. And while this task proves too much for finite humans—they cannot follow in the God-man's footsteps—Christ is also the giver of grace. Despite each and every human's continued failure to become a self before God, Christ stands in our place.

Christ thus initiates the Christian dialectic of existence, which consists in a repeating cycle: attempting the task of following after Christ's example; being crushed by the weight of this impossible task; discovering solace in the grace available in Christ; and finally finding in the experience of Christ's grace the courage to take up once again the task of imitating Christ. In outlining Kierkegaard's Christological dialectic of existence, this chapter contributes to my thesis in two key ways: First, the general outline of Kierkegaard's anthropology described in chapters two through four is here revealed to have a fundamentally Christological aspect, with Christ uniquely defining and driving the task of becoming a spirit. Second, we can see in this Christological framework a sharpening of the concerns raised in chapter four about the status of temporality and sociality in Kierkegaard's anthropology. The perpetual dialectic initiated by Christ—with

Christ functioning as a prototype but also strictly defining the limit of what humans are able to achieve—suggests that there is something about temporal existence that excludes the possibility of fully realized selfhood.

This concern comes to the foreground in chapter six, which extends and sharpens Christ's determinative role in Kierkegaard's anthropology. Here, I situate Christ's role as prototype in relation to Kierkegaard's theological commitment to the notion of God as the Unconditioned, and the attendant characterization of Christianity as the unconditional requirement of the Unconditioned. Utilizing a logic of inversion and opposition between eternity and temporality, Kierkegaard argues in the late discourses that the path toward selfhood before the eternal God requires suffering in this world—for eternity and eternity's requirement fundamentally oppose temporality. Becoming a self ultimately means imaging the eternal, changeless God. And while Christ succeeded in actualizing the eternal within the vicissitudes of temporality, thereby establishing the insanely high requirement for becoming a fully-actualized self, his success is unique, possible only by virtue of his status as the God-man. To put the matter bluntly, I argue that the ultimate effect of this Christological anthropology is to call humans out of this world. While every human must indeed struggle *within* the world on the path to becoming a self, the ultimate hope for Kierkegaard is escape from temporality. Because Christ functions as an utterly unattainable prototype external to each individual, and because the grace available from Christ involves his function as an extrinsic substitute who covers our failings, the nature of Kierkegaard's anthropological hope is not the reconciliation of temporality with eternity, accomplished through the communion of God and humanity in Christ. Rather, the dialectic initiated by Kierkegaard's Christ teaches humans to put their hope in the eternal—at the expense of the temporal.

Before making a final assessment of this Christological anthropology, I turn in chapter seven to demonstrate that the Christological anthropology described in chapters five and six is continuous with Kierkegaard's earliest philosophical and theological

commitments. Contrary to those interpreters who discount Kierkegaard's late writings (including the exceptionally harsh assessments of temporality), I argue that Christ's decisive anthropological role occurs within the parameters described in chapters two through four. Put another way, Christ's role in the anthropology of the late discourses is not a new development, but rather a sharpening and clarifying of a trajectory that runs from Kierkegaard's earliest journal entries, through the pseudonymous writings and early upbuilding discourses, and into the late discourses. In order to trace this development-in-continuity, a take up the exemplary thread of "transfiguration," a term that named for Kierkegaard and many of his contemporaries the feat of achieving the concrete actualization of things eternal or ideal. Used widely in anthropological discussions in Denmark and figuring prominently in the works of Fichte, Hegel, and Schelling, the notion of transfiguration also crops up throughout Kierkegaard's authorship in anthropologically significant ways.

I show that Kierkegaard's evolving use of the term leads directly toward the centrality and uniqueness of Christ, who Kierkegaard eventually identifies as the *only* transfigured one.[49] Whereas Kierkegaard's contemporary and frequent target, H. L. Martensen, identifies the transfigured Christ as the "original unity of divinity and humanity" who empowers and guarantees the possibility of further transfigurations in human history *via* state, family, and vocation, Kierkegaard argues that the human in temporality can only become an *inverse* reflection of God's character as the gracious forgiver of sins—mirror-imaging divine forgiveness by confessing our sinfulness. Kierkegaard thus frames human existence as a perpetual cycle of struggle and failure (as described in chapter four), punctuated by the silent confession of sinfulness in the presence of Christ, the Holy One. By tracing occurrences of transfiguration through the various stages and genres of Kierkegaard's writings, we can see that my reconstruction of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology reflects not a shift into bitter cynicism at the end of his

[49] *SKS* 12, 156 / *PC*, 152.

life; rather, it reflects the outworking of philosophical and theological commitments that characterize Kierkegaard's entire authorship.

In my concluding chapter, I make a final, critical assessment of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology, along with some brief comments about its problematic ramifications for sociality, ethics, ecclesiology, and the nature of Christian hope. Kierkegaard's earliest intuitions about the opposition between eternity and temporality—according to a framework largely set by his contemporary polemical discourse—commit him to a strongly bifurcated anthropology, which finds fullest expression in the Christologically-conditioned anthropology of the late discourses. With the self-as-spirit on one side and the body-mind on the other, Kierkegaard believes he secures the person's spiritual relation to God in freedom and ethical responsibility. He also wants to maintain that the spiritual relation to the eternal has some sort of bearing on temporality.

However, that bearing increasingly follows a logic of inversion and opposition, and temporal existence comes to be seen solely as the realm of sin, striving, and failure—with an emphasis on suffering and dying to the world. Though the person must *become* a spiritual self through striving in concrete actuality (a process that only attains the proper level of stringency in the dialectic of Christian existence initiated by Christ), she can only *be* this self in separation from the world, a separation that is prefigured in temporal suffering and fulfilled in death. Kierkegaard thus views Christ not only as the revelation of what existing humans *ought* to be, but as the revelation of what they *cannot* be—even in or through Christ. For Kierkegaard, the relation between the temporal and the eternal remains problematically oppositional. And his theologically limited notion of Christ as the extrinsic boundary of human efforts toward transfiguration (along with an understanding of the atonement as exclusively substitutionary) only sharpens and solidifies this opposition. This, I argue, does not do justice to all that Christ is supposed to mean for the world.

That being said, Kierkegaard's critique of Martensen and other overly optimistic contemporary figures is well-founded and compelling, and offers several valuable avenues for constructive work. Thus, I temper my critique by making some provisional suggestions about ways in which Kierkegaard's best insights might be preserved: Kierkegaard's comments about history and the identity of the individual and the race in *Concept of Anxiety* (as outlined in chapter four) hold tremendous promise when combined with a more robust Christology, and allow us to preserve many of Kierkegaard's key anthropological insights.

CHAPTER TWO

Kierkegaard's Structure of the Human Being

My goal in this dissertation is to *describe* and *assess* Kierkegaard's anthropology—and I have said that his anthropology is best described as Christological. However, in order to describe and assess Kierkegaard's explicitly Christological anthropology we must gain a clear idea of his basic anthropological formulations—the structure of the human being. And this, in turn, must be examined in relation to Kierkegaard's critical appropriation of idealist anthropological thought, especially on the subjects of freedom, evil, and ethics. As noted in chapter one, even though the most explicit comments about Christ's anthropological significance occur in the oft-neglected late theological discourses, I contend that a robust reconstruction of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology must draw from every stage of the authorship—early and late, pseudonymous and direct.

Therefore, the overarching goal in the present chapter (and in chapters three and four) is to establish a consistent vocabulary, the general outlines of a Kierkegaardian anthropology, and a philosophical contextualization of that anthropology. Each of this steps plays a vital role in the process of reconstructing Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology, in large part by preparing us to understand the significance of the "Christological sharpening" that occurs in the later theological writings.[1]

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[1] Again, I am not positing a disjunction or even real tension between, say, an early "philosophical anthropology" and a later "Christological anthropology." Rather, I hope to make clear that even from the earliest stages of Kierkegaard's authorship, in both his pseudonymous works and those penned under his own name, certain theological and philosophical tendencies or commitments are actively informing Kierkegaard's vision of human existence. These tendencies and commitments—sometimes latent or implicit, but always present—become increasingly clear as the authorship progresses (to us as readers, but perhaps to Kierkegaard as well), with the figure of Christ eventually being revealed to occupy the central, determinative role in Kierkegaard's anthropology. Put another way, Christ's determinative role is itself contextualized in a variety of ways by Kierkegaard's theology, philosophy, and polemical engagements.

The goal of this chapter is twofold: 1) I establish a basic vocabulary and set of definitions pertinent to Kierkegaard's anthropology, and 2) I provide what I take to be a fairly uncontroversial, general account of the way Kierkegaard's dynamic, tripartite anthropology functions. But before introducing the main sections of this chapter properly, I would like to highlight two related terms that will follow us throughout this reconstruction of Kierkegaard's anthropology: *commensurability*[2] and *transfiguration*.[3]

Put simply, commensurability and transfiguration point to the challenge and the task of existential unity that lies at the heart of Kierkegaard's anthropology. *Either/Or* circles around the question of whether ideality and reality can become commensurable with each other, finding actual expression in a unified life. In Part I, the young aesthete, "A," strives desperately to concretize ideals of beauty and love into actual moments—either through aesthetic reflection or immediate intuition—but remains frustrated by the pernicious dissonance between his poeticized imaginations and the stark realities that confront him at every turn. In *Either/Or* Part II, Assessor Wilhelm argues vigorously (but ultimately unconvincingly) that only the moment of ethical decision holds the key to navigating and unifying the vagaries of aesthetic immediacy and speculative abstraction: in concrete reflection culminating in ethical decisiveness, a transfigured actuality leaps forth by uniting ideality and reality. And in Kierkegaard's most famous work, *Fear and Trembling*, the pseudonymous Johannes de Silentio wrestles with the apparent interval between faith and ethics: can the inward, spiritual relation to God and the outward,

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[2]I use the term "commensurable" simply because it is the common English translation for the anthropologically significant word *commensurabelt*, which appears in several of Kierkegaard's writings. For instance, in *Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard's Vigilius Haufniensis uses this word in dealing with the question of how "my religious existence comes into relation with and expresses itself in my outward existence" (*SKS* 4, 408 / *CA*, 106). Finding the *commensurability* of faith (the inward religious life) and outward existence is the task of every human life, Haufniensis tells us, for "every human life is religiously designed" (*SKS* 4, 407 / *CA*, 105). In this context, Haufniensis asserts that the religious is "absolutely commensurable" with the rest of life, but does not go into much detail about exactly how this works (*SKS* 4, 408 / *CA*, 106).

[3]Transfiguration (*Forklarede*, from the verb *Forklare*) is a term Kierkegaard borrows from Romantic and idealist aesthetics (and, perhaps, from Fichte's ethics) to describe the reconciliation or harmonization of existential dissonances.

temporal relationships that constitute our daily duties and activities find existential commensurability and coherence?

The list could go on—nearly every book in Kierkegaard's authorship, whether pseudonymous or published under his own name, can be read as tackling some aspect of the dissonance between two sets of categories, or two "realms." The boundary line dividing these categories shifts in subtle ways from book to book, and the dilemma takes on different aspects from one authorial voice to the next. Some of the categories are somewhat fluid, moving from one side of the fence to the other depending on the book or author. For instance, in *Fear and Trembling*, "the ethical" stands in contrast to "faith," with the former indicating conditioned social relations and the latter indicating the unconditional relation of faith to God; but in other writings, especially *The Concept of Anxiety*, *Works of Love*, and various journal entries, the ethical stands firmly on the side of ideality, presenting an impossibly high standard that seems to resist full translation into concrete actuality.[4] Yet, in spite of these nuances and shifts, a generally consistent set of themes is readily apparent: On one hand, there is the the temporal, the finite,

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[4]The ambiguity of the ethical is partly related to Kierkegaard's notion of two distinct forms of ethics—the "first" and "second" ethics described in *Concept of Anxiety*. The first form of "metaphysical" ethics identifies an abstract ideal and attempts to approximate it in a social context (with socially-developed norms coming to inform the interplay of various competing responsibilities and allegiances), whereas the second, "dogmatic" ethics transforms all ethical responsibility into the absolute, inward responsibility of the self before God. The ethics critiqued in *Fear and Trembling* and described *Either Or*, Part II, can be thought of us elements in Kierkegaard's polemics against Hegel and Fichte, and descriptions of insufficient views of ethics that become shipwrecked upon the reality of evil and sin—here we can see Kierkegaard as critiquing and extending Kant's musings on radical evil in *Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason*. We can also think of Kierkegaard working with the notion of ethics as "absolute responsibility" versus ethics as "universal duties and rights." In fact, it is here, in the juxtaposition of absolute responsibility and universal duties—along with the paradox that a generalized social responsibility always seems to involve moral compromise in its need for sacrificial victims—that *Fear and Trembling* anticipates the profoundly world-negating direction that I believe Kierkegaard's anthropology eventually takes; as Jacques Derrida notes, "What does Abraham teach us, in his approach to sacrifice? That far from ensuring responsibility, the generality of ethics incites to irresponsibility. It impels me to speak, to reply, to account for something, and thus to dissolve my singularity in the medium of the concept" (Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (University of Chicago Press, 1995 [1992]), 61). Thus, it is these kinds of considerations—polemical context, first versus second ethics, etc.—that help explain the apparent ambiguity of "the ethical" in Kierkegaard's authorship. See also Arne Grøn, *The Concept of Anxiety in Søren Kierkegaard*, trans. Jeanette B. L. Knox (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1994), 133–7.

the concrete, the conditioned, the social (or, more polemically, the crowd). On the other hand, there is the eternal, the infinite, the ideal, the unconditioned, the spiritual. Throughout the authorship Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms wrestle with how (and indeed, whether) the latter can be translated into or find expression in the former—or better, how the two can become united in actuality.[5]

This problematic—seeking transfiguration as the overcoming of apparent incommensurability—runs directly through the center of Kierkegaard's anthropology. The very structure of the human being, which I discuss below in the main sections of this chapter, maps on to these dissonances; indeed, as we will see, these dissonances account for the fact that Kierkegaard's anthropology is fundamentally an anthropology of *becoming*. In short, the task of becoming a self involves the pursuit of existential continuity and harmony—transfiguration—in the midst of various existential tensions and through certain constitutive relations. And, as we will see in chapter seven, Kierkegaard equates Christ's exemplarity of truly human existence with his status as the uniquely *transfigured* one. Therefore, the dual problematic of commensurability and transfiguration can be thought of not only as the philosophical ground-zero for Kierkegaard's anthropology but as a theologically significant trajectory that eventually finds a particularly Christological expression. The call to achieve transfigured commensurability (and the persistent dissonances that form the backcloth of this call) characterizes and drives the Kierkegaardian task of becoming a self.

This short description leaves many questions unanswered: How is the call to transfiguration issued? What is the content of the call? Does this call point to a universal human

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[5]Note that these concerns were typical of Danish literature, theology, and philosophy in Kierkegaard's time. Erik M. Christensen designates a period in the history of ideas (in the particularly Danish context) that he calls "optimistiske dualisme"—from roughly 1800 to 1870. This dualism, he says, is a Time/Eternity dualism, with *time* and *eternity* referring to two radically different sorts of reality that must be bridged in some way; the optimism refers, of course, to the prevailing sentiment that such bridging was not only possible but quite likely through various cultural developments and activities. The Lutheran Evangelical Danish State Church was perhaps the foremost purveyor of *optimistiske dualisme*. See Erik M. Christensen, "H. C. Andersen og den optimistiske dualisme," in *Andersen og Verden* (Odense, 1993), 177–91.

telos or does it simply name a contentless disposition that guides the quality of one's existence without dictating its concrete details? Why does Kierkegaard insist that every human life is religiously designed, and what is the relation between "the religious" and the rest of life? These questions will all be addressed in their turn. But for now it is sufficient to signal the importance of the notions of commensurability and transfiguration, and to prepare the reader for their repeated occurrences throughout what follows.

Returning now to the central topic of this chapter, let me briefly outline the following sections. In the first section (2.1), I examine how the notion of "becoming a self," so central to Kierkegaard's anthropology, is intimately related to the tripartite structure of the human being. Put simply, something about the composition of the human being as body, soul, and spirit is unstable and given to flux. And yet, the flux that characterizes the human being is not simply the unfolding of a causal chain of events. Rather, it is a movement characterized by the distinctively human experiences of consciousness and freedom—and ultimately by the experience of being addressed by the eternal. Spirit proves to be the key to the human synthesis—thus, I define Kierkegaard's key anthropological terms—body, soul, and spirit—in the context of examining the spirit as at once a *disruptive* power and the *structuring* principle of the human synthesis. Spirit is disruptive in the sense that the human qualified as spirit cannot merely rest (like other animals) in an immediate unity of body and soul, but rather awakens in anxiety to its own freedom and responsibility and embarks on a task of becoming. And yet, spirit is capable of structuring the human synthesis. It initiates a different kind of unity and stability than the unreflective immediacy of a plant or animal—namely, it establishes history as a dynamic, relational context for existential coherence in which a human becomes herself in relation to others.

In the second section (2.2), I examine three sets of dissonances through which spirit develops: reality-ideality, necessity-possibility, and temporality-eternity. In the tension of reality and ideality, the immediate, pre-conscious unity of body and soul becomes refracted through reflection and imagination, moving from unreflective harmony into opposition

and conflict—and in this conflict, the spirit (previously latent and "dreaming") becomes qualified as consciousness. In the second tension—between necessity and possibility—the spirit-as-conscious now progresses toward freedom. For Kierkegaard, necessity enfolds the spheres of logic and natural causality, and here the activities of philosophy and mediation are valid. But Kierkegaard insists that the unique κίνησεις of human existence cannot be accounted for either by logic or natural causality. Rather, human existence is fundamentally related to possibility, and hence the increasing exercise of freedom. It is in the exercise of freedom against the tensional backdrop of necessity-possibility that human existence is set apart from and exceeds mere animal life or the static confines of abstractive logic. The third tension, between temporality and eternity, is similar to the first two, but actually turns out to be the fundamental tension that both establishes the spirit and makes possible the experience of consciousness and freedom. Indeed, the intersection of temporality and eternity (in what Kierkegaard calls the *moment*) provides the setting for the distinctively human task of becoming a self. Moreover, temporality and eternity are fundamentally heterogenous, whereas reality-ideality and necessity-possibility are revealed as secondary tensions that are posited by temporality's encounter with the eternal. While the secondary tensions of reality-ideality and necessity-possibility admit of degrees of existential harmonization through spirit-qualified existence, the primary tension of temporality-eternity persistently resists both harmony and stability. This, as we shall see, has profound ramifications for Kierkegaard's anthropology, especially regarding the ultimate status of spirit vis-á-vis the body-soul synthesis.

2.1 The Human Synthesis: Becoming a Self

In a seminal anthropological text, *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844), Kierkegaard's Vigilius Haufniensis introduces a tripartite structure of the human being: "Man is a synthesis of the psychical and the physical; however, a synthesis is unthinkable if the

two are not united in a third. This third is spirit."[6] Further on, Haufniensis describes the human being as a "synthesis of psyche [soul] and body that is sustained by spirit."[7] This same kind of formulation appears throughout Kierkegaard's writings, from *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, to late journal entries, to *The Sickness Unto Death*.[8] But what are these aspects of the human being, and how are they related?

For Kierkegaard, the dynamic, complex synthesis of body, soul, and spirit is fundamentally directed toward the task of becoming a self. Significantly, the words "self" (*Selv*) and "spirit" (*aand*) are roughly equivalent for Kierkegaard: the self is spirit, and the fact that a human being must *become* a self is related to the peculiar workings of the spirit in relation to the body and the soul: for every human being is "a soul-body synthesis planned with a view to becoming spirit."[9] By positing the body and the soul, Kierkegaard is affirming that humans are animals at a fundamental level. But they are also spirit, a qualification that sets humans apart from all other animals: "In innocence, man is not merely animal, for if he were at any moment of his life merely animal, he would never become man. So spirit is present, but as immediate, as dreaming."[10] This notion that the human being, though certainly a rational and bodily animal, is also latently (or, in a sense, potentially) spirit is vital for our understanding of Kierkegaard's anthropology. For the *spiritual* is what defines the distinctively human, in two important ways: *First*, the spirit qualifies the human beyond the merely animal; it disrupts the pre-conscious coincidence of the body and the soul in unreflective immediacy, leading to an anxious

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[6] *SKS* 4, 349 / *CA*, 43.

[7] *SKS* 4, 353 / *CA*, 48.

[8] *SKS* 7, 317 / *CUP*, 346; *SKS* 24, 312 NB23:216 / *JP* 4, 4341; *SKS* 11, 129 *SUD*, 13. Throughout this chapter, I appeal frequently to *Concept of Anxiety* and *Sickness unto Death*, which are the works in Kierkegaard's authorship most fully devoted to anthropological reflections. However, even in this early stage-setting chapter, I also move well beyond these *loci classici*, in keeping with my purpose of "reconstructing" Kierkegaard's anthropology in way that attempts to treat the authorship comprehensively.

[9] *SKS* 11, 158 / *SUD*, 43, translation modified.

[10] *SKS* 4, 349 / *CA*, 43.

restlessness that culminates in self-consciousness—the positing of the self. *Second*, spirit initiates the historical "endurance" of personal relationality beyond the merely temporal "persistence" of other created things. In other words, not only does the spirit disrupt the body-soul but it posits it as a synthesis that has historical continuity—a unique continuity-in-movement that goes beyond a series of causal states. For, as Haufniensis insists, the mere unfolding of natural causality not really any movement at all.[11] In short, spirit is what qualifies what would otherwise be mere animal existence, utterly conditioned by natural, spatio-temporal causality, into a free and ethically responsible self with an actual *history* in the proper sense of the word.[12] In the next two subsections, I explore in more detail how the spirit both disrupts and structures the human synthesis, and along the way provide descriptive definitions of the body, soul, and spirit.

2.1.1 Spirit as Disruptive Restlessness

How does the spirit qualify an individual human beyond a mere instantiation of an animal species? We come here to the first round of establishing a vocabulary for my reconstruction of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology. Kierkegaard's use of the term "body" does not require any special explanation.[13] The soul (*sjael* or psyche), when Kierkegaard uses the term in a technical anthropological sense, refers strictly to that which animates the human being, the animal capability of purposeful reactions to the world—which in the case of humans is quantitatively, but not qualitatively, beyond

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[11] *SKS* 4, 329 / *CA*, 21: "[B]ecoming by necessity is a state, as, for example, the whole history of the plant is a state."

[12] *SKS* 4, 350 / *CA*, 44.

[13] However, it is helpful to note, following John Elrod, that Kierkegaard uses "body" to refer to the "on-going, consistently changing facticity of each existing individual subject" rather than a substance like Descartes' *res extensa*. John W. Elrod, "The Self in Kierkegaard's Pseudonyms," *Philosophy of Religion* 4 (1973): 218–40, 228.

the kind of existence we see in animal and plant life, not to mention inanimate matter.[14] Thus, Kierkegaard always talks about the body and the soul together, as a synthesis that exists in the realm of concrete reality, of empirical spatio-temporality. The important thing to remember is that the soul and the body are *animal* qualifications. The body-soul is not distinctively human in itself, but describes an entity that for all practical purposes is determined by the realm of empirical, natural causality.

Spirit, however, is something else. On one hand, it is a *gift*, for even a "dreaming spirit"—which is Haufniensis' way of describing the innocent human, the unselfconscious and thus unactualized self—is still a spirit; someone in a state of dreaming innocence is not a "mere animal." But on the other hand, the spirit is a *task*—for no one becomes a spirit apart from some sort of self activity.[15] Furthermore, the peculiarly human mode of physical-psychical actuality has everything to do with the restlessness of the spirit, which at once *disrupts* and *constitutes* of the human synthesis. In *Concept of Anxiety*, Haufniensis narrates the the primordial spiritual story of every human being—

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[14]Here again Elrod's nuancing proves helpful, though with a couple of caveats. He notes that Kierkegaard's use of the term is somewhat inconsistent, with at least two varying nuances depending upon the context and pseudonymous voice. Sometimes Kierkegaard or his pseudonyms simply use "soul" in the context of quoting biblical passages—and it is especially in such cases or in certain theological discourses that Kierkegaard's use of "soul" appears to be essentially synonymous with spirit (*aand*) or self (*Selv*). See, for instance, "To Gain One's Soul in Patience" in *SKS* 5, 159–74 / *EUD*, 159–75, which takes its title from Luke 21:19. But for our purpose, it is helpful to focus on the more technical sense of the term, especially in contexts in which Kierkegaard or his pseudonyms maintain a clear distinction between soul and spirit. In these cases, Elrod asserts that "soul" means "animating power," naming a certain kind of free self-determination—though, as will become clear in the next chapter, this is not necessarily synonymous with the kind of ethically significant freedom that corresponds uniquely with the human spirit in relation to the eternal. See Elrod, "The Self in Kierkegaard's Pseudonyms," 228.

[15]Thus, Paul Holmer probably states things too strongly when he claims that for Kierkegaard, "the 'self' is a 'how,' not a 'what.'" Paul Holmer, "Post-Kierkegaard: Remarks about Being a Person," in *Kierkegaard's Truth: The Disclosure of the Self*, ed. Joseph H. Smith, vol. 5, Psychiatry and the Humanities (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 3–22, 15. At the bare minimum, Kierkegaard's description of the human animal, in terms of a body-soul synthesis, has having been planned with a view toward being spirit, indicates that a latent spirit or self in a "what" sense is already present in the human being, prior to the "how." Or, as C. Stephen Evans puts it, Kierkegaard does not choose between the options of self as substance and self as achievement: he has "a foot in both of these camps." See C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard: An Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 51. Cf. Maurice Carignan, "Kierkegaard et l'Historicité Humaine," *Science et Esprit* XLVIII (1996): 85–97, 75f.

the mysterious awakening of spirit that individuates humans in a way that sets them apart from other creaturely life:

> Inasmuch as [spirit] is now present, it is in a sense a hostile power, for it constantly disturbs the relation between soul and body, a relation that indeed has persistence and yet does not have endurance, inasmuch as it first receives the latter by the spirit. On the other hand, spirit is a friendly power, since it is precisely that which constitutes the relation.[16]

The salient point here is that the spirit ensures that the human being is never able to rest in a state of pure, unreflective immediacy.[17] Immediacy—an important category to which we will return—denotes the undisturbed and balanced state of "being what one is," as in the unreflective, unselfconscious harmony of body and soul that characterizes animal life, not to mention the even more basic forms of vegetative or inanimate existence. The presence of spirit—even dreaming, unactualized spirit—constantly disrupts immediacy and seeks to constitute the human synthesis in a distinctively spiritual mode of existence—which is to say, in an existence of historical actuality through freedom. I will say more about the important themes of human freedom and history below, but for now it is enough to note that spirit is what posits the human synthesis as free and responsible, beyond an animal existence circumscribed entirely by natural causality.

Because of this intrinsic qualification as spirit, humans experience innocence as anxiety, a psychological phenomenon unique to human life. After describing the ambiguity of the spirit's disruptive and constitutive power in relation to the body-soul synthesis, Haufniensis asks,

> What, then, is man's relation to this ambiguous power? How does spirit relate itself to itself and to its conditionality? It relates itself as anxiety. Do away with itself, the spirit cannot; lay hold of itself, it cannot, as long as it has itself outside of itself. Nor can man sink down into the vegetative, for he is qualified as spirit;

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[16] *SKS* 4, 349–50 / *CA*, 43–4.

[17] Cf. Arthur A. Krentz, "The Socratic-Dialectical Anthropology of Søren Kierkegaard's *Postscript*," in *Anthropology and Authority: Essays on Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. Poul Houe, Gordon D. Marino, and Sven Hakon Rossel (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 17–25, 22–3.

> flee away from anxiety, he cannot, for he loves it; really love it, he cannot, for he flees from it. Innocence has now reached its uttermost point, it is ignorance; however, it is not an animal brutality but an ignorance qualified by spirit.[18]

Thus, the qualification of spirit, the distinctively humanizing aspect of the human synthesis, is what ensures existential restlessness, moving the innocent human being from a state of dreaming immediacy to self-consciousness, and thus into the task of becoming a self. Spirit initiates and enables humans to experience freedom beyond the deterministic cause-and-effect system of the natural world. However—and this is extremely significant—the spirit is not simply posited over against causality. It is not some sort of fully-realized substance that underlies human existence, nor is it an essence that stands in contrast with the accidents of body-soul animality.[19] Rather, in the very moment of the spirit's self-actualization, the body-soul synthesis of animal existence is actualized as well.[20] Prior to the actualization of the spirit (and hence, body-soul), the human being "is not [merely] animal, but neither is he really man. The moment he becomes man, he becomes so by being animal as well."[21] The significance of this affirmation of the spirit's connection with the body-soul is vital, and relates to Kierkegaard's concern with transfiguration and commensurability.

Because of this basic structure of the human being as a synthesis of body and soul qualified as spirit—what I will now designate as "body-soul/spirit" for the sake of brevity—an individual human being is neither an instantiation of an animal species nor a purely spiritual angelic creature. She is rather both animal and spirit. Humans are thus uniquely structured creatures, with a unique capacity for becoming individuals in relation to

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[18]*SKS* 4, 350 / *CA*, 44.

[19]George Connell, *To Be One Thing: Personal Unity in Kierkegaard's Thought* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985).

[20]*SKS* 4, 355 / *CA*, 49: "In the moment the spirit posits itself, it posits the synthesis [body-soul], but in order to posit the synthesis it must first pervade it differentiatingly."

[21]*SKS* 4, 355 / *CA*, 49.

God and to one another.[22] We can even say that the synthetic tensions inherent to the ontological structure of the human being give rise to the task of becoming a self—though this must not be understood as a purely natural, immanent, or necessary process—a point to which I will return shortly.

We can see the destabilizing work of the spirit illustrated in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846). In §3 of "Actual and Ethical Subjectivity," Kierkegaard's Johannes Climacus describes the task of becoming a self (or spirit) as a pursuit of personal unity in the face of various existential dissonances. But these existential dissonances occur at several different levels. For one thing, the human herself is not automatically or originally a unified self—she is, as we have seen, a body-soul/spirit synthesis. This complex human creature must strive toward personal unity by properly relating these aspects of herself. Personal dissonance, rooted first and foremost in various kinds of *mis*relations of the body, soul, and spirit, corresponds with the potential dissonances or misrelations of the possible and the necessary, the infinite and the finite, the ideal and the real. Various temptations related to these pairs of existential poles constantly challenge or distract from the task of personal unity.

Furthermore, many of the attempts to surmount the dissonances between these various poles actually betray misrelations within the human being: Speculative philosophy grasps at the ideal and the infinite while forgetting the real and the finite, thus signaling a failure to remember embodiment. Animal sensuousness seeks the immediate union of ideality and reality *without* the essentially human activity of reflection; in rejecting the psychical, the sensate person paradoxically fails to attain existential concreteness and hovers perpetually in a state of aesthetic abstraction. We will look more carefully at Kierkegaard's examples of these sorts of existential failures in following chapters. For now, let it suffice to say that in such cases, the human being truncates her existence.

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[22]Cf. Michael Plekon, "'Anthropological Contemplation': Kierkegaard and Modern Social Theory," *Thought: Fordham University Quarterly* 55 (1980): 346–69, 350.

Both reflective abstraction and immediate sensuousness amount to denials of one or more aspects of the human synthesis. Neither the animal unity of immediacy nor the intellectual unity of reflection does justice to the human's unique status as a synthesis of body and soul qualified as spirit. Thus, the pursuit of personal unity must encompass the human synthesis in its entirety. The human's variety of powers and functions tend toward dispersal and fragmentation—a person can become what Climacus describes as a "many-sided person"—but the key to attaining personal unity is not to pursue an "energetic one-sidedness"; rather, the existing person must strive toward carefully balanced integration and harmonization of the whole person.[23]

And yet, there is an additional dissonance that powerfully determines Kierkegaard's anthropology, and rules out the reduction of the task of becoming a self to an immanent balancing act between reflection and immediacy. The incommensurability between the eternal and the temporal, though similar in many ways to the tensions signaled by the infinity of freedom and imagination in relation to the limitations of temporal embodiment, carries an additional set of provocations. In the *Postscript*, Climacus challenges the speculative anthropology of the Danish Hegelians specifically on the issue of the relation of the "pneumatic" (the spirit) to the "psychical-somatic."[24] Here, Climacus insists that the individual spirit must not be imagined as simply continuous with the body-soul realm of sociality, causality, and explanation. Spirit is from and for the individual, and to say otherwise is an "ethical abomination": when the "scientific-scholarly" treats spirit "world-historically" (a phrase which I take here to refer to a empirical or speculative approach rather than an existential and religious one) it displaces ethics and confuses "the bewildering, bellowing demands of the times with the eternal demands of the conscience upon the individual. . . . and ethically understood it is every individual's task to become a

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[23]*SKS* 7, 319–20 / *CUP*, 348–9.

[24]*SKS* 7, 317 / *CUP*, 346.

whole human being."[25] Thus, we can see two interrelated levels at which the individual must strive to become a whole human being: First, there is the psychical-somatic—the soul-body—which, though qualified as and synthesized in spirit, belongs to bare temporality and causality (and it is here that the work of reflection and immediacy must both be posited in a holistic manner). But secondly, this synthesis of body and soul in the spirit immediately implies a prior relation of temporality to the eternal. This brings us to the next point: spirit's work is not merely disruptive in a generative manner. It is also constitutive of a distinctively human form of life that has historical coherence and endurance.

2.1.2 Spirit as Historical Endurance

For Kierkegaard, the notion of becoming a self, or spirit, is equated with becoming fully human. Indeed, he asserts that the "soulish-bodily synthesis in every human is planned with a view toward being spirit"—the goal of human life, a goal built fundamentally into the most basic synthesis of body and soul, is to attain spiritual selfhood. And yet, despite the fact that the soul-body synthesis is "planned" and directed toward spirit, that attainment of spiritual selfhood cannot occur through a series of quantitative accretions. As Climacus argues, the individual-pneumatic does not simply burst forth eventually from a causal chain within the psychical-somatic realm. Rather, the self is only posited through a qualitative leap—the transition from the animal-like state of dreaming immediacy to the actualization of the spirit. Furthermore, the quest is not completed in a single moment of transition; rather, the quest consists in the *repetition* of the contingent κίνησις of freedom, through each new qualitative leap from possibility to actuality. Thus, the truly human, for Kierkegaard, is a matter of becoming qualified as spirit, which occurs in and through the ongoing exercise of freedom.

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[25] *SKS* 7, 316 / *CUP*, 345–6.

And yet, if the spirit constantly disturbs the body-soul into these qualitative leaps—which by definition are not determined by the past or related to the future through the laws of causality—how can a full-fledged personal human being, an existing body-soul/spirit, have any coherence, such that the spirit has its life in the body-soul and becomes truly and continuously involved with temporal existence? Is the self-as-spirit something that flickers fitfully in and out of time and nature, emerging occasionally from the body-soul—a kind of punctual achievement rather than a substantially continuous reality? There are several ways to approach this problem, but the strategies Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms employ are fundamentally tied to the decisive difference between historical actuality and the abstract representation of bare time. While speculative thought or representation may be able to grasp a causal chain of natural necessity within its logic, such speculations cannot lay hold of the actual. The complex synthesis of the human being exists at the intersection of temporality and eternity—she has a *history*.

As early as Kierkegaard's dissertation, *The Concept of Irony*, we can see the prioritization of *historical* actuality as something intimately related with the self and the existential task: "actuality (the historical actuality) relates itself in a two-fold way to the subject: partly as a gift which will not admit of being rejected, and partly as a task to be realized."[26] This formulation effectively guards against Fichte's unmoored self-creating self, and resists to an extent a bluntly Platonist notion of a full-blown Ideal soul finding various imperfect degrees of expression in the material world. Rather, historical actuality refers to the dynamic process of becoming conscious of having already been given the gift of existence and the increasing awareness of the (ultimately religious) task of real-izing the self. Historical actuality further names the context for various existential tensions—necessity-possibility, finitude-infinity, temporality-eternity; or, perhaps better, historical actuality consists of the human's experience (precisely as a body-soul/spirit

[26]*SKS* 1, 327 / *CI*, 293. Cf. Frits de Lange, "Becoming One Self: A Critical Retrieval of 'Choice Biography'," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 1 (2007): 272–93, 288ff.

synthesis) of those existential tensions. Importantly, this means that history is, at least in some sense, a fundamentally spiritual notion for Kierkegaard—for apart from the spirit's awakening, there simply is no history.

Historical endurance, then, truly subsists in the distinctively human existence as body-soul/spirit in dynamic relation to the eternal. Eternity, as Haufniensis argues in *Concept of Anxiety*, is what lets mere time become something more than representation's infinitely vanishing present, incapable of finding any foothold between the past or the present.[27] The synthesis of the temporal and the eternal is thus not "another synthesis" but is "the expression for the first synthesis" (the human synthesis of body-soul/spirit), and "as soon as the spirit is posited, the moment is present."[28] Haufniensis recognizes that momentary nature of human spiritual existence might seem to come off rather badly in comparison with nature's seemingly solid endurance through in time:

> [O]ne may rightly say reproachfully of man that he lives only in the moment, because that comes to pass by an arbitrary abstraction. Nature does not lie in the moment. It is with temporality as it is with sensuousness, for temporality seems still more imperfect and the moment still more insignificant than nature's apparently secure endurance in time. However, the contrary is the case. Nature's security has its source in the fact that time has no significance at all for nature. Only with the moment does history begin. . . . The moment is that ambiguity in which time and eternity touch each other, and with this the concept of *temporality* is posited, whereby time constantly intersects eternity and eternity constantly pervades time. As a result, the above-mentioned division acquires its significance: the present time, the past time, the future time.[29]

Perhaps it is better to think of spirit not so much as a source of the self's endurance in time, but rather as the fundamental condition for the individual's experience of time *as* history. For, as Haufniensis notes, plants or animals do not have a history at all. Only humans, by virtue of their spiritual relation to the eternal which gives

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[27] *SKS* 4, 388–9 / *CA*, 85–6.

[28] *SKS* 4, 392 / *CA*, 88.

[29] *SKS* 4, 392 / *CA*, 88–9.

rise to their freedom over against the world of natural determinism, can experience temporality in terms of genuine responsibility to God and one another (rather than the fated unfolding of plant life).

The vital question raised here is exactly *how* the spirit awakens, how human existence enters into historical actuality, if, as Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms make abundantly clear, spirit cannot emerge naturally from the body-soul synthesis.[30] Certainly Kierkegaard takes great care to describe the body-soul as being structured and planned with a view toward being spirit; and he seeks to keep the spirit's life deeply related to temporality, especially here in *Concept of Anxiety* through Haufniensis' notion of history and the idea that the spirit sustains the body-soul synthesis in a positive third. But the overall thrust of Kierkegaard's approach is to insist that spirit simply cannot be explained or caused by (and certainly not arise from) the body-soul's immanent workings. In several of Kierkegaard's works, he makes it clear that the spirit only awakens in *the moment* (*Øieblikket*, literally, "the blink or glance of an eye")—when the eternal addresses a temporal creature. In a very real sense, then, the fact that human existence is geared toward and can become spiritual and historical has everything to do with his theological account of the eternal, and the way that eternity intersects with and even permeates the temporal in the moment.[31] This is not yet the place for a full explication of the significance of the moment for Kierkegaard's anthropology, but I hope to signal to the reader its unique importance and thus the priority of the existential dissonance of eternity-temporality in the development of the human self.

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[30]This signals a disagreement Kierkegaard has with the Hegelians. Whereas Hegel supposes that immediacy (the somewhat static and harmonious synthesis of body-soul in all animal life) is already in a state of dialectical tension which must necessarily give way to self-consciousness and eventually to freedom, Kierkegaard argues that immediacy is a stable, sufficient state—the dreaming spirit does not simply awaken without some sort of prodding from beyond. See *SKS* 4, 343 / *CA*, 37; cf. Sylvia Walsh, *Living Poetically: Kierkegaard's Existential Aesthetics* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 153–4 .

[31]For an insightful discussion of *Øieblikket* that clarifies the non-synthesis of temporality-eternity, see David J. Kangas, *Kierkegaard's Instant: On Beginnings* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 185–8.

Let me briefly sum up what has been said so far about the structure of the human being. The human is a complex synthesis of body and soul qualified as and constituted by spirit. The spirit is not merely the name of a negative unity but a positive third—and the complex human synthesis is unstable because of the restlessness of the spirit. One might say that the entire synthesis leans toward freedom and possibility—and ultimately, eternity—but always in keeping with the limits of creaturely finitude. This is why Kierkegaard can say that human existence is both a gift and a task.[32] Spirit precludes the human being from an unreflective animal immediacy. But the synthesis also can attain a kind of coherence—historical endurance—precisely because of the spirit's synthesizing activity through the awakening relation with the eternal. For Haufniensis, humans have historical actuality—not the precarious Humean coincidence of events, nor the rigid determinism of nature's causal chains in Kant's empirical realm. In other words, history is neither fate nor arbitrary randomness, but the uniquely human experience of an existence at the intersection of time and eternity. Precisely at this intersection, Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms employ the concept of "the moment."

2.2 The Dialectical Emergence of the Spirit

In this section, I examine three sets of existential dissonances through which spirit emerges or awakens: reality-ideality, necessity-possibility, and temporality-eternity.[33]

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[32]Evans, *Kierkegaard*, 50–2.

[33]This is not to say that these are the only kinds of existential dissonance that are anthropologically significant in Kierkegaard's work, but I believe they offer a sufficiently comprehensive (rather than exhaustive) overview. John Elrod has identified five tensions through which or in which the spirit develops: in addition to the three I treat, he includes finitude-infinitude and body-soul. See Elrod, "The Self in Kierkegaard's Pseudonyms." However, I find Elrod's categorizing to be somewhat problematic for a couple of reasons. First, as he readily admits, some of the five existential dissonances deal with "essentially the same phenomena" (227); and yet, he is so eager to take various thematic resonances from throughout Kierkegaard's authorship and force them into his own preconceived, highly structured ontological anthropology that he ends up unnecessarily multiplying discrete yet highly redundant "stages" in the self's development. Second, despite acknowledging Kierkegaard's insistence that spirit does not emerge immanently from body-soul, finitude-infinitude, or necessity-possibility, Elrod seeks to describe the spirit's development exclusively within these terms, with the eternity-temporality dissonance remaining as a fundamentally analagous

Through these dissonances, the human being moves from dreaming spirit, refracts into a reflective/imaginative consciousness, and moves ultimately toward freedom. In what follows, I treat each existential dissonance in turn: In the tension of reality-ideality, the previously latent or "dreaming" spirit awakens, becoming qualified as consciousness. In the tension of necessity-possibility, the spirit-as-conscious now progresses toward freedom, exceeding mere animal life or the static confines of abstractive logic. The final tension of temporality-eternity, though similar to the first two, actually turns out to be unique in a couple of important ways: *First*, it proves to be the fundamental tension that both establishes the spirit and makes possible the experience of consciousness and freedom.

(though admittedly especially important) dissonance. Arnold Come calls out Elrod on this mistake in Arnold B. Come, *Kierkegaard as Humanist: Discovering My Self* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 470ff. Exactly why Elrod's approach is a problem should become clear in the course of the following chapters, but we can locate and concisely describe the problem by pointing out that Elrod equates the eternal with the human spirit, and describes the spirit as that which introduces the eternal into the body-soul synthesis, thus bringing about the moment and establishing the self's endurance through time (237–8). There is a sense in which this is accurate, but Elrod basically flips Kierkegaard's (or Haufniensis') formula: it is not the spirit that posits the eternal, but the eternal that posits the spirit. Ultimately, the spirit can only function as disruptive restlessness or historical endurance because of the fact that the eternal presses upon temporality and awakens or even draws forth the spirit; without the prior action of the eternal, there would be no spirit. Human life would never move beyond immediacy into the spiritual life of consciousness, self-consciousness, and freedom. As a result of this basic reversal, Elrod's version of Kierkegaard's anthropology constantly veers away from the deeply theological implications of Kierkegaard's anthropology, and instead describes Kierkegaard's ontology of the self almost purely in terms of immanent, natural development. This problematic interpretive tendency reaches its full ramifications in John W. Elrod, *Being and Existence in Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Works* (Princeton University Press, 1975). Even in the later sections of this book, in which he affirms the way in which the sin-consciousness and encountering the Deity in time in Religiousness B forms a kind of breach within the immanent processes of the self within the self, such transcendence only functions as a kind of heuristic device, something the self posits in order to move beyond the existential impasse of Religiousness A. Elrod's reasons for taking this approach become clear at the end of his study, when he posits the human spirit and the divine as mutually establishing, finding their fulfillment and reality only in and through one another (258). When Elrod says that "Kierkegaard's Christology is not a compartmentalized subject matter for a special intellectual discipline but . . . part of a total definition of the self" (256), he really means that any theological notions of Christ, the eternal, or the transcendent are decisively "sublimated" within a "Christian Philosophy of Spirit" in which divine spirit and human spirit are revealed to be expressions of the same ontological process, becoming realized in the "existential synthesis achieved in faith" (258). I find this approach to be patently incorrect and extremely unhelpful in the long run; not only does it obfuscate what I take to be the vital core of Kierkegaard's theology—the persistent otherness of the eternal, transcendent God—but it frankly sounds much more like the early Schelling and H. L. Martensen than Kierkegaard, both thinkers with whom Kierkegaard took serious exception on these very issues. Just how un-Kierkegaardian Elrod's "Christian Philosophy of Spirit" is should become more obvious in my next chapter, in which I contextualize Kierkegaard's polemically developed anthropology.

Indeed, the intersection of temporality and eternity (in what Kierkegaard calls the *Moment*) is the setting for the distinctively human task of becoming a self–a task both ethical and religious. *Second*, temporality and eternity are fundamentally heterogenous, whereas reality-ideality and necessity-possibility are secondary tensions posited originally by temporality's encounter with the eternal. While the secondary tensions of reality-ideality and necessity-possibility admit of degrees of existential harmonization through spirit-qualified existence, the primary tension of temporality-eternity persistently resists both harmony and stability. This, as we shall see, has profound ramifications for Kierkegaard's anthropology, especially regarding the ultimate status of spirit vis-á-vis the body-soul synthesis.

2.2.1 Reality-Ideality: Dreaming Spirit Awakens

The reality-ideality tension relates with Kierkegaard's understanding of immediacy and reflection. Immediacy names the purely unreflective aspects of human existence—raw sensory experience, cognition, and perception apart from the activity of reflection.[34] Thus, immediacy maps onto reality, specifically reality as experienced by the body-soul prior to the spirit's restless disturbance. The disturbance at this early stage of the self's development takes the form of an inquiry about truth. Whereas pure immediacy does not distinguish between true and false, possible and impossible,[35] reflection's inquiry into truth brings the mind into a "relation with something else" and annuls immediacy.[36]

> But how, then, is immediacy canceled? By mediacy, which cancels immediacy by *pre*-supposing it. What, then, is immediacy? It is reality itself. What is mediacy? It is the word. How does the one cancel the other? By giving expression to it, for that which is given expression is always *presupposed*. Immediacy is reality; language is ideality.[37]

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[34] *SKS* 15, 54ff / *DODE*, 166ff.

[35] *SKS* 15, 55 / *DODE*, 168: "In immediacy, the most false and the most true are equally true; in immediacy, the most possible and the most impossible are equally actual."

[36] *SKS* 15, 54 / *DODE*, 167.

[37] *SKS* 15, 55 / *DODE*, 167–8.

In reflecting upon reality, the human mind transmutes it into ideality. Revealing a Kantian leaning (contra the broadly Hegelian confidence that reason can mediate the differences between the thing and the human knowledge of the thing, between epistemology and ontology), Kierkegaard sharply delineates between the word or the concept and the thing itself; reality underlies concepts and language but remains decisively inaccessible to them.[38] Yet, despite reflection's annulment of immediacy, it is not simply synonymous with consciousness for Kierkegaard. In *De Omnibus Dubitandem Est*, Climacus notes that "reflection is the possibility of relationship" between the ideal and the real; reflection is an activity whereby the self comes to see the difference between the real and the ideal—or more specifically, to posit the real and the ideal *as* different. This happens because of reflection's dual forms: finite reflection and infinite reflection. In *Either/Or* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard unveils how reflection in one sense remains bound to the real, attending to the factical and the sensual through the conditions of immediacy.[39] But reflection is not simply limited by the concrete facts of existence—it is capable of infinitely projecting possibilities and even moving into fantastical imaginations, far beyond the pale of any meaningful connection with reality.[40] These two aspects of reflection reveal the need to establish an actual, existential relation between reality and ideality—an existential relation that Kierkegaard in *De Omnibus Dubitandem Est* calls consciousness.

Perhaps nowhere in Kierkegaard's writings is the dialectical tension between finite and infinite reflection so dramatically set out as in *Either/Or*, where Kierkegaard juxtaposes reflection utterly enamored of immediacy and imagination (embodied by the Aesthete and the Seducer) on one hand and reflection that submits itself to the task of attaining actuality (in the form of Judge William's ethical decision). In both cases—

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[38]*SKS* 15, 54–7 /*DODE*, 166–70.

[39]See "The Shadowgraphs" and "The Rotation Method" in *EO1*.

[40]*SKS* 7, 118 /*CUP*, 123–4.

whether in the Aesthete's increasingly tortured self-consciousness as he attempts vainly to reenter a Don Juan-esque immediacy, or the Judge's brave but baseless confidence that he can attain a conscious transfigured union of ideality and reality (a kind of second immediacy) through the ethical decision, consciousness names a particular relation (or, more accurately, misrelation) between the ideal and the real, a relation located in the self. Significantly, Kierkegaard (through Judge William's critique of the Aesthete but also in *Concept of Anxiety* and *Sickness unto Death*) indicates a couple of dangers inherent within infinite reflection: the danger of infinite abstraction without any concern for attaining actuality, and the delusions of a romantic-poetical imaginativeness that seeks only poetical versions of actuality. The former might be exemplified by the speculator who perpetually lives outside the magnificent edifice of his own speculative system,[41] while the latter finds expression especially in the Aesthete's downward spiral throughout *Either/Or* I. Both of these tendencies display perverse forms of consciousness that reject or buck against the self's givenness and the limits of finite reality.[42]

To sum up, consciousness is self-consciousness for Kierkegaard. Reflection's inquiry into truth annuls immediacy and sublimates it into the ideal forms of thought and speech. Consciousness of the self as both embedded in reality and yet open to ideality leads directly to the idea that *how* the self will inhabit actuality is in fact the responsibility of the reflective self. Furthermore, consciousness names the self's awareness of itself as a synthetic relation between the ideal and the real—it's status as both gift (an immediate factual reality) and task (with various options opened up through reflection and imagination in constant interplay with the limits set by reality). Consciousness can thus be thought of as an initial moment in the self's awakening to itself, the transition from

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[41]SKS 11, 158–9 / *SUD*, 43–4: "A thinker erects a huge building, a system, a system embracing the whole of existence, world history, etc., and if his personal life is considered, to our amazement the appalling and ludicrous discovery is made that he himself does not personally live inside this huge, domed palace, but in a shed alongside it, or in a doghouse, or at best in the janitor's quarters."

[42]*SKS* 11, 150–1 / *SUD*, 35–7.

dreaming spirit to a self that is at least vaguely or imperfectly aware that existence is a task. And again, the spirit-as-conscious does not simply emerge from tensions within body-soul or reality-ideality—rather, it is the spirit's restlessness (described especially *De Omnibus Dubitandem Est* as an inquiry into the truth) that takes what would otherwise be a sufficient, static condition of body-soul coincidence and posits reality and ideality as opposed, and thus in need of union. Self-consciousness names the tensional *relation* in the self between the real and the ideal, and encompasses a vast range of ways of inhabiting this existential tension in actuality.

2.2.2 Necessity-Possibility: Freedom and the Task of Actuality

"Personhood," Anti-Climacus insists, "is a synthesis of possibility and necessity."[43] In some ways, we have already begun to touch upon this category—highlighting the fact that these sets of existential dissonances should not be thought of as discrete stages but as various dimensions or aspects of a related and sometimes overlapping set of dynamic processes in the spirit's development.[44] Even so, the existential dissonance of necessity-possibility is especially useful for understanding more fully what was already implied above by the self's consciousness of its own existence as a task. In this specifically

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[43] *SKS* 11, 155 / *SUD*, 40.

[44] Incidentally, Elrod's ontological treatment of Kierkegaard's anthropology strikes me as an especially egregious example of forcing Kierkegaard's anthropology into artificially discrete stages. I certainly agree with him that there is philosophical coherence in Kierkegaard's anthropology, but it is one thing to notice and attempt to draw out this coherence, and quite another to transmute such coherence into a step-by-step sequence of stages in the self's development. His imposition of a system smooths out and confuses what in Kierkegaard's writings is actually a highly textured collection of thematically related but subtly nuanced treatments of the same issues across various pseudonyms and genres. For example, Elrod insists that the consciousness developed in reality-ideality is a discrete stage that precedes the further emergence of freedom, giving the impression that Kierkegaard somewhere spells out this progressive development. However, his treatment of consciousness draws almost exclusively from *De Omnibus Dubitandem Est* while his treatment of freedom relies largely on *Concept of Anxiety* and *Sickness unto Death*, with smatterings of *Philosophical Fragments*. The effect is the nearly complete decontextualization of the arguments of each of these works and their reorganization within Elrod's own structure. While this kind of broad, thematic approach has its uses (I am in fact employing a version of it in this chapter), Elrod goes too far in applying his own structure, often warping the obvious rhetorical thrust of Kierkegaard's argument in his eagerness to build his own case. See John W. Elrod, "Feuerbach and Kierkegaard on the Self," *The Journal of Religion* 56 (1976): 348–65, 54ff. For a similar critique of Elrod's approach, see Come, *Kierkegaard as Humanist*, 471ff.

anthropological context, necessity names not so much ontological or logical necessity[45] as those aspects of existence that are limited or determined by natural, concrete facticity. In other words, necessity in this context should not be thought of in relation to either abstract logic or the ontological contingency of the world, but rather in relation to the idea that spatiotemporal, finite reality apparently progresses in accord with natural laws, with prior events or states of affairs determining that which follows. Anti-Climacus describes slavery to necessity as a death-knell for human selfhood:

> The determinist, the fatalist, is in despair and as one in despair has lost his self, because for him everything has become necessity. . . . Personhood is a synthesis of possibility and necessity. Its continued existence is like breathing (*re*spiration) which is an inhaling and exhaling. The self of the determinist cannot breath, for it is impossible to breath necessity exclusively, because that would utterly suffocate a person's self.[46]

Possibility is the antidote for the shackles of bare necessity. Spirit sets humans apart from plant or animal life, raising them above the mere unfolding of a predetermined sequence of states—a truly human life includes the genuine κίνησις of freedom. And yet, possibility no less than necessity poses a threat to genuine selfhood. Consider this description of the spirit's initial awakening to freedom in terms of anxiety in the face of possibility.

> Anxiety may be compared with dizziness. He whose eye happens to look down into the yawning abyss becomes dizzy. . . . Hence anxiety is the dizziness of freedom, which emerges when the spirit wants to post the synthesis and freedom looks down into its own possibility, laying hold of finiteness to support itself. Freedom succumbs in this dizziness.[47]

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[45]By "logical necessity" I mean those things which must be the case for abstract or theoretical thought, and by "ontological necessity" I mean the difference between the radical contingency of creaturely existence in contrast to something like divine aseity. For instance, Climacus notes that "Nothing whatever comes into existence by way of necessity, no more than necessity comes into existence or anything in coming into existence becomes the necessary. Nothing whatever exists because it is necessary, but the necessary exists because it is necessary or because the necessary is" (*SKS* 4, 275 / *PF*, 74–5).

[46]*SKS* 11, 155 / *SUD*, 40.

[47]*SKS* 4, 365–6 / *CA*, 61.

In the initial moments of the spirit's awakening—the self-consciousness described above—the individual apprehends at some level the way in which possibility might counter and even overcome necessity. But this apprehension of freedom is curved inward, seeing only "the selfish infinity of possibility," or the self's "possibility of every concretion."[48] The self, surveying the unbounded options open to it in possibility, becomes dizzy and anxious and immediately grasps finitude, and in that very moment, "everything is changed, and freedom, when it again rises, sees that it is guilty"—rather than embracing freedom's responsibility, the self has recoiled from the task in fear and anxiety.[49] From this point on, the human self's exercise of freedom remains fraught with dangers and difficulties on every side. Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms revel in recounting various temptations that attend freedom: to actualize corrupt or perverse forms of existence, or to become a fundamentally misaligned synthesis by drifting spiritlessly into necessity and finitude, speculatively or aesthetically playing with possibility, or demonically asserting oneself in sheer autonomy.

At this point, we need not embark upon a complete cataloguing of the forms of existential misrelation that can beset individuals. But it will be helpful to end this section by briefly examining two examples of freedom's failure to synthesize necessity and ideality, both taken from *Sickness unto Death*, in which Anti-Climacus analyzes various forms of existential misrelation under the rubric of despair and sin. The first misrelation I want to draw attention to is when the self forgets necessity. Imagine a self who, after the initial moments of grasping at finitude in existential panic, slowly overcomes its dizziness and begins to view possibility with fascination. Leaning again and again over the edge of the abyss of subjective possibility, this self begins to delight in possibility for possibility's sake—and becomes enamored with sheer possibility. As possibility looms larger, the self

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[48] *SKS* 4, 365 / *CA*, 61.

[49] *SKS* 4, 366 / *CA*, 61.

forgets not only necessity but also freedom's task—to take the time to enter actuality. This vital task the possibility-enamored self sets aside in favor of idle speculation and the hallucinations of an unrestrained imagination:

> Thus possibility seems greater and greater to the self. . . . Eventually everything seems possible, but this is exactly the point at which the abyss swallows up the self. It takes time for each little possibility to become actuality. Eventually, however, the time that should be used for actuality grows shorter and shorter; everything becomes more and more momentary. Possibility becomes more and more intensive—but in the sense of possibility, not in the sense of actuality, for the intensive in the sense of actuality means to actualize some of what is possible. The instant something appears to be possible, a new possibility appears, and finally these phantasmagoria follow one another in such rapid succession that it seems as if everything were possible, and this is exactly the final moment, the point at which the individual himself becomes a mirage.[50]

Significantly, the loss of the self is related not so much to a lack of actuality but rather an improper form of actuality due to a failure to attend to necessity. Contra those (broadly Hegelian) philosophers who "explain necessity as a unity of possibility and actuality," Anti-Climacus argues that "actuality is the unity of possibility and necessity."[51] The self's existential task is to achieve a certain kind of actuality, an actuality that properly synthesizes possibility and necessity, using freedom in a way that neither ignores facticity in the pursuit of possibility nor rejects possibility and settles spiritlessly into necessity. Implicit here is the notion that the self's task of achieving actuality must be conditioned by some sort of requirement. Judge William in *Either/Or*, Part II, places the accent on the choice itself, as if merely having chosen oneself at all is somehow constitutive of selfhood (though the Judge certainly posits some sort of ethical requirement); but Anti-Climacus implies that at the very least something about the self's sheer givenness carries normative force. Playing off the idea that possibility enables the self to reflect itself fantastically, Anti-Climacus employs the metaphor of a mirror:

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[50] *SKS* 11, 152 / *SUD*, 36.

[51] *SKS* 11, 152 / *SUD*, 36.

> Even in seeing one*self* in a mirror it is necessary to recognize oneself, for if one does not, one does not see one*self* but only a human being. The mirror of possibility is no ordinary mirror; it must be used with extreme caution, for, in the highest sense, this mirror does not tell the truth. That a self appears to be such and such in the possibility of itself is only a half-truth, for in the possibility of itself the self is still far from or is only half of itself. Therefore, the question is how the necessity of this particular self defines it more specifically.[52]

But beyond this seemingly immanent condition (which might seem to admit of reduction to something like Kantian autonomy), Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms consistently frame the self's task of becoming itself in actuality in terms of ethics and obedience, especially the unconditional requirement of the Unconditioned. I will fill out this ethical-theological aspect of Kierkegaard's vision of freedom's task in subsequent chapters—but for now I only want to suggest that Anti-Climacus's vision of freedom implies the task of actualizing the self by properly synthesizing possibility and necessity—and he insists on defining "properly" in terms of particular, divinely given requirements that find their sharpest expression in Christ himself.[53]

The second form of misrelation I want to discuss is freedom's ultimate inability to use possibility correctly, thereby sinking again and again into the mire of necessity. Anti-Climacus here introduces a distinction between counterfeit possibility rooted immanently in imagination or reflection and the true possibility offered by God and available only to one who has faith—one who is a "believer."[54] Dismissing those inauthentic versions of hope and despair that deal only with "at a certain time, at a particular moment of life," Anti-Climacus clarifies that he is not here concerned with a finite choice between this or that but with the larger question of whether human life is fundamentally determined (in that it is decisively bracketed by necessity) or ultimately open to possibility. Such a stark choice only appears in moments of existential crisis: the "critical decision does

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[52]*SKS* 11, 153 / *SUD*, 37.

[53]SKS 11, 240ff / *SUD*, 129ff.

[54]*SKS* 11, 154 / *SUD*, 39.

not come until a person is brought to his extremity, when, humanly speaking, there is no possibility."[55] In such cases, the "ingeniousness of the human imagination" in its ability to create merely relative or purely immanent possibility, simply will not do—in the suffocating grip of necessity, "only this helps: that for God everything is possible."[56] Beyond probabilistic calculations of what may or not be possible—the counterfeit trinkets of possibility that freedom all too often remains content to distract itself with, a "*believer* sees and understands his downfall, humanly speaking (in what has happened to him, or in what he has ventured), but he believes."[57]

In both misrelations described above—the loss of necessity through ignoring the given self in its finite facticity, and the insufficiency of humanly available possibility—Anti-Climacus presses his readers toward the idea that the self, in order to become a self, must be "before God."[58] Self-knowledge for Kierkegaard is never a purely immanent or philosophical category. It immediately touches upon distinctively theological notions: to become conscious of oneself against the backdrop of reality-ideality and to actualize oneself through positing a relation of necessity-possibility, the self *must* become conscious of God—the one who as Creator establishes the self in all its finite givenness and the one who is also the God with whom all things are possible. Necessity and possibility, reality and ideality, must be synthesized before God—otherwise the self will veer into any number of existential misrelations that jeopardize the spirit, reducing it finally to "unreal" status.[59]

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[55] *SKS* 11, 153 / *SUD*, 38.

[56] *SKS* 11, 154 / *SUD*, 39.

[57] *SKS* 11, 154 / *SUD*, 39.

[58] *SKS* 11, 151, 161, 193 / *SUD*, 35, 46, 79ff.

[59] *SKS* 11, 152 / *SUD*, 36.

2.2.3 Temporality-Eternity

This leads us naturally to our final existential dissonance of temporality-eternity. Here, the theological dimensions that often remained implicit in previous sections come to the foreground. Although reality-ideality and necessity-possibility sometimes seemed to be analyzable into immanent dialectical tensions within the human being that gave rise to consciousness and freedom, Kierkegaard's many and varied discussions of temporality-eternity reveal decisively the priority of the eternal in establishing the human being as a dynamic synthesis with an existential task. What then, is the role of this fundamental existential dissonance for Kierkegaard's anthropology, and how does it relate to the picture of the human being that we have been developing throughout this chapter—the body-soul/spirit synthesis with the existential task of becoming a self?

This is hardly the place for a comprehensive treatment of the eternal or eternity in relation to temporality in Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms, but I believe we can get at the heart of its anthropological significance through three basic statements: First, the eternal most properly refers to the utterly unconditioned, transcendent divine—the infinitely qualitatively different. Second, there is a sense in which the human self is also eternal; however, whatever the significance of this notion it must not be conceived in a way that undermines or overcomes the persistent interval between the eternal in the sense described above and the human creature. Third and finally, the uniquely asymmetrical tension present in eternity-temporality "generates" all of the anthropologically significant existential dissonances in Kierkegaard's work: it undergirds both the givenness of reality and necessity as well as the responsibility implicit in ideality and possibility—in other words, it establishes human consciousness and freedom. And furthermore, the eternal establishes humanity's conscious experience of temporality as a coherent history textured by the κίνησις of freedom. In short, the eternal both grants the human self (establishing the human animal as a latent or dreaming spirit) and generates the conditions and context—consciousness, freedom, and historical endurance—for the task of becoming a self.

Perhaps the best way to support these three statements is to see each of them displayed in a single context, *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*.[60] In these discourses Kierkegaard is particularly concerned with anthropology; here, the didactic and philosophically dense anthropological vision from *Concept of Anxiety* finds expression in a theological and even pastoral voice.[61] In Part One's "On the Occasion of a Confession," Kierkegaard discusses the unparalleled significance of the eternal for the human being. The differences between this discussion and his descriptions of reality-ideality or necessity-possibility are striking. Whereas Kierkegaard describes the latter two as dialectical tensions which each individual must synthesize in actuality—balancing each pole, as it were, rather than remaining animally bound to the real and the necessary or floating away into unbounded

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[60]Despite the fact that there are three distinct parts and several discourses in this volume, they comprise an internally coherent whole: the ethical-ironic stance of Part One and the humorous tone (or "jesting earnestness") of Part Two clearly support the essentially and directly Christian discourses of Part Three. See *JP* 5 5974 / *Pap*. VIII[1] A 15.

[61]It should be noted that Kierkegaard draws a firm distinction between a Christian discourse and a sermon—only the latter participates in the dogmatic authority of the apostolic or the scriptural, whereas Christian discourses may properly include or revolve around the experience of doubt. Kierkegaard comments in his journals that the first two parts of *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits* operate within the *confinia* between the aesthetic and ethical (the ethical-ironic in Part One) and the ethical and religious (the humorous in Part Two) (*SKS* 7, 455 / *CUP* 501–2; see also *JP* 5, 5974 / *Pap*. VIII[1] A 15: all quotes in this footnote are taken from this journal entry). The humorous plays a significant role for Kierkegaard. In this case the humor refers to the fact that the lilies and birds function as teachers for human beings about *how properly to exist as a human being*. This is humorous because a learner-teacher relationship usually involves a learner adopting the teacher as his "more ideal *genus proximum*"; but in this case, the bird and the lily are not even of the same genus—they are "related inversely" to the human being in "qualitative heterogeneity." Thus, the discourse's upbuilding occurs within the context of "jesting earnestness," with manifestly subhuman teachers illuminating the ideally human in a way that gently humbles and instructs. The reader "will smile at many points but never laugh," for the humor serves genuinely and earnestly the goal of upbuilding. The ethical-ironic can be thought of as a mode of irony that points toward and perhaps prepares the way for faith. Unlike nihilistic irony that submits entirely to spiritlessness's deterministic fate or romantic irony that flies away into imaginative ideality, ethical irony incorporates and reconfigures the insights of nihilism and romanticism in service of the ethical task of actualizing the self—the self that ought to be. Within the "religiousness of immanence," the ethical-ironic speaks to "that single individual" (*hiin Enkelte*) not by differentiating her from the crowd but through "completely abolish[ing] the differences as illusion and establish[ing] the essential equality of eternity." In other words, the ethical-ironic seeks to put the individual directly in the presence of the eternal—that essential ingredient in truly becoming a self. And yet, the ethical-ironic is not itself the proper relation to the eternal. It does not comprise faith but it points the way. For a helpful look at the function and role of Socrates and the Socratic in Kierkegaard's authorship, see Mary-Jane Rubenstein, "Kierkegaard's Socrates: A Venture in Evolutionary Theory," *Modern Theology* 17 (2001): 441–73.

ideality or possibility—he describes the eternal as having permanent priority over the temporal. The eternal is always the unconditioned, the temporal the conditioned.

Framing the Christian enactment of penitential confession as a way for humans caught in temporality to make time for eternity, Kierkegaard begins by establishing the utter asymmetry of time and eternity.[62] Indeed, the relation between time and eternity is so utterly lopsided that it is only by divine grace and patience that temporality can have any relation at all to eternity without suffering immediate annihilation. Meditating on "Solomon's" assertion in Ecclesiastes that "everything has its time," Kierkegaard runs through the litany of joys and cares that characterize all human life, with each occurring in its own time.[63] Yet, totaling up everything for which there is "a time" fails to encapsulate the fullness of human life:

> Is the story finished here? Has everything been heard that can be said about what it means to be a human being and about human life in time? Surely the most important and the most crucial thing has been left out, because discourse about the natural changes of human life over the years as well as about what happens externally is not essentially different from discourse about plant or animal life.[64]

Turning to death as the final moment, the final "change" in an existence utterly characterized by change, Kierkegaard humorously envisions asking a flower the same question at the end of its life, after all the things for which there is a time have come and gone: "Is there nothing more to tell?" He imagines the flower answering in the negative:

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[62]Kierkegaard's designation of confession as a kind of pinnacle, paradoxically speaking, of human existence is not unique to this passage—for it is here that humans are freely and consciously "before God," mindful of eternity and turned away from sin and the cares of temporality, silent and still rather than moving restlessly from one thing to another. See *SKS* 5, 364 / *EUD*, 380; *WA*, 140–1.

[63]*SKS* 8, 124 *UDVS*, 8; cf. Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

[64]*SKS* 8, 125 / *UDVS*, 9. Significantly, this passage evokes and even mirrors the anthropological discussion in *Concept of Anxiety* when Kierkegaard identifies humanity's experience of historical freedom as that which sets them apart from plant or animal life: all of human time intersects with and is permeated by the eternal, and thus qualifies as history rather than the successive unfolding of predetermined states. See *SKS* 4, 329 / *CA*, 21.

> "No, when the flower is dead, the story is finished"—otherwise, of course, the story would have had to be a different story from the beginning and in the development and would not have become different only at the end. Suppose that the flower ended its reply in another way and added, "The story is not finished, because when I am dead I become immortal"—would this not be strange talk? . . . the immortality would have to have been present every moment of its life. And the talk about its life would in turn have to have been entirely different in order to express the difference of immortality from everything changeable and from the diversity of the corruptible. Immortality could not be a final change that intervened, if one wants to put it that way, in death as the concluding age; on the contrary, it is a changelessness that is not changed with the change of the years.[65]

The difference of immortality, Kierkegaard continues, is really the difference of eternity. Yes, for humans (as for plants and animals) there is a time for everything—but "[God] has also put eternity into the heart of human beings"[66] Eternity establishes the essential uniqueness of human life, pressing upon human life in such a way that every detail must be viewed in relation to eternity which fundamentally permeates it, to the extent that no aspect of human existence can be understood or discussed properly apart from eternity: "If, then, there is something eternal in a human being, this must be able to be . . . claimed throughout every change."[67] Indeed, unlike those joys and cares which each have their time, the presence of eternity in the human heart means that "there is something that should always have its time, something that a person should always do."[68] And even this is not phrased strongly enough, for the eternal is not an "associate" of any aspect of natural time-bound life; rather, it is "the dominant, which does not want to have its time but wants to make time *its own*."[69]

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[65] *SKS* 8, 126 *UDVS*, 10–11.

[66] *SKS* 8, 126 / *UDVS*, 11; Kierkegaard is referring to Ecclesiastes 3:11.

[67] *SKS* 8, 126 / *UDVS*, 11.

[68] *SKS* 8, 126 / *UDVS*, 11.

[69] *SKS* 8, 126 / *UDVS*, 11, emphasis in original.

Already, several anthropologically significant statements have been set forth. First, the eternal God addresses each person inwardly, and this is what essentially differentiates humans from all other creatures. The internal address of the eternal establishes the human being as spirit—a dreaming spirit that needs to be awakened to its freedom so as to embark upon the task of becoming a full-fledged self, but spirit nonetheless. God is eternal, and because he "puts eternity into the heart of human beings," humans can also be described as having an eternal aspect, in a sense that remains strictly demarcated from God's eternity. When Kierkegaard says that there is "something eternal in a human being"[70] or that "spirit is eternal,"[71] he is not talking about some sort of gnostic spark that forms the essential component within the human being. Rather, the eternal within the human being should be understood quite literally as the eternal's address of the soul-body animal, an inward presence that constitutes the human animal as spirit.

Thus, the soul-body is planned with a view toward being spirit, and the human's preconscious status as dreaming or latent spirit refers not so much to a component of the human animal as to a receptivity to the eternal. It is in the *moment* when the eternal intersects with this time-bound creature that it becomes qualified as spirit—conscious and free. Kierkegaard confirms this in the discourse "How Glorious It Is to Be a Human Being." Noting the peculiarly human difficulty associated with Christ's command to become like the birds and lilies who do not worry about tomorrow, Kierkegaard asks

> Why does the bird not have worry about making a living? . . . because there is nothing eternal in the bird. But is this indeed a perfection! On the other hand, how does the possibility of worry about making a living arise—because the eternal and the temporal touch each other in a consciousness or, more correctly, because the human being has consciousness. . . . when eternity came into existence for him, so also did tomorrow.[72]

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[70] *SKS* 8, 126 / *UDVS*, 11.

[71] *SKS* 4, 393 / *CA*, 90.

[72] *SKS* 8, 292 / *UDVS*, 195.

Furthermore, while it may be helpful to discuss consciousness in terms of reality-ideality, it is not quite right to say that consciousness emerges from that existential dissonance. Rather, while reality-ideality is experienced as dissonance and tension by the human consciousness, it is really the intersection of the eternal and the temporal within the human being that qualifies her as conscious:

> the human being is consciousness, he is the place where the eternal and the temporal continually touch each other, where the eternal is refracted in the temporal. Time can seem long to the human being because he has the eternal in his consciousness and measures the moments with it . . . This is why the human being has a dangerous enemy that the bird does not know—time, an enemy, yes, an enemy or a friend whose pursuits and whose association he cannot avoid because he has the eternal in his consciousness.[73]

Kierkegaard also shows that freedom does not simply spring from the tension of necessity-possibility; rather, the particular existential dissonance of necessity-possibility arises only *for* the human who possess freedom, but freedom itself is a function of the presence of the eternal. In *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, the eternal signifies a requirement, something that a human being must *do*—and this is not a relative requirement for which there is "a time" but a requirement that applies at all times. The relation between eternity's requirement and freedom (and also, therefore, sin) will receive additional explication in the next two chapters of this dissertation, but for now it is enough to note that the eternal imparts to human existence a kind of freedom-in-responsibility: human's can only have genuine freedom (beyond the kinds of relative choices or powers of self-determination that even animals possess) in the presence of a transcendent requirement that calls forth obedience. Only in and through obedience to the eternal God can the human self become itself: "what is obedience except this: to let God rule; and what other connection and harmony are possible between the temporal and

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[73] *SKS* 8, 292 / *UDVS*, 195. Cf. *SKS* 4, 388 / *CA*, 85: "If time is correctly defined as an infinite succession, it most likely is also defined as the present, the past, and the future. this distinction, however, is incorrect if it is considered to be implicit in time itself, because the distinction appears only through the relation of time to eternity and through the reflection of eternity in time."

the eternal than this—that God rules and to let God rule!"[74] Indeed, all human activities *must* include eternity if they are to qualify as properly human. Leave out the eternal—and consciousness, freedom, reflection, and deliberation are rendered empty concepts:

> [T]he person who does not continually have the conception of eternity as the other magnitude in the deliberating deliberates upon nothing—he cannot even deliberate. To deliberate on something temporal versus something else temporal when the eternal is left out is not deliberating. This is being fooled; this is wasting one's time and forfeiting eternal happiness by being fooled with life's childish tricks and games. . . . The basic meaning of human deliberating is to weigh the temporal against the eternal; in all other human deliberating this basic meaning must be present. Otherwise, despite all the busyness and pompous importance, the deliberating is baseless and meaningless.[75]

Before ending this chapter, I should mention one final aspect of Kierkegaard's anthropology in relation to the eternal. While Kierkegaard sometimes seems to "explain" various phenomena of human existence through appealing to the category of the eternal, he is careful to avoid drawing the eternal into a larger explanatory framework or system that encompasses human existence. In *Concept of Anxiety* Haufniensis asserts that "Every science lies either in a logical immanence or in an immanence within a transcendence that it is unable to explain."[76] Anthropology is the latter sort of science, and the transcendence that it presupposes is the eternal. Consequently, the eternal must never be thought of as something to be grasped but rather as something to obey. Kierkegaard's anthropology is existential in its focus precisely because of the heterogeneity of the eternal, which implacably requires of existing humans that they inhabit time in a particular way:

> Christianity has been shoved back into the esthetic (something the superorthodox unwittingly are especially successful in doing), where the incomprehensible is the relatively incomprehensible (relative either with regard to its not yet having been understood or to the need for a seer with an eagle eye to understand it), which in time has its explanation in something higher behind itself, rather

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[74] *SKS* 8, 355–6 / *UDVS*, 257.

[75] *SKS* 8, 402 / *UDVS*, 309.

[76] *SKS* 4, 355 / *CA*, 50.

> than in Christianity's being an existence-communication that makes existing paradoxical, which is why it remains the paradox as long as there is existing and only eternity has the explanation. But therefore it is not meritorious, as long as one is in time, to want to dabble in explanation, that is, to fancy that one is in eternity. As long as one is in time, the qualitative dialectic charges every attempt of that sort with being illegitimate dabbling. The qualitative dialectic continually enjoins that one is not to flirt *in abstracto* with that which is the highest and then want to dabble in it, but one is to comprehend one's essential task *in concreto* and essentially express it."[77]

Paralleling his insistence that the eternal cannot be drawn within an explanatory framework, Kierkegaard also warns that the eternal must not be envisioned as a possession of human subjectivity, a property of the self. Lest anyone suppose that the eternal is some sort of subjective projection (like immanent possibility or ideality), Kierkegaard reminds us in "Sufferings Educate for Eternity" that we are obediently to become

> receptive soil in which the eternal can take root. You cannot take the eternal, you can only appropriate it; but you cannot appropriate what belongs to you, only what belongs to another; and this in turn you cannot legitimately appropriate if he is unwilling to give it to you. . . . In relation to God and the eternal the appropriation is obedience.[78]

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Having established a basic understanding of what Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms mean by body, soul, and spirit, as well as having gained some insight into how Kierkegaard's tripartite anthropology functions, we must move into a more in-depth discussion of Kierkegaard's understanding of freedom, the ethical shape of the task of becoming a self, and the problem of sin. For if we hope to move beyond the basic anthropological structure and uncover the significance of Kierkegaard's claim that the human synthesis is designed with a view toward "being spirit," we must develop a much more robust sense of how these basic definitions cash out in existence. A vital step in this direction

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[77] *SKS* 7, 511–2 / *CUP*, 562–3.

[78] *SKS* 8, 357 / *UDVS*, 259.

involves getting a clearer sense of *why* Kierkegaard chooses to develop his anthropology in relation to the issues of freedom, sin, and ethics. The theoretical anthropology outlined above—wherein the ontological structure of body, soul, and spirit produces and inhabits productive existential tensions and reveals the task of freely becoming a self—may provide general outline of Kierkegaard's anthropological thought, but it is not immediately clear what Kierkegaard believed was at stake in his anthropological formulations. Nor does it explain why one of his most anthropologically-focused works, *Concept of Anxiety*, revolves around the issues of freedom, ethics, and sin. In order to answer these questions am going to take a brief detour through Kant and Schelling, demonstrating that Kierkegaard developed his early anthropological thought through polemical engagement with an existing discourse. And, as noted in chapter one, if we hope to gain an accurate accounting of the significance of the late discourses' explicitly Christological visions of human existence, we must be able to see their continuity with Kierkegaard's early, polemically-conditioned anthropology. Thus, the next chapter's work of contextualization both deepens the general anthropology outlined in this chapter, and contributes to setting the stage for seeing the Christological nature of Kierkegaard's anthropology.

CHAPTER THREE

The Context: Freedom, Ethics, and Evil

Kierkegaard's anthropology can be contextualized fruitfully in a variety of ways. Take *Concept of Anxiety*, which we examined cursorily in chapter two: due to its status as an especially detailed expression of Kierkegaard's anthropology, as well as a philosophically-dense and polemically engaged work, I contend that if we situate its argument in relation to certain anthropological discourses of the day, we not only get a better sense of the pseudonymous Vigilius Haufnienesis' project in that particular work but also a richer, more contextualized view of Kierkegaard's overall anthropology. Put simply, concerns and categories that figure prominently in *Concept of Anxiety* continued to characterize Kierkegaard's anthropology to the very latest stages of his authorship.

A few obvious interactions with Hegel (or a version of Hegelianism that Kierkegaard found especially noxious) make it tempting to frame the argument in *Concept of Anxiety* according to the old "Kierkegaard versus Hegel" narrative, but such an approach cannot account for why Kierkegaard's Haufniensis focuses on the issues of freedom, evil, and ethics.[1] A few explicit references to Schelling, along with vague references to "men of the

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[1] I refer here to the familiar Kierkegaard-Hegel opposition so prominently espoused in older research (for example, see Niels Thulstrup, *Kierkegaards Forhold til Hegel* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1967)). While this opposition is basically accurate as far as it goes, the narrative tends toward oversimplification, which has led in many cases to a decontextualized Kierkegaard, a Kierkegaard who, given his supposed stance as a stark counterpoint to the tendencies of idealist thought (with Hegel standing in as the culminating representative of idealism), can be read in relative isolation from that complex background. According to this account, Kierkegaard can be read in terms of a relatively straightforward opposition between two monolithic philosophical options, with Hegel's speculative, objective idealism on one side and Kierkegaard's idiosyncratic post-idealist project of existential-ethical subjectivity on the other. In recent decades, this picture has been dramatically complicated and enriched. Kierkegaard's target was not simply Hegel (or even Kierkegaard's version of Hegel), but certain key figures amongst the Danish Hegelians, a group that included several of Kierkegaard's teachers and classmates. These contemporaries include, most notably, J. L. Heiberg and H. L. Martensen. See Jon Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered* (Cambridge University Press, 2003); 45–69, 123ff, 345; George Pattison, "Johan Ludvig Heiberg: Kierkegaard's Use of Heiberg as Literary Critic," in *Kierkegaard and His Danish Contemporaries, Tome III: Literature, Drama and Aesthetics*, ed. Jon Stewart, vol. 7, Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources (Farnham: Ashgate,

Schelling school," indicate at least the peripheral importance of Schelling's philosophy to Haufniensis' project.[2] But relying solely on these obvious interactions with Schelling fails to draw out the full significance of Kierkegaard's project in *Concept of Anxiety*.

2009), 169–88, Henning Fenger, *Kierkegaard, the Myths and Their Origins: Studies in the Kierkegaardian Papers and Letters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 15–8, 135–49; Curtis L. Thompson, "Hans Lassen Martensen: A Speculative Theologian Determining the Agenda of the Day," in *Kierkegaard and His Danish Contemporaries, Tome II: Theology*, ed. Jon Stewart, vol. 7, Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 229–66. Furthermore, Hegel no longer occupies a privileged position as the undisputed culmination of idealist thought: as Kierkegaard himself recognized, thinkers such as Schelling and Schopenhauer offered lively and compelling critiques of Hegelianism while remaining continuous with core tenets of Kantian and idealist thought. Kierkegaard himself commented: "The view that Hegel is a parenthesis in Schelling seems to be taking hold more and more; one is merely waiting for the parenthesis to be closed" (*SKS* 19, KJN3: Not5:18). Indeed, Schelling has now been recognized as a significant source of Kierkegaard's critique of Hegelianism (see, for example, Lore Hühn and Philipp Schwab, "Kierkegaard and German Idealism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Kierkegaard*, ed. John Lippitt and George Pattison (Oxford University Press, 2013), 62–93, 70). We also know that Kierkegaard read and resonated with Schopenhauer's pessimistic turn—although, despite this tentative approval, Kierkegaard does voice serious reservations about the misrelation between Schopenhauer's personal character and the content of his arguments (see Johannes Sløk, *Livets Elendighed: Kierkegaard og Schopenhauer* (Denmark: Centrum, 1997); Lore Hühn, ed., *Schopenhauer–Kierkegaard*, Kierkegaard Studies Monograph Series (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011); David E. Cartwright, *Schopenhauer: A Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 534). The elder Fichte's ethics and anthropology have likewise been recognized as deeply significant in the development of Kierkegaard's thought: while Kierkegaard's emphasis in *The Sickness unto Death* on the self as established by God can be read as a denunciation of Fichte's early understanding of the self-establishing I=I, it is just as clear that Kierkegaard's emphasis on the priority of ethics and earnestness (or seriousness) are prefigured in Fichte's later nuancing of his early formulations (Michelle Kosch, "Kierkegaard's Ethicist: Fichte's Role in Kierkegaard's Construction of the Ethical Standpoint," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 88 (2006): 261–95). In short, Kierkegaard simply cannot be thought of merely as an external critic of idealism, nor even as a straightforward alternative to a final form of idealism represented in Hegel. Rather, Kierkegaard is best understood as deeply involved—even immersed—in debates internal to idealism (and by extension, Romanticism). While maintaining that there certainly remains critical distance between Kierkegaard and the various kinds of idealism represented by the evolving views of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel (and their followers in nineteenth-century Copenhagen), we must also see that Kierkegaard's project is in many ways a part of that discourse, and that his critical work simultaneously involves a creative appropriation. Thus, my provision of a framework for situating Kierkegaard vis-à-vis his philosophical context, without the over-reliance on the Kierkegaard-Hegel opposition, which in the long run fails to provide sufficient traction for my critical reconstruction of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology.

[2]SKS 4, 363 / *CA*, 59. In a draft for *Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard identifies these Schellingean philosophers as Franz Schubert (1797–1828), whose song cycles *Wintereisse* and *Die schöne Müllerin* reflect Ballanche's social-philosophical musings on Original Sin; Adam Karl August von Eschenmayer (1768–1852), a medical doctor who extended Schellings philosophical anthropology in a distinctively mystical direction and became an exorcist; Johann Joseph von Görres (1776–1852), a Catholic mystic; and Henrik Steffens (1773–1845), a Norwegian-born Danish philosopher who attempted to provide a more scientifically compelling ground for Schelling's highly speculative natural philosophy. Each of these thinkers attempted to explain sin's cosmological effects using ideas drawn from Schelling. An early but flawed treatment of the significance of Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift* for *Concept of Anxiety* can be found in Michael Theunissen, "Schellings anthropologischer Ansatz," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 47 (1965): 174–89.

I contend that a robust understanding of what Kierkegaard thought to be at stake in his development of a distinctive anthropology, as well as clues as to why his argument revolves around the central issues of freedom and evil, requires a sense of how Kierkegaard's anthropology (especially in *Concept of Anxiety*) engages in a running debate internal to idealism, namely: a particular line of post-Kantian inquiry into the Kantian dilemma of human freedom in a world of natural causality.[3] The varied attempts to harmonize the libertarian freedom of the noumenal self with the determinism of the empirical world of spatiotemporality came to a head in relation to ethics, and more specifically with the intuition that ethics requires the preservation not only of the imputability of good acts but also culpability for evil acts—something that every permutation of Kantian autonomism finds exceedingly problematic.

In short, Kierkegaard's anthropology is especially concerned with two issues that exercised Kant and his successors, including Schelling: securing a kind freedom capable of supporting ethics (i.e., unconditioned and thus culpable for both good and evil); and imagining how this unconditioned freedom could get traction in the conditioned world of natural causality without dissolving into natural causality. The following brief overview of the history of this problematic illuminates the kind of concerns and categories that shaped and determined Kierkegaard's anthropology.

For our present purposes, we need not get mired in debates about the proper interpretation of Kant's complex writings on freedom and ethics; rather, we need only outline the state of the discourse about freedom and ethics that arose in response to Kant's

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[3]My purpose is not to provide a comparative study of Kierkegaard and idealism—that kind of work has been and continues to be accomplished with extraordinary thoroughness elsewhere. For a helpful introduction to this topic, see Hühn and Schwab, "Kierkegaard and German Idealism." Nor can I offer a comprehensive account of the relation between Kierkegaard and particular philosophical contemporaries or influences. Again, excellent work has been dedicated in recent years to unearthing Kierkegaard's relations to Schelling, Fichte, Schopenhauer, Martensen, Heiberg, and so forth. The rather limited goal in this section is simply to fill out the basic vocabulary and conceptual framework for understanding Kierkegaard's anthropology that I introduced in chapter two. These preliminary philosophical-anthropological considerations and contextualizations clarify what is at stake for Kierkegaard in offering up his own account of the human person.

writings in the years immediately preceding Kierkegaard's authorship. Kant's proponents and critics alike saw competing trajectories in his understanding of freedom and reason. And while some saw this as an invitation to systematize Kant's inchoate philosophy, others rejected his project as fundamentally unsound—and more importantly, as ethically repugnant (for reasons that I explain below). Fascinatingly, Schelling represents both ends of this spectrum of responses. His early *System of Transcendental Philosophy* can be read as an attempt to systematize and complete Kant's union of the freedom of the noumenal self and the causal determinism of the empirical self by prioritizing practical reason and the attendant notion of the autonomous self—that is, the configuration of the self's freedom in terms of rational self-determination in accord with the self-imposed law of practical reason. But Schelling eventually abandoned this trajectory, and sought to recover a different strand of Kant's philosophy—the early assertion of transcendental freedom's priority over reason or law. The 1809 *Philosophical Inquiry into the Nature of Human Freedom* represents the beginning of Schelling's lifelong attempt to provide an account of human freedom that makes ethics feasible—something he (and Kierkegaard) feared had been lost in Kant's drift toward autonomy.

In what follows, I first provide (in 3.1) a scant outline of Kant's evolving philosophy of freedom and reason, which culminated in the enthronement of practical reason and the accompanying turn to autonomy. I also highlight the largely ethical concerns voiced by Kant's contemporaries—especially the concern that Kant was unable to account for evil acts as the culpable acts of free, rational agents. I then examine (in 3.2) Schelling's early attempt to systematize Kant's union of freedom and reason under the rubric of autonomy, followed by a description of Schelling's eventual break with this position and his retrieval of an earlier Kantian account of freedom (and ethics) that Kant himself had all but abandoned. This will allow me to argue in the next chapter that the themes that emerge in this post-Kantian discourse form the backbone of Kierkegaard's anthropology—most prominently in *Concept of Anxiety*, but throughout his other writings as well. Dissatisfied with

Kantian autonomy and guardedly impressed by Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift*, Kierkegaard frames his own anthropology in terms of freedom and ethics against a backdrop largely developed in polemical engagement with the discourse outlined in this chapter.[4]

3.1 Kant: Toward Autonomy[5]

Immanuel Kant's theory of freedom in terms of the autonomous will—"the will's property of being a law to itself"[6]—finds its roots in his critical epistemology and his trajectory toward the prioritization of practical reason. In this section, I provide a brief overview of Kant's intellectual journey to autonomy, thereby highlighting how

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[4]I became convinced that Kant and Schelling are especially important discussion partners for contextualizing Kierkegaard's anthropology by two resources in particular: Michelle Kosch, *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling, and Kierkegaard* (Oxford University Press, 2006); and David A. Roberts, *Kierkegaard's Analysis of Radical Evil* (London: Continuum, 2006). These authors argue compellingly that Kierkegaard's primary polemical counterparts in his development of his notions of freedom and sin (which in turn, hang upon his Christology and form the core of his anthropology, as we will see in chapter four) were most notably Kant and Schelling, although Fichte looms large as well, according to Kosch, standing as the completion of Kantian ethics. In the course of my research, I found that contextualizing Kierkegaard's anthropology in relation to Kant and Schelling would be especially fruitful for reconstructing Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology, especially in terms of recognizing how the explicitly Christological statements of the late discourses were anticipated in earlier works. (As will become more clear in chapter four of this dissertation, Kierkegaard's anthropology is Christological in large part because Kierkegaard formulates freedom and sinfulness as implications of Christological dogma, proceeding directly from the historical reality of the God-man's atoning death on the cross, which implies that human are culpably sinful, and thus free.) I am deeply indebted to Kosch and Roberts for setting me on this course, and rely especially on Kosch's readings of Kant and Schelling in what follows. See also Roe Fremstedal, "Original Sin and Radical Evil: Kierkegaard and Kant," *Kantian Review* 17, no. 2 (2012): 197–225. For an excellent overview of the various sources of Kierkegaard's familiarity with Kant, see Ronald M. Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant: The Hidden Debt* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 2–31. For the same regarding Schelling, see Tonny Aagaard Olesen, "Kierkegaards Schelling: Eine historische Einführung," in *Kierkegaard und Schelling*, ed. Jochem Hennigfeld and Jon Stewart, vol. 8, Kierkegaard Studies Monograph Series (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 1–102.

[5]For the sake of simplicity, I offer here at the outset a brief explanatory note regarding references to Kant's writings: all citations of *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (*The Critique of Pure Reason*) follow the standard practice of citing the A/B editions of 1781 and 1787. Citations of other works refer to the standard German edition of Kant's works: Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Royal Prussian (later German) Academy of Sciences (Berlin: Georg Reimer/Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1900–). These citations are designated by "Ak" followed by the volume and the page number. The sources for English quotations for each work are indicated in footnotes (all of which use a paginating that is keyed to the Ak or A/B editions).

[6]Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge University Press, 1998), Ak 4: 447.

he developed the notion of the human self as the central locus of not only the *problem* of the incommensurability of thought and existence, but also the *solution* to that incommensurability.

Kant's never-to-be-completed *Opus postumum* proceeds in repeating fragments, due largely to its aging author's greatly weakened mental abilities. Unable to write more than a few words or sentences before losing his train of thought, Kant repeated key phrases in a perpetual loop, betraying his futile attempts to pick up the elusive strands of his arguments. One of these repeating phrases encapsulates the anthropological center of Kant's project: "The self is the connecting link between the two worlds."[7] This was Kant's final, incomplete attempt to resolve the ontological and epistemological interval between the intelligible and the sensible realms through the notion of the combining self, the rational subject conditioned by the empirical world.

The phrase "two worlds" indicates a fundamentally Platonic element of Kant's philosophy, the distinction between the thing-in-itself and appearance, between the noumenal world and the empirical, sensible world of spatiotemporality. Put briefly, Kant's distinction between the noumenal thing-in-itself and the sensible objects of experience is rooted in his insistence that there is a distinction between the *manner* of a thing's givenness and *what* is given. The knower's *a priori* structures of spatiotemporality receive material content, but matter does not simply exist "in" space or time as such. Therefore, the *Ding an sich* is never directly available to the human knower's understanding.

This results in an apparently indissoluble gap between *what* is given and the *way* in which this *what* is present to the consciousness. For the active, knowing self, experience and understanding have entirely to do with the mode of a thing's presence to the consciousness, while the noumenal substrate of experience remains radically unknowable. Kant's critical epistemology thus seems to press toward an ultimate ontological

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[7]Translated in Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, ed. David S. Pacini (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 52.

framework: while the knower's intellectual reach seems totalizing in its activity, the fact remains that the self is always already *acted upon*, for the self can only be a self in combining what is given to it. And this *passio* of the active, knowing self indicates an ontological framework within which Kant's epistemology must find its home.[8]

The ghostly ontological givenness that apparently precedes and engenders the self's activity became programmatic for Kant's anthropology, and for the anthropologies of his successors and critics. Following Kant's lead, the calling of humanity came to be seen in terms of the union or transfiguration of the two realms, with the coherent integration of the self anchoring this vocation. Those who came after took up the task of systematizing and clarifying Kant specifically at this juncture: how to imagine and articulate the ultimate commensurability of personal freedom (the active, cognizing self) and ontological givenness (the passive receptivity that seems necessarily to precede activity) in such a way that avoids or overcomes the facile prioritization of one side over the other. In nearly every case, the working assumption was that the self is somehow at the center of this Kantian problematic: because the theory of the active self implies the "two worlds," it seems that the real union of these worlds ought to happen in or through the self's activity.

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[8]It was precisely this aspect of Kant's philosophy—the preservation of what often sounded like a distinct realm of things-in-themselves that "act" upon the mind and thus initiate the mind's re-presentation of noumenal matter into the *a priori* spatiotemporal structures of empirical experience—that many of Kant's successors found most problematic. Clearly, the thing-in-itself *functions* as a kind of limiting concept, a heuristic device that disciplines Kant's epistemology. But is this *all* that it is? Is the givenness that seems to precede and condition human experience really indicative of another "world" which, although it exceeds our knowledge and experience, remains required as a kind of ontological substrate that explains our ways of knowing and experiencing? The status of the thing-in-itself in Kantian philosophy thus became a source of ongoing controversy. Jacobi bluntly asserted that Kant's philosophy falls prey to sheer contradiction inasmuch as it posits a *Ding an sich* that "causes" the representing activity of the human mind—an activity which was supposed to originate the realm within which causality exclusively pertains in the first place. Jacobi thus offers a dichotomizing critique of Kant: "I cannot get inside the system without this assumption [of the *Ding an sich*], and with this assumption I cannot stay in it." He further argued that, in order to become consistent, Kant would have to drop the thing-in-itself entirely and embrace a subjective monism (which Jacobi identified as a kind of nihilism), or else fall into the deterministic naturalism of Spinoza. Jacobi's own alternative was a kind of philosophy of immediacy, in which a person could only begin with the presupposition of the already-thereness of God, the other, and external material reality, such that *Glaube* precedes and founds reason. See Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Werke: Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Klaus Hammacher and Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Meiner / Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann Holzboog, 1998–), vol. 2.1, 109.

But this—the return to the self—is precisely what Kant's critical philosophy, with its description of the self in terms of active knowing, seems to rule out. Kant's construal of cognition and understanding apparently requires the two-worlds ontological framework described above; but if we understand the self strictly as the combiner of what is given to it (through the activity of the collective representing faculties), and if we operate within the bounds of reason imposed by the Kantian distinction between representation and the thing-in-itself, it becomes very difficult to imagine how the self is supposed to function as the "connecting link." The self's unifying vocation appears to rule out imagining the self as an exclusive member of just one of the worlds; but, as natural as it might seem, a concept of the self as a relation between the two worlds is simply unavailable within Kant's account of the self as active combiner, according to which the concepts of the understanding are incapable of getting "beyond" the realm of representation. Kant's epistemology sits very uneasily alongside the ontology it implies.[9]

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[9]An initial attempt to solve this dilemma can be seen in Kant's description of freedom as the *destination* of reason. See the 1793 essay "Welches sind die wirklichen Fortschritte, die die Metaphysik seit Leibnizens ind Wolf's Zeiten in Deutschland gemacht hat?" Ak 20:311; English translation: Immanuel Kant, "What Real Progress Has Metaphysics Made in Germany since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?" In *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, ed. Henry Allison and Peter Heath, trans. Peter Heath, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant (Cambridge University Press, [1793/1804] 2002), 337–424. In the second *Critique*, we find freedom described as the "keystone" to the vault of reason: "The concept of freedom, insofar as its reality is proved by an apodictic law of practical reason, constitutes the *keystone* of the whole structure of a system of pure reason" (Ak 5:3–4). See also Gary Dorrien, *Kantian Reason and Hegelian Spirit: The Idealistic Logic of Modern Theology* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 541ff; and Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 52ff. On this reading of Kant, the critique of theoretical reason structures reason itself as a kind of paradoxical vault that seems both to demand and problematize an ontology that includes the intelligible and the sensible. The self understood as the receptive/active combiner within this framework cannot derive the reality of freedom from mere theoretical discourse. However, the structure of our cognitive faculties as described by Kant seems to press toward an awareness of freedom. Kant thus argues that practical reason and the demands of the moral law function as the source of postulates for theoretical reason (even if these postulates are not available to theoretical reason), and thereby cements the unity of Reason itself in and through practical reason—and the categorical imperative, as the law of practical reason (Ak 5:120; 8:146n). Within this permutation of Kant's "system," freedom (no less than space and time) seems to be an *a priori* principle that generates laws and determines actions for the sake of this law (See Ak 5:4; 20:311; cf. ibid., 58). The freedom of the rational subject serves as the connecting point for the intelligible and the sensible (which we identified as the goal and task of humanity according to Kant's later formulations)—for freedom is a kind of causality which, while it belongs to the intelligible world, has effects on the sensible. Kant already hinted at this unique placement of freedom in Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), A 446/B 474. For a fuller account of the emergence of freedom as a key for the vault of reason, see Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 57–61. Unfortunately,

This problematic motivates Kant's trajectory toward the primacy of the categorical imperative as the supreme principle of reason—not only of practical reason but of a unified Reason that encompasses the theoretical and practical.[10] Kant wanted a way to avoid the mere incommensurability of the noumenal self's freedom according to intelligibility and the empirical self's determination according to the laws of nature.[11] Evidently, he thought of this problem in primarily ethical terms. So long as freedom and law are thought of as merely incommensurable—with the freedom of the noumenal self on one hand and the laws of nature conditioning and determining of the actions of the self in the empirical realm on the other—ethics seems impossible. For how can actions in the world, which must be viewed as linked causally to prior *empirical* states, *simultaneously* be judged as imputable actions proceeding with absolute spontaneity from a transcendentally free agent? The best case scenario seems to be an utter disconnect between the *form* of the laws of reason and the material *content* of concrete activities that proceed from that law,

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prioritizing freedom as the keystone to the vault of reason fails to solve the original problem—indeed, in the second *Critique*, Kant simply reiterates the simple bifurcation of both reality and the human according to the distinction between the noumenal self and the empirical self: "The union of causality as freedom with causality as the mechanism of nature, the first being given through the moral law and the latter through natural law, and both as related to the same subject, man, is impossible unless man is conceived by pure consciousness as a being in itself in relation to the former, but by empirical reason as appearance in relation to the latter." See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: Garland, 1976), Ak 5: 6n.

[10]See Onora O'Neill, *Constructions of Reason* (Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Jens Timmermann, "The Unity of Reason: Kantian Perspectives," in *Spheres of Reason*, ed. S. Robertson (Oxford University Press, 2009), 183–98. Because of this, Kant believes the heuristic suppositions of God, freedom, and the immortality of the soul available through practical reason can then function as elements within theoretical reason, despite the fact that such notions are unavailable to theoretical reason alone.

[11]This touches upon one of the key aspects of an ongoing debate within Kant studies, namely, the question of whether Kant intended merely a two-aspect approach to resolving the antinomies (such that the problem simply disappeared into two non-overlapping and therefore fundamentally non-contradictory discourses), or whether he had in mind a kind of two-worlds ontology, as I suggest above, requiring some sort of substantial reconciliation. Various interpreters seem especially concerned about the possibility that Kant's approach suggests not only that we understand the self as both free and determined through positing two aspects, but also that it implies two distinct selves. See Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Paul Guyer's incisive review of this work, Paul Guyer, "Review of *Kant's Theory of Reason*," *The Journal of Philosophy* 89 (1992): 99–110. Cf. Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

resulting in an ethics that could only have within its purview something like "inner" dispositions or intent, without having any traction whatsoever to adjudicate between the "outward" concrete productions of these inner realities.

Kant attempts to redress this utter incommensurability by bringing freedom into a mutually constitutive relation with the *moral* law of practical reason—or more precisely, in his concept of the autonomous self. However, the turn to autonomy involved a subtle but devastating transformation of Kant's notion of freedom. Before turning to Schelling, I will describe two kinds of freedom discussed by Kant (transcendental freedom and practical freedom), which in turn illuminates Kant's eventual conclusion that freedom consists in auto-nomism: "the will's property of being a law to itself."[12]

In the first *Critique*, Kant describes *transcendental* freedom as "a causality through which something takes place, the cause of which is not itself determined, in accordance with necessary laws, by another cause antecedent to it, that is to say, an *absolute spontaneity* of the cause, whereby a series of appearances, which proceeds in accordance with laws of nature, begins *of itself*."[13] Kant clearly understands this kind of freedom as a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for an action being imputable to an agent: "The transcendental idea [of freedom] stands only for the absolute spontaneity of an action, as the proper ground of its imputability."[14] His reasoning here is straightforward enough; an action can only be imputable to an agent if that agent is the causal source, and could have acted differently than she in fact did.

This of course gives rise to the problematic or antinomy of spontaneity/causality (and ultimately freedom/determinism), and sets the stage for Kant's resolution through transcendental idealism. At this early stage, Kant suggests that transcendental freedom is

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[12]Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak 4: 447.

[13]Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 446/B 474.

[14]ibid., A 448/B 476.

the only kind of freedom at issue in the antinomy: *practical* freedom does not necessarily pose the same problem. Put briefly, freedom in the practical sense is merely the ability to choose from amongst options in a way that legislates between immediate inclinations and future aims or goods:

> Freedom in the practical sense is the will's independence of coercion through sensuous impulses. For a will is sensuous, in so far as it is *pathologically affected*, i.e., by sensuous motives; it is *animal* (*arbitrium brutum*) if it can be pathologically necessitated. The human will is certainly an *arbitrium sensitive*, not, however, *brutum* but *liberum*. For sensibility does not necessitate its action. There is in man a power of self-determination, independently of any coercion through sensuous impulses.[15]

However, Kant waffles on the precise relationship between transcendental and practical freedom. He explicitly states at one point that the denial of transcendental freedom involves "the elimination of all practical freedom,"[16] but argues shortly thereafter that a certain kind of practical freedom could be at home in natural, empirical determinism: "Whether reason is not, in the actions through which it prescribes laws, itself again determined by other influences, and whether that which, in relation to sensuous impulses, is entitled freedom, may not, in relation to higher and more remote operating causes, be nature again, is a question which in the practical field does not concern us."[17]

Not until the *Critique of Practical Reason* does Kant offer a clarification. Here he distinguishes between true practical freedom and merely comparative freedom by arguing that only agents who are free in the practical sense can be subject to *oughts* of some sort, in addition to having the ability to choose between available options according to some kind of criteria, whether arbitrary or natural.[18] Conversely, mere comparative freedom cannot make a being subject to moral law, for this kind of freedom signals simply the

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[15]Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 534 /B 562.

[16]ibid., A 534/B 562.

[17]ibid., A 803/B 831).

[18]Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Ak 5: 95, 97; cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 534/ B 562.

ability to decide between available options based on a comparison of immediate and future states of affairs. This is not (necessarily) freedom in the true sense, according to Kant's final view: it may be merely "nature again," fully explainable with reference to a complex web of empirical causality. Thus, for primarily ethical reasons—namely, preserving the imputability of our actions—Kant (at this stage in his career) construes practical reason in such a way that it *depends* upon transcendental freedom, i.e., the causal ultimacy of the agent apart from natural causes and states of affairs. Within Kant's notion of practical freedom, we additionally find what Michelle Kosch has helpfully described as "rational self-determination." An agent that is free in the sense that it is rationally self-determining is able to act according to laws of reason, *rather* than being bound entirely by the laws of nature.[19]

Significantly, a rationally self-determining agent can be thought of in two very different senses: in the first sense, freedom entails *behaving* according to the dictates of rationality, whereas in the second sense, freedom is a *capacity* to behave according to the dictates of rationality, *whether the agent does so or not*. This signals an important ethical problematic for Kant: having already set up freedom (specifically, practical freedom rooted in transcendental freedom) as the basic condition for the imputability of actions, the interpretation of rational self-determination in terms of *behavior* seems to indicate that freedom is expressed only in certain kinds of actions—namely, actions that proceed in accord with reason. This obviously introduces a difficulty for immoral activity: if an evil action is not rational, it is not free—and, consequently, neither is it imputable.

The dilemma comes out most clearly in Kant's development of freedom as autonomy, according to what has been called Kant's "reciprocity thesis."[20] Put simply, Kant's argument runs as follows: the will, as free, cannot be determined by laws of nature (for

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[19]Here again we see the decisive bifurcation of intelligibility and sensibility, reason and nature.

[20]Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, 201ff.

only the unconditioned quality of the will preserves the fundamental category of moral responsibility, which is what makes freedom such a significant category for Kant in the first place). However, given the fact that the will is a form of causality, it must be governed by some sort of law (for sheer arbitrariness cannot bear causal import, nor can qualify as relating intelligibly with anything else). If the law that governs free will cannot be imposed from *without*, it must be self-imposed.[21]

Unfortunately, the strategy of introducing autonomy still fails truly to address the ethical problematic that emerged from Kant's account of rational self-determination. By reintroducing a law—even a self-imposed law—that determines freedom (in a bid to reintegrate the absolute spontaneity of the active, noumenal self with the conditioned activities of the receptive, empirical self), Kant's formulation seems to defeat rather than secure his original conditions for imputability and moral responsibility. Namely, it fails to accommodate his earlier intuition that only the transcendental freedom of absolute

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[21] The clearest statement of Kant's argument for the will's autonomism can be found in *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, III: "Since the concept of a causality brings with it that of laws in accordance with which, by something that we call a cause, something else, namely an effect, must be posited, so freedom, although it is not a property of the will in accordance with natural laws, is not for that reason lawless but must instead be a causality in accordance with immutable laws but of a special kind; for otherwise a free will would be an absurdity. Natural necessity was a heteronomy of efficient causes, since every effect was possible only in accordance with the law that something else determines the efficient cause to causality; what, then, can freedom of the will be other than autonomy, that is, the will's property of being a law to itself?" (Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* Ak 4: 446–7). Kant had already made a nearly identical argument in the second *Critique*. After arguing in chapter four that the form of practical law is such that it requires rational agents (since these are the only kind of beings upon whom the formal condition of lawfulness could have any traction), and reiterating in chapter five the notion that a rational being with a free will must be free in the transcendental sense (for the reasons discussed above), Kant sets up the problem in chapter six: "Granted that a will is free, find the law which alone is competent to determine it necessarily" (Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Ak 5: 29). Concluding that only a legislative form of law can "constitute a determining ground of the will," Kant posits that "freedom and unconditional practical law reciprocally imply each other" (ibid., Ak 5: 29). Thus, Kant seems to argue that practical reason and freedom are mutually constitutive—and this explains why freedom, not theoretical reason, seems capable of functioning as the keystone of Kant's attempts to bring into balance the vault of reason, unifying the ontological framework of intelligibility and sensibility within his conception of the rational subject. Reason, formulated specifically as *practical* reason, immediately entails freedom, and the autonomous self is therefore constitutive of the unity of the intelligible and the sensible, the realm of freedom and the realm of spatiotemporal conditions. In short, the reconciliation of Kant's critical epistemology with the ontology it implies must be solved anthropologically—by viewing the reciprocity of law and freedom through the very constitution of the *autonomous* self.

spontaneity results in agents who *could* do good but might not (and might in fact do evil). For the early Kant, only this kind of freedom could produce agents who would be *responsible* for their actions in either case.[22]

An attempt to address this problem appears in Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), where he argues that freedom need only be understood as the capacity to *act* in accord with our practical reason. Even though we experience freedom as having the ability to choose between options, it is not necessary to posit a "neutral" capacity to sustain our intuitions about morality.[23] While various (and opposing) options presented by sensibility can be chosen by a rational agent, freedom is most fully realized when we adjudicate between the options presented by sensibility according to the self-imposed law of practical reason.

But this represents a significant retreat from Kant's earlier emphasis on the transcendental form of freedom. And at its core it relies on a simple reiteration of Kant's answer to the third antinomy in the first *Critique*: the apparently paradoxical simultaneity of a causality rooted in an agent's absolute spontaneity and empirical causality rooted in the laws of nature is not (and cannot be) a real contradiction, simply because the two realms are incommensurable. Thus, Kant fails to offer any real clarification of how both kinds of causality, natural and spontaneous, might actually coinhere in the unified life of a unified person. Indeed, the puzzle remains just as problematic as ever.[24]

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[22]One of Kant's earliest critics, Karl Leonhard Reinhold, argued this precise point. See Karl Leonhard Reinhold, "Erörterung des Begriffs von der Freiheit des Willens," in *Materialien zu Kants Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, ed. Rüdiger Bittner and Konrad Cramer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1975), 252–74, 255–6. Indeed, Reinhold goes so far as to say that according to Kantian autonomy, acting immorally is not only an inability (an observation that Kant himself agreed with in *Metaphysics of Morals*), but simply *impossible*. See Karl Leonhard Reinhold, "Einige Bemerkungen über die in der Einleitung zu den 'Metaphysischen Anfangsgrüunden der Rechtslehre' von I. Kant aufgestellten Begriffe von der Freiheit des Willens," in *Materialien zu Kants Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, ed. Rüdiger Bittner and Konrad Cramer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1975), 310–24, 323–4. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge University Press, 1996), Ak 6: 226.

[23]ibid., Ak 6: 226–7.

[24]Schopenhauer provides a kind of solution, one that Kant never seems to have seriously considered, by simply radicalizing Kant's suggestion that the empirical world is mere appearance. In effect, Schopenhauer demoted the realm of finite, embodied existence (including the distinctions of "good" and "evil") to mere

We can clarify the dilemma facing Kant by tracing his ambivalence regarding whether *freedom* or *the moral law* has logical priority. For while Kant is able to argue that these noumenal realities (pure freedom and the contentless form of law found in the categorical imperative) are beyond temporal causality, he clearly recognizes that he cannot simply do without "law" of any sort if he hopes to describe freedom in a way that can gain a satisfactory degree of traction on concrete reality. Occasionally, Kant appears to derive freedom (or at least, the possibility of freedom) from theoretical reason: in the first *Critique* and in *Groundwork* III, Kant suggests that transcendental freedom is implied by—and in fact, a precondition for—the active spontaneity of *theoretical* reason itself. A condition for the "pure self-activity" of theoretical reason includes the notion that it must issue from *rational* principles—which by definition cannot be conditioned by or reduced to the deterministic laws of nature: "[O]ne cannot possibly think of a reason that would consciously receive direction from any other quarter [than rational principles *not* causally dependent on prior conditions or events] with respect to its judgments, since the subject would then attribute the determination of his judgement not to his reason but to an impulse."[25]

Yet, this still fails to bridge the gap Kant himself posited between transcendental freedom and practical freedom: on Kant's account it seems entirely possible (and ethically problematic) to be absolutely spontaneous in a transcendental sense while remaining utterly conditioned by immediate sensuous desires in the empirical realm.[26] Here again, freedom (and, therefore, morality) seems to apply only to non-temporal, supra-sensible

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illusion and nothingness, a nihilistic cycle of suffering and death without ultimate moral significance. Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung – The World as Will and Representation, 2 vols.*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, 1969, [1819–44]), 164–5; cf. Christopher Janaway, *Self and World in Schopenhauer's Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 230ff.

[25]Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak 4: 448.

[26]For a helpful discussion of this issue, see Dieter Henrich, "Die Deduktion des Sittengesetzes," in *Denken im Schatten des Nihilismus*, ed. A. Schwan (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), 55–112.

aspects of an agent's actions, and ethics finds itself in the regrettable situation of having no definable traction in the realm of empirical, social, conditioned interactions. Kant clearly wants more than mere incommensurability.

Thus, Kant eventually prioritizes the moral law of practical reason as the original insight from which freedom can be posited. In this subtle shift in Kant's thinking, freedom is no longer an *a priori* supposition of theoretical reason that requires moral law as its only suitable counterpart. Rather, freedom is a kind of causality demanded by practical reason's immediate awareness of the moral law in the form of the categorical imperative. Prioritizing *law* within the "reciprocity thesis" that underlies the autonomous self, Kant secures a kind of commensurability between the noumenal and the empirical. The moral law as the principle of a unified notion of Reason provides a purely rational framework for both the causality of free will and the causality that determines the natural world, and thus relativizes merely natural causality within an ultimately transcendental framework of practical reason. But in doing so, Kant abandons his original impulse to posit the transcendental idea of freedom as the pre-rational capacity to choose good *or* evil. Along with the loss of the transcendental idea of freedom, ultimate culpability for good *and* evil—formerly the primary condition for ethics—fades entirely out of the picture.

3.2 Schelling: Pro and Contra Autonomy[27]

Schelling's first system (and, for that matter, Hegel's system, which can be thought of as essentially an expansion of the early Schelling) is a continuation of the particular trajectory in Kant's thought described above—the systematization of the reciprocity of freedom and law. But eventually, Schelling, and Kierkegaard after him, found the ethical and existential cost of such systematization to be far too high. In preparation for my

[27]Regarding references to Schelling's work, page numbers and volume information refer to F. W. J. Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, 14 vols., ed. K. F. A. Schelling (Stuttgart and Augsburg: Cotta, 1856–61). Footnotes simply take the form of the work's title, followed by *Werke* and numbers indicating volume and pagination. In initial references, I cite the English translations utilized, all of which are keyed to the pagination of the *Werke*.

examination in the next chapter of the shape of Kierkegaard's approach to this essentially Kantian problematic in *Concept of Anxiety*, I will offer a brief synopsis of Schelling's early systematization and later critique of Kantian autonomy—a critique that Kierkegaard leveraged heavily in his early accounts of human freedom and ethics.[28]

3.2.1 Schelling's Early Systematization

In contrast to Kant's strategy of interminably parsing and re-parsing ever-finer distinctions within his concept of freedom, the early Schelling plunged headlong into the awkward ethical implications of Kantian autonomy. Like Kant, Schelling early in his career began to see freedom as centrally important for the human's unifying role in the world: in freedom we find "a fulcrum on which reason can rest its lever, without therefore placing it in the present or in a future world but only in the *inner sense of freedom*, because it unites both worlds in itself."[29] Also like Kant, Schelling wrestled with two competing impulses inherent in the idealist framework regarding the status of freedom. His early systematization of Kant's philosophy relied heavily upon the notion of a "pre-established harmony" between freedom and nature, a harmony rooted in the eternal mutuality of the subjective freedom of the Absolute on one hand, and the objective determinations of history on the other. In his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), Schelling describes history as a drama, with each individual actor (as the *disjecti membra poëtae*, of the single, spiritual Absolute) participating in the subjective Absolute's own drive toward successive self-disclosure in objective history.[30]

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[28]For a brief overview of the evolution of Schelling's thought, see Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1993), 12ff.

[29] *Werke* 1: 401, quoted and translated in James Gutman, "Introduction," in *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1936), xi–Lii, xxxvii.

[30] *Werke* 3: 602; all English translations of this text are drawn from F. W. J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, trans. Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978).

Schelling's early understanding of human freedom emerges from within this dramatic notion of history. Taking up Kant's late idea of freedom as autonomous development in accord with one's own nature, Schelling explicitly connects freedom (i.e., the law of morality) and nature by positing a common *telos* that sublates both freedom and causality.[31] More specifically, Schelling's early systematization relies on a twofold softening of the sharp distinction between freedom and nature implied by Kant.

First, Schelling emphasizes the teleological aspect of natural causality, replacing Kant's strictly linear notion of a causal chain with a web of causality. Inspired by the phenomenon of electromagnetism, Schelling posits the idea of *Wechselwirkung*, reciprocal action, through which he imagines the natural world as constituted by *forces* and counter-forces in dynamic interaction, rather than mere *matter* existing in uni-directional relations of cause and effect. These tensions between natural forces are fruitful—the more these tensions are allowed to interact, the more fully their potentiality becomes actualized. Thus, nature has a kind of built-in *telos*, a natural tendency toward the full realization of nature's potency—with ramifications that range from mere matter and simple organisms, to the eventual production of self-conscious moral agents.

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[31] This impulse toward teleology is an expansion of certain themes in Kant's philosophy mentioned above, which play upon the apparent tensions between teleological and mechanistic causality. At an epistemic level, Kant prioritized mechanistic causality as absolutely essential to our *understanding* of the phenomenal world of experience; however, he posited that we can assume an open-ended teleology of sorts as a heuristic device, a regulative guide in our activity of experimentally systematizing our knowledge of the empirical realm. Here, mechanistic determinism *constitutes* our knowledge of phenomena, whereas the notion of teleology functions heuristically to *regulate* our empirical investigations, primarily by allowing us to imagine the natural world as a unified totality. However, at a metaphysical level, Kant reverses the priority of teleological and mechanistic causality. The epistemic approach tells us nothing about how to apply both models of causality to the same world, so Kant suggests that, at a metaphysical level, the overall purpose or *telos* of nature is the realization of human autonomy. Under the guidance of something very like divine providence, the mechanistic constitution of the laws of nature are subordinated to the furtherance of a specifically moral *telos*, the emergence of autonomous creatures. It is this latter, metaphysical aspect of Kant's thought that the early Schelling expands upon. For a helpful discussion, see Kosch, *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling, and Kierkegaard*, 73–4.

Second, in a move that is perhaps already implicit in his teleological reconfiguration of causality, Schelling softens Kant's original emphasis on transcendental freedom.[32] In short, Schelling imagines agents possessed of moral freedom as continuous with and analogous to natural organisms in general—both are expressions (albeit higher and lower manifestations) of the basic *telos* of natural forces. And nature, in turn, is itself understood as the dramatic unfolding of the Absolute in history. Freedom, in this system, is not qualitatively distinct from the laws of nature (again, understood in Schelling's expanded notion of *Wechselwirkung*), but is rather a quantitatively higher specification of the natural organism: humans are uniquely self-conscious and reflexive, and their rational activity thus acquires the peculiar aspect of freedom—which Schelling describes as an *appearance* that rests wholly upon the individuals empirically limited perspective within the interminable process of the Absolute manifesting itself in history, and the attendant (infinite) interval between conscious and unconscious activity.[33] The appearance of freedom is just that—mere appearance. Acting agents, suspended as finite, particular nodes of consciousness within the infinite process of the Absolute concretizing itself in history, are powerfully impressed by a sense of contingency, the sense that they could have done otherwise than they in fact do. But this appearance of freedom is rooted simply in the fact that their activities have causal ultimacy. Each person—*not as an individual, but as an empirical, finite manifestation of absolute subjectivity*—participates in the activity of the absolute: "The Absolute acts through each individual intelligence. That is, their action is *itself* absolute, and to that extent neither free nor unfree, but rather both together—*absolutely* free, and for this very reason also necessary."[34] Thus, what an agent experiences as an

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[32]See Joseph L. Esposito, *Schelling's Idealism and Philosophy of Nature* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1977), 56–68.

[33]Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, *Werke* 3: 601–2. Cf. Esposito, *Schelling's Idealism and Philosophy of Nature*, 63–4.

[34]Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, *Werke* 3: 602, from the unpublished system of 1804, *System der gesamten Philosophie und der Naturphilosophie insbesondere*, translated and quoted in Kosch,

arbitrary choice is actually the freedom of the Absolute expressed in natural causality, filtered through the self-conscious decisions of the agent.[35]

The ethical ramifications of this early systematization are obvious. Kant's law of the will's causality—the form of moral law—is no longer an "ought," but rather a straightforward "is." While it is possible to imagine a certain kind of contingency within this system, predicated on the imperfection and thus possible failure of certain kinds of organisms to act in accord with their nature, such failures cannot truly be conceived of as the rational, much less *free*, activity of a morally responsible agent.[36]

Rather than alleviating the tensions in Kant's philosophy, Schelling's early system simply clarifies the fact that Kant's system presses a choice between the laws of causality and the kind of freedom that Kant thinks can fund any sufficient account of ethics. In spite of Schelling's reconfiguration of natural causality (from a mechanistic chain to a force-counterforce web[37]), the sublation of freedom within nature results eventually in the eradication of freedom in any individual sense, the loss of the ethical subject, and the odd conception that morality consists not in the distinctively free and responsible task of becoming a certain kind of person, but in overcoming oneself as individual personality in a drive to become unified with the Absolute—to override myopic particularity by seeking consciousness of the self *as* Absolute. In a surprising twist, Kant's original impulse toward securing the kind of human self for whom ethics makes sense (through his notion

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Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling, and Kierkegaard, 80; all English translations are drawn from Kosch's partial translation of the work in Kosch, *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling, and Kierkegaard*.

[35]See also Schelling's unpublished 1804 *System* in *Werke* 6: 539–542, 551.

[36]The move away from the idea of consciously free empirical individuals toward the emphasis on a vague participation of individuals in the unconscious freedom of the Absolute, evidenced in Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism*, finds completion in his unpublished *System* of 1804. Here, Schelling claims outright that there is no individual who acts; rather, each individual is a conduit for the activity of divine substance: "In the soul as such there is no freedom; rather, only the divine is truly free, and the essence of the soul, insofar as it is divine. (But in this sense there is no individual)." See *Werke* 6: 541, translated and quoted in Kosch, *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling, and Kierkegaard*, 80. Any translations of this unpublished and as yet untranslated *System* from 1804 come from Kosch's extensive translation of the text in her book.

[37]Esposito, *Schelling's Idealism and Philosophy of Nature*, 63.

of a transcendentally free, responsible agent who could thus be considered culpable for his or her actions, whether good or evil) has gradually dissolved: freedom now seems indistinguishable from nature, and the corresponding vision of morality subsists not in free actions that in some sense transcend natural causality (whether conceived as a chain or web), but rather in passively inhabiting one's place within natural causality.

Especially important for our purposes is the status of evil implicit in such an account of freedom and morality. In keeping with Kant's eventual stance, the early Schelling realizes that only a purely negative conception of evil remains available to him. In the 1804 *System*, he includes several interlocking descriptions of moral evil. First, it is in some sense *inevitable*, simply one of a multitude of features of the finite, historical world which, when taken all together, constitute the ceaseless striving of the Absolute to manifest itself to itself. Second, evil is *privation*, but privation (which Schelling identifies with a thing's finitude in general) is never a feature of a thing in itself, but rather of a thing in relation or comparison to other things.[38] In other words, each thing, considered in itself, expresses the Absolute in some way; it is only within the human's imaginative activity of comparison that various things seem to embody the Absolute to greater or lesser degrees. Further, Schelling argues that the human mode of knowing particulars *through* universals (which he understands as conceptual categories of our own construction) is the source of our illusory perception of evil; the divine Absolute, knowing each particular as a particular without the need of universal categories or concepts, sees each thing as perfect in itself.[39] Thus, Schelling concludes (again, only in this never-to-be-published *System* of 1804) that there can be no "absolute ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) in the sense that can be thought of as an accomplishment or as a work of human freedom."[40] If anything, ethics

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[38] *Werke* 6: 524–4.

[39] *Werke* 6: 546–7.

[40] *Werke* 6: 560, translated and quoted in Kosch, *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling, and Kierkegaard*, 84.

consists not in *activity* (such as the active embrace of the morally good and eschewal of the morally evil), but in arriving at a particular kind of *consciousness* of one's role and place within the natural history of the Absolute.

Thus, in systematizing a certain strand of Kant's philosophical anthropology—i.e., teasing out the ethical and anthropological ramifications of the teleological ontology implied by Kant's union of law and freedom within his notion of the autonomous self—Schelling confirmed what Reinhold and other early critics of Kant already feared: the union of law and freedom could only lead to the utter relativization and eventual loss of the individual, freedom, and ethics under the overbearing weight of a supra-existent Absolute. Each of these categories (the individual, freedom, and ethics) seem to imply or require one another: ethics requires a certain kind of individual with a certain kind of freedom; freedom grants the kind of individual for whom ethical requirements make sense; and the individual only matters *qua* individual against the backdrop of freedom and ethics understood as somehow distinct from the determinism of nature and nature's laws.

3.2.2 Schelling's Later Critique

The fact that Schelling declined to publish his 1804 *System* hints at his dissatisfaction with the full ethical ramifications of Kantian autonomy. By 1809, the year of the publication of the *Freiheitsschrift*, Schelling had made a radical and decisive shift toward prioritizing the twin themes of the ethically-responsible individual and human freedom.[41] Rather than conflating moral responsibility with rational self-determination, Schelling here operates with the assumption that any philosophical system must grow out of the fundamental insight that humans are free, in a strong sense, to commit morally good *and* evil actions. And if an evil action is truly to count as a free, culpable *action*, evil

[41] F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*, trans. James Gutman (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1989 [1809]). All English translations of the *Freiheitsschrift* come from this edition, which utilizes the *Werke* pagination scheme. For the sake of simplicity, I hereafter refer to this work as the *Freiheitsschrift*, its usual designation in the literature on Schellling.

must be something more than a pure negative—it cannot be merely perspectival, a matter of degrees of goodness, or mere privation.[42]

The *Freiheitsschrift* can be thought of as the first of many attempts by Schelling to derive a philosophical system from the fundamental intuition that the individual is free and responsible for both good and evil (and, by implication, that evil is a positive reality, not merely privation or the absurd acquiescence of active reason to sensuousness). However, Schelling still had to come to terms with the central problematic that pushed Kant toward autonomy in the first place. On one hand, Schelling certainly wanted to rescue freedom from empirical determinism. Dissolution into determinism was the seemingly inevitable consequence of Kantian autonomy, even after Kant carefully distinguished between *Wille* (practical reason) and *Willkür* (rational self-determination),[43] or after Schelling appended numerous nuances to his accounts of causality. Freedom always turned out to be, in Kant's words, mere "nature again." But on the other hand, Schelling recognized, like Kant, that lawless, unconditioned arbitrariness could never count meaningfully as freedom—certainly not the kind of freedom that has any traction in a relational world of ethical responsibility.

Schelling's revised account of human freedom in the *Freiheitsschrift* is a retrieval of something implicit in an argument Kant had made in his *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. In the midst of a fairly standard account of moral evil as a disordering of

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[42]For an especially concise description of the distinctively theological dilemma presented by the necessity of positive evil for ethics, see Schelling, *Freiheitsschrift*, *Werke*, 7: 352–7. According to Schelling, Kantianism can only offer two equally problematic accounts of evil: evil is either 1) the overcoming of the intellectual by the sensible, in which case evil is mere passivity, or 2) an utterly unintelligible permissiveness of the intellectual in restraining its own activity and subordinating itself in relation to the sensible, which seems absurd and impossible. He clarifies: "According to current views the sole basis of evil lies in the world of the senses, and the good is derived from pure reason. Accordingly it is obvious that evil can have no freedom (since the inclinations of the senses are here sovereign) or—to speak more correctly—evil is completely lost sight of. For the feebleness and inefficacy of the reasonable principle can indeed be a basis for the lack of good and virtuous actions, but it cannot be a basis for actions that are positively bad and opposed to virtue"(ibid., *Werke* 7: 371, emphasis added).

[43]A distinction which, as Kosch notes (rightly, in my view), does nothing to address the problem; see Kosch, *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling, and Kierkegaard*, 55n26. For a more in-depth discussion of the *Wille/ Willkür* distinction and its potential contributions and limitations, see Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, "Willkür und Wille bei Kant," *Kant-Studien* 81, no. 3 (1990): 304–20.

relative goods (which Kant frames as the intrinsic tension between the objective principle of the form of moral law and the subjective principle of self-love, i.e., between reason and sensuousness), Kant seems to realize that nothing in his discussion touches upon the *origin* of moral evil. The mere fact that humans are subject to the sensuous and tend naturally toward self-love is not an *explanation* of evil, but simply provides a partial condition for the possibility of evil.[44] In the subsequent section, "Concerning the Origin of Evil in Human Nature," Kant toys with the notion of an extra-temporal act, a decision from an intellectual state of innocence (by which Kant means a kind of moral neutrality, neither good nor bad) to take up either a perfect or a deficient maxim of practical reason. Either the innocent person chooses to act according to a maxim or law which perfectly subordinates the sensuous desires of self-love to the absolute moral law of the categorical imperative, and thereby becomes a naturally good person; or she becomes distracted by the powerful impression made by sensuous desires, adopts a mixed or disordered maxim, and becomes a "perverse," or disordered person.[45]

While Kant seems to recognize a sense in which this extra-temporal adoption of either a good or evil maxim conditions subsequent chains of activity in the empirical world (i.e., people develop character, good or ill, over time), he maintains that each and every action must ultimately be seen as a kind of leap into good or evil from a state of pure innocence (of the apparently neutral, unconditioned intelligible self).[46] This account

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[44]*Ak* 6: 34–9; for English translation, see Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, trans. Allen Wood (Cambridge University Press, 1998), which follows the *Ak* pagination scheme. Cf. Patrick R. Frierson, *Freedom and Anthropology in Kant's Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 109ff.

[45]Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, *Ak* 6: 37. Kant chooses the term "perverse" very carefully to indicate mere disorder rather than a positive conception of evil. He writes: "The depravity of human nature is therefore not to be named *malice*, if we take this word in the strict sense, namely as a disposition (a subjective *principle* of maxims) to incorporate evil *qua* evil for incentive into one's maxim (since this is *diabolical*), but should rather be named *perversity* of the heart, and this heart is then called *evil* because of what results" (ibid., *Ak* 6: 37).

[46]ibid., *Ak* 6: 41.

remains problematic. For one thing, as Kant himself finally admits, this is still not an explanation: "The rational origin, however, of this disharmony in our power of choice with respect to the way it incorporates lower incentives in its maxims and makes them supreme, i.e. this propensity to evil, remains inexplicable to us, for, since it must itself be imputed to us, this supreme ground of all maxims must in turn require the adoption of an evil maxim."[47] Furthermore, it simply perpetuates the problematic bifurcation of the intelligible self and the empirical self, based on Kant's original transcendental idealist solution to the third antinomy. Nonetheless, the philosophical baseline of Kant's anthropology in this work stands in tension with the eventual ascendancy of rational autonomy: "The human being must make or have made *himself* into whatever he is or should become in a moral sense, good or evil," and the person does this through an extra-temporal choice "according as he either incorporates or does not incorporate into his maxims the incentives contained in that [good] predisposition."[48]

Taking up this line of thought, Schelling argues that "Man has been placed on that summit where he contains within him the source of self-impulsion towards good and evil in equal measure; the nexus of the principles within him is not a bond of necessity but of freedom."[49] Somewhat revising Kant's notion of an extra-temporal decision of the spirit, Schelling describes a unitary and eternal decision that undergirds and determines the individual's entire empirical history. In short, Schelling differentiates between the human as spiritual and free (an "original creation") and the bodily activities that together constitute the history of each human:

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[47]Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, *Ak* 6: 43. Kant continues, "Evil can have originated only from moral evil (not just from the limitations of our nature); yet the original predisposition (which none other than the human being himself could have corrupted, if this corruption is to be imputed to him) is a predisposition to the good; there is no conceivable ground for us, therefore, from which moral evil could first have come in us."

[48]ibid., *Ak* 6: 44. Cf. Frierson, *Freedom and Anthropology in Kant's Moral Philosophy*, 112–3.

[49]Schelling, *Freiheitsschrift*, *Werke* 7: 374.

> In original creation, as has been shown, the human is an undetermined entity (which may be mythologically presented as a condition antecedent to this life, a state of innocence and of initial bliss). The human alone can determine himself. But this determination cannot occur in time; it occurs outside of time altogether and hence it coincides with the first creation even though as an act differentiated from it. The human, even though born in time, is nonetheless a creature of creation's beginning (the centrum). The act which determines the human's life in time does not itself belong in time but in eternity. Moreover, it does not precede life in time but occurs throughout time (untouched by it) as an act eternal by its own nature.[50]

Schelling supposes that this description satisfactorily accounts for the fact that a human can feel that her actions in time are both determined and free. In the extra-temporal act of becoming a *person*, rather than mere organism (a state which Schelling describes as being a kind of pre-conscious spirit), each individual culpably becomes that which her temporal history will eventually reveal her already to be. And there is a very real sense in which temporal acts are both free and necessary, both culpable and determined—by the spiritual self's extra-temporal decision.

This kind of account obviously reintroduces the specter of the indifference conception of freedom, which carries with it the various problems discussed above. Indeed, the problem of sheer indifference or arbitrariness seems to be what pressed Kant toward autonomy and the priority of practical reason in the first place. Unfortunately, Schelling's complex and at times frustratingly opaque foray into metaphysical cosmology in the *Freiheitsschrift* fails to provide a compelling answer to the problem of freedom as indifference.[51] For this and other reasons, the *Freiheitsschrift* remains unsatisfactory. Nonetheless, this work marks the decisive reintroduction of certain concepts and categories that prove to be invaluable in our understanding of Kierkegaard's early anthropological formulations, especially in *Concept of Anxiety*—namely, the retrieval of Kant's initial intuition that an account of the human must begin with (rather than build toward) a conception of

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[50]Schelling, *Freiheitsschrift*, *Werke* 7: 385–6. Schelling signals the fact that this is a retrieval and expansion of a notion found in Kant at 7: 388.

[51]For Schelling's attempt to answer this charge, see ibid., *Werke*, 7: 382ff.

freedom. More specifically, it rediscovers the importance of preserving the free, responsible individual from the impersonal systematicity of law and reason. Furthermore, and perhaps most significantly for Kierkegaard, Schelling argues that humans are individually responsible not to an internal, self-generated law, but, as creatures, to the divine will. For Schelling, the return to the notion of a self-revealing Creator before whom human creatures are ethically responsible is the only alternative to Kantian autonomy.[52]

* * *

All of these emphases resonate deeply with Kierkegaard's anthropology, in *Concept of Anxiety* and beyond; moreover, *The Concept of Anxiety*'s description of the dreaming self, the dizziness of freedom, and the fall into sin seem to be drawn directly from the *Freiheitsschrift*. However, Kierkegaard has serious reservations about Schelling's metaphysics, cosmology, and theology. Thus, equipped with the above narration of the philosophical-anthropological discourse that runs from Kant through the early and late Schelling, we now turn to a detailed examination of Kierkegaard's account of sin, freedom, and history in *The Concept of Anxiety*, referring back to the themes and concerns discussed above wherever they illuminate Kierkegaard's anthropological impulses.

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[52]Kant only introduced the concepts of God, freedom, and revelation in order to bolster or fill out his fundamental accounts of autonomous freedom and reason; this is especially evident in Kant's discussions of Christ and scripture, which he consistently depicts either as already in agreement with human reason, or else subject to reinterpretation or judgment by human reason (for example, see Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak 4: 408–9: "Even the holy one of the Gospel must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before one can recognize him as holy; . . . But where do we get the concept of God as the highest good? Solely from the *idea* that reason projects *a priori* of moral perfection and connects inseparably with the concept of a free will"). See also Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant: The Hidden Debt*, 15. Conversely, Schelling offers a fairly robust (if unorthodox) account of revelation in terms of God (as personal spirit) seeking to manifest Godself in creation; furthermore, Schelling's account of revelation centers upon the eternal divine Word becoming incarnate as a personal creature in history (Schelling, *Freiheitsschrift*, *Werke*, 7: 373–8).

CHAPTER FOUR

Kierkegaard's Early Anthropology in Context

We are beginning to see the philosophical-existential challenge that Kierkegaard's anthropology seeks to address. The pseudonymous Johannes Climacus gives concise expression to the issue, in a manner that resonates with the contextualization provided in chapter three: "To exist, one thinks, is nothing much, even less an art. Of course, we all exist, but to think abstractly—that is something. But truly to exist, that is, to permeate one's existence with consciousness, *simultaneously to be eternal*, far beyond [temporal existence], as it were, and nevertheless present in it and nevertheless *in a process of becoming*—that is truly difficult."[1] Just how difficult will become especially clear in chapters five through seven.

But for now we need to situate Kierkegaard's anthropology more thoroughly in relation to the context described in chapter three. In this chapter, I continue my focus on *Concept of Anxiety*, given its status as an early and especially detailed anthropological account. In further contextualizing this seminal work, we will see how Kierkegaard's Vigilius Haufniensis (and, I would argue, Kierkegaard himself),[2] clearly differentiates key

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[1] *SKS* 7, 192 / *CUP1*, 208; emphasis added.

[2] It would be prudent to say something about how I treat the relation between Haufniensis and Kierkegaard. In keeping with my comments in chapter one about pseudonymity, I will primarily refer to Haufniensis in the course of explicating *Concept of Anxiety*, while occasionally referring to what Kierkegaard "thinks," "is telling us," etc. Broadly speaking, this habit is rooted in the notion that Kierkegaard's pseudonyms encourage us to read each book on its own terms, but also invite us to situate each work within the larger authorship. In the specific case of Haufniensis, I believe he represents a reliably Kierkegaardian framing of the anthropological issues of freedom, sin, the structure of the human being, and so forth—albeit in an especially didactic manner that sets him apart somewhat from the other early pseudonyms. However, Haufniensis gestures rather hopefully toward a couple of conclusions—specifically about commensurability—that the later Kierkegaard will treat, quite explicitly, in a negative fashion. Yet even here, as in the case of Judge William that I mentioned in chapter one's methodology section, the overall framework provided in *Concept of Anxiety* undermines some of Haufniensis' cautious optimism, and anticipates in important ways the late theological works. Just how this is the case will be spelled out in section 4.2. Evidence for the relative "thinness" of the Haufniensis pseudonym includes: the work was nearly published under

components of his anthropology from Kant and Schelling through his unique approach to the problem of freedom in relation to sin, and especially through his understanding of history—which perhaps constitutes *Concept of Anxiety*'s most significant contribution to the topic of anthropology. Rather than attempting to sidestep or overcome Kant's early argument for the interval between our knowledge and the world by appealing to some form of the all-encompassing subject (whether the early Kant's dual-aspect selves, the late Kant's autonomous self, or Schelling's finite spirit participating in Absolute Spirit), Haufniensis dramatically rethinks the way in which finite creatures inhabit the world of space and time. In short, rather than positing the notion of the human being as already and primordially encompassing ideality and reality (with the task of becoming the increasingly intensified manifestation of this primordial truth), we will see that Haufniensis argues that the self (or spirit) is a *relational* reality that arises out of the encounter with the eternal. In this encounter—which Haufniensis equates with the *moment*—history in the true sense of the word is posited as a free, dynamic, and ethically-infused set of concrete relationships that include but dramatically exceed the bounds of the bare logic of spatiotemporal causality.

Kierkegaard's own name, with the addition of a pseudonym at the last moment; the work bears both a personal dedication to Poul Martin Møller, and autobiographical details of Kierkegaard's visit to Berlin; and the fact that Kierkegaard did not publish an attendant set of direct religious discourses along with *Concept of Anxiety*, as had become his habit—rather, *Concept of Anxiety* is itself quite direct and religious in nature, and was published in conjunction with the more typically-pseudonymous *Prefaces* (by Nicholas Notabene). See Gordon D. Marino, "Anxiety in *The Concept of Anxiety*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, ed. Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 308–28, 309–10; Joakim Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography*, trans. Bruce H. Kirmmse (Princeton University Press, 2007 [2000]), 268. Roger Poole calls for a very sharp distinction between Vigilius Haufniensis and the deeply religious Anti-Climacus (who I take to be a very thin pseudonym since he appears to be a device that allows Kierkegaard to say what he believes without falling into gross hypocrisy). Even granting Poole's thesis (parts of which I find highly doubtful), his main point does not undermine but actually supports my approach to the Kierkegaard-Haufniensis question: Poole specifically singles out the contrasting moods in which Haufniensis and Anti-Climacus discuss "sin," arguing that the earlier Haufniensis was only "playing with aesthetic categories," while the later Anti-Climacus describes sin in terms of the existentially devastating realization that we are sinners before God. This would support my contention that Haufniensis, while framing things in a recognizably Kierkegaardian fashion at the intellectual level, does not match the later Kierkegaard's Christologically-conditioned vision the way people on the way to becoming "spirit" before God relate with temporality.

This chapter proceeds in two parts: In 4.1, I show how Haufniensis' distinctive treatment of the Christian dogma of original sin is best understood as a foray into the discourse described in the previous chapter—the problematic of transcendental freedom and natural determinism. Moreover, following the lead of Kant and Schelling, Kierkegaard was inspired to structure the human being so that that she bears within herself the eternal and the temporal—a synthetic dissonance from which the characterization of the self as an ethical task emerges.[3] In fact, Kierkegaard's anthropology is grounded, philosophically-speaking, in his attempt to offer an account of human freedom capable of sustaining a certain kind of ethics—namely, an unconditional responsibility to eternity *within* the existential context of conditioned temporality. Here we find *anxiety*—the phenomenological attendant of freedom—introduced as a fundamental aspect of human experience. Recognizing with Kant that abstract freedom as sheer arbitrariness is an absurdity, Kierkegaard nevertheless avoids adding to freedom a transcendental, self-imposed law, and opts instead for the concretization of freedom in the anxiety-inducing condition of ethical responsibility imposed from without—not *in* eternity, but *by* the eternal within the context of temporal existence. Additionally, although Haufniensis takes many cues from Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift*, at important junctures he expresses serious misgivings about Schelling's theology (and, by extension, his metaphysical cosmology).[4] In short, Haufniensis wants to build an anthropology that preserves the paradoxes of freedom, sin, and ethical responsibility, rather than seeking to eliminate the paradox's tension within the self's synthesis.

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[3]For a study that situates Kierkegaard's thoughts on radical evil, especially in *Sickness unto Death*, in relation to this discourse, see David A. Roberts, *Kierkegaard's Analysis of Radical Evil* (London: Continuum, 2006), especially 1–22.

[4]We will see in this chapter how Kierkegaard's Haufniensis was both attracted to and repelled by Schelling's anthropology. He resonated with Schelling's account of freedom and sin while rejecting on theological grounds Schelling's highly speculative metaphysical/cosmological framework that supported his notion of the self. Teasing out this polemical engagement with Schelling will go a long way toward revealing the particular shape of Kierkegaard's anthropology—especially the Christological approach that Kierkegaard uses in place of Schelling's speculations, which I address in chapters five through seven.

Second, in section 4.2, I examine how Haufniensis extends his seminal description of the human person as body-soul/spirit in connection with two interrelated themes: Haufniensis' assertion of the *identity of the individual and the race*, and his attendant reconfiguration of the concept of history in terms of ethical responsibility—a distinctively Christian "second ethics" that is decisively conditioned by the Christian dogmatic notions of sin, Atonement, and, ultimately, Christology.[5] In Haufniensis' account of history, we see what is perhaps Kierkegaard's most promising attempt at tying together individual

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[5]Although I spell out these connections between sin, Atonement, and Christology in relation to freedom and sin in 4.2, it may be helpful to note very briefly how I see Haufniensis' approach. Essentially, he works backwards from Christ. If Christ died for our sin, we must be sinful. If we are sinful, we must have the sort of freedom that preserves ethical responsibility in general and more precisely, the imputability of evil. Likewise, Haufniensis interprets hereditary sin (i.e., our relationship with Adam and his sinful act) in terms of the Atonement (i.e., Christ and his perfect work): we certainly want to be "participants" in the Atonement, rather than mere onlookers; we must therefore also frame the doctrine of hereditary sin in terms that make us participants in Adam's sin, rather than mere onlookers (*SKS* 4, 342 / *CA*, 36). Thus, the Christian "second ethics" posited by Haufniensis is distinctively Christological because it develops in terms of Christologically-rooted presuppositions about sin, freedom, and so forth. Relatedly, this is exactly how Haufniensis decides it is appropriate to conduct his purportedly psychological investigation in the shadow of dogma—despite his harsh words for Schelling and those Danish Hegelians who confused the spheres and tried to formulate dogmatic theological content from speculative endeavors. Haufniensis' rationale for injecting his ethical and psychological investigations with dogmatic content is quite simple: "Every science lies either in a logical immanence or in an immanence within a transcendence that it is unable to explain" (*SKS* 4, 355 / *CA*, 50). Dogma, for Haufniensis, is a transcendence—revealed by God rather than discovered through speculation. As we noted above, Haufniensis firmly ties freedom and sin to the primary dogmatic content of the Atonement—Christ's death for sinners requires that we in fact be the sort of people who a) have the freedom to sin and b) have in fact sinned. This, then, is why Haufniensis everywhere insists that neither freedom nor sin are subject to explanation by psychology or philosophical speculation—for they qualify as dogmatic content. (Why he assumes that sin and freedom might not also be confirmable through means other than dogmatic presupposition is a question worth asking; it may simply have been Haufniensis' effort to remove the question from the realm of debate, given the idealists' repeated failure to preserve either freedom or ethics in a manner that was sufficiently robust in Kierkegaard's eyes.) As implications of Christological dogma, freedom and sin are not on the same plane of logical immanence with psychology and philosophical speculation; rather, they are the transcendence within which the sciences of psychology and philosophical speculation rest, and from which they must proceed—without attempting to explain their own presuppositions. In the Introduction, Haufniensis also notes the following order of transcendent and immanent sciences: the "historical presupposition" of faith—which, based on *Philosophical Fragments*, I contend is the God-man's actual existence—is the transcendence that situates faith and dogma (10). The fundamental presuppositions of dogma and existential faith situate philosophical-speculation and psychology—but not vice-versa (10–11). Hence, Haufniensis' dismissal of those who attempt to reconfigure faith as immediacy (and therefore as something which must be surpassed), or ethics in terms of logic (and thus something that does not really consist in contingency and freedom) (10–11). We can see here in vague outline why the late Kierkegaard would want to identify Christ as utterly determinative for his anthropology: Already in 1844, Haufniensis is using Christological dogma to undercut Kant and Schelling (and, of course, Hegel and the Hegelians), and grounding freedom and ethics—key anthropological categories—in the Christological dogma of the Atonement.

existence in relation to God with temporality and sociality. However, we will also see ways in which Kierkegaard's thought already contains elements that will ultimately undercut these possibilities. Haufniensis gestures toward the *difficulties* while also asserting the *possibility* of some kind of actual commensurability between the absolute demands of eternity on each individual and full engagement with the relative demands of family, society, etc. But Haufniensis' framing of the problem—and especially his reluctance to elaborate on just what the aforementioned commensurability actually looks like—serves to engender suspicion of Haufniensis' vague optimism and forms the perfect backdrop for the proceeding chapters' investigation of the increasingly harsh anthropological vision in Kierkegaard's late theological works.

In sum, this chapter serves as a transition from our primarily philosophical-anthropological overview in the first half of the dissertation to my treatment in the second half of the Christological considerations that determine the final shape of Kierkegaard's anthropology. This chapter completes the process of acquiring a basic understanding of Kierkegaard's anthropology in terms of definitions, terminology, and formulations, as well as a general sense of the philosophical and polemical concerns that contextualize Kierkegaard's anthropology. But it also begins the turn in this critical reconstruction towards Kierkegaard's explicitly *Christological* anthropology. Even in the relatively early, pseudonymous *Concept of Anxiety*, the perennial sources of concern for those assessing Kierkegaard's anthropology—i.e., Kierkegaard's purported propensity for or eventual drift into individualistic anti-sociality, pseudo-gnostic denigrations of temporality and embodiment, and so forth—are revealed to be deeply connected with Kierkegaard's Christology.

4.1 Freedom in Concept of Anxiety

The Concept of Anxiety has been variously referred to as "maddeningly difficult," "nearly impenetrable," and "rather close to being unreadable"—no doubt a bit of a shock to any reader who has taken at face value the work's self-description in the subtitle as a

"simple" deliberation.[6] Here, the pseudonymous Vigilius Haufniensis undertakes an investigation of anxiety as the psychological phenomenon that makes sin a possibility (though, importantly, anxiety is neither sin's explanation nor its cause). Haufniensis takes this occasion to offer a full-fledged account of the person in a manner that draws in and reconfigures the notions of time, freedom, and history—and even hints at possibilities for sociality.

Haufniensis does not explicitly claim the specific idealist discourse described in the previous chapter as the context for his anthropological investigation in *Concept of Anxiety*. And although he does allude to a broadly idealist background,[7] his purported point of departure is rather the distinctively Christian, dogmatic concept of original (or hereditary) sin: how is it that a person is a sinner by virtue of her membership in the human race, while simultaneously responsible for her sin and thus individually guilty? As Haufniensis frames his project, he is seeking to provide a description of the psychological *possibility* of sin—not an *explanation* of sin.[8] Furthermore, his project readily implies an anthropological question: "What kind of person, with what kinds of abilities and characteristics, could be both *able* to sin and *culpable* for such sin?" Better yet, Haufniensis' basic method of inquiry is to ask: *in light of Christian dogma, what must we mean when we say "human being"—what notion of the human being can correspond to Christianity's dogmatic claims about sin's universality and ethical responsibility*?

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[6]See Marino, "Anxiety in *The Concept of Anxiety*," 308; Edward F. Mooney, *On Søren Kierkegaard: Dialogue, Polemics, Lost Intimacy, and Time* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007), 107; Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography*, 541.

[7]*SKS* 4, 319–21 / *CA*, 11–14. He ends his brief contextualization in idealism by noting, "What has been developed here is probably too complicated in proportion to the space that it occupies (yet, considering the importance of the subject it deals with, it is far from too lengthy); however, it is in no way extraneous, because the details are selected in order to allude to the subject of the book. . . . He who presumes to develop the system is responsible for much, but he who writes a monograph can and also ought to be faithful over a little."

[8]Aside from the illegitimacy of attempting to use psychology to explain the dogmatic notions of sin and freedom when it is sin and freedom which must frame psychology and provide its presuppositions, Haufniensis is also concerned that explaining sin turns it into the logically-determined outworking of a prior condition—rendering it neither free nor sinful, properly speaking.

And yet, the terms under which this investigation into Christian dogma proceeds are at least latently situated by the idealist discourse described above.[9] Even when Haufniensis presses against or beyond Schelling, Kant, Fichte, or Hegel, a deeply idealist understanding of the underlying problematic—the human being's unique situatedness vis-á-vis the deterministic, systemic causality of the natural world, and the unconditioned freedom of the noumenal—informs his entire enterprise. Haufniensis' core concerns, namely, the ethical responsibility and freedom of the individual, mirror Schelling's suggestions in the *Freiheitsschrift*, despite *Concept of Anxiety*'s immediate context of the Christian dogma of original sin. However, Haufniensis remains suspicious of the metaphysical speculations Schelling uses to undergird his anthropology—meaning that he must come up with an alternative way of securing his modified Schellingean anthropology.

4.1.1 Contra Kantian Autonomy

Kierkegaard found Kant's notion of autonomy objectionable for a variety of reasons. Perhaps his most fundamental reason is also the most simple and obvious (and rests on what is probably a consciously facile reading of Kant).[10] Autonomy, according to Kierkegaard, boils down to "lawlessness or experimentation," for such a view could never generate the ethical strictness necessary for becoming a self: "If I am bound by

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[9]As we saw above, Schelling in the *Freiheitsschrift* also frames the idealist dilemma of freedom and nature in nearly the same way, i.e., according to the problem of evil as a ubiquitous principle and evil as a culpable act of free individuals: "And indeed what has to be explained is not simply how evil comes to be real in individual men, but its universal effectiveness and how it could have burst forth from creation as an unmistakable general principle, everywhere battling against the good" (F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*, trans. James Gutman (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1989 [1809]), *Werke* 7: 373.)

[10]By this, I simply mean that Kierkegaard's frequent rejection of Kant seldom moves beyond a basic concern about ethical strenuousness, despite the fact that he had read quite a lot of Kant and sought to incorporate aspects of Kant's ethics in his own thinking. See Ronald M. Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant: The Hidden Debt* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 2ff, 90–2; cf. Karl Ameriks, *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy: Problems in the Appropriation of the Critical Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 14. For a recent comparative study on the topic of autonomy that questions and nuances the legitimacy of the kind of objection Kierkegaard raises against autonomy, see Robert Stern, *Understanding Moral Obligation: Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

nothing higher than myself and I am to bind myself, where would I get the rigorousness as A, the binder, which I do not have as B, who is supposed to be bound, when A and B are the same self."[11]

But at a rather fundamental level, Haufniensis evidently wants to preserve something approaching Kant's earliest understanding of transcendental freedom as the only kind of freedom that could viably fund a robust ethics. Throughout *Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard is concerned to show that human acts (specifically the "leap" into sin) proceeds not from a prior state of affairs (natural causality) but from freedom—above and apart from the natural causal order of things. The desire to "explain" any sin-act is itself the result of a conflation that "denies the leap and explains the circle as a straight line," inasmuch as one supposes that, with enough quantifications, a new quality eventually breaks forth as a sort of end product.[12] The problem, dogmatically speaking, is that sin must be understood as the free and therefore culpable act of the individual—and this requires that sin's entry into the world does not arise from the temporal and natural framework of causality.[13]

In fact, Kierkegaard's rejection of Kantian autonomy coincides with Haufniensis' broader rejection of the reconciliation (*Forsoning*) supposedly achieved by the philosophical systems that were all the rage amongst his contemporaries. Kant, Fichte, the early Schelling, and Hegel all sought to reconcile the noumenal and the phenomenal, the infinite and the finite, the eternal and the temporal within a single unifying principle—usually understood anthropologically. But according to Haufniensis' sweeping diagnosis, each of these attempts—whether Kant's autonomy, Fichte's I=I, Schelling's absolute, or Hegel's mediation—dissolves *movement* into a merely logical relationship and thereby does away

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[11] *SKS* 23, 45, NB15:66 / *JP* 1, 188.

[12] *SKS* 4, 338 / *CA*, 32.

[13] Haufniensis reiterates this point repeatedly. See *SKS* 4, 338, 344, 345, 348 / *CA*, 32, 38, 39, 41.

with any meaningful sense of history and contingency.[14] Bare temporality and spatiality are nothing more than the mutual displacement of successive states *for representation*—but to assume that these conceptualizations are adequate to the human's existential, concrete experience of time and space turns historical motion and the contingency of freedom into mere illusion:[15] "[W]hen logic becomes deeply absorbed in the concretion of the categories, that which was from the beginning is ever the same. Every movement, if for the moment one wishes to use this expression, is an immanent movement, which in a profound sense is no movement at all."[16] Like Reinhold and the Schelling of the *Freiheitsschrift*, Haufniensis understands that relativizing freedom under a law that governs it leads all too easily to the denial of freedom.

Even so, Haufniensis remains sensitive to the problem of freedom devolving into sheer arbitrariness or abstract neutrality. Like the early Kant, he senses that while a fairly strong notion of freedom (what I referred to as "transcendental freedom" in chapter three) seems to be a necessary condition for ethical responsibility, particularly the imputability of sin, such freedom must *relate* to the world in which ethics pertains—the temporal world of human interaction. "If freedom is given a moment to choose between good and evil, a moment when freedom itself is in neither the one nor the other, then in that very moment freedom is not freedom, but a meaningless reflection."[17] This is not a denial of transcendental freedom: "Freedom is infinite and arises out of nothing."[18]

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[14]See *SKS* 4, 452 / *CA*, 153.

[15]Recall that this illusory status of motion was in fact Schelling's conclusion in his early attempts to systematize Kant: freedom and contingency, if sublated into systematic reason, become mere *appearance*, the ultimately deterministic outworking of the eternal in history filtered through individual nodes of absolute consciousness. Schopenhauer later championed this view of freedom-as-appearance. See Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung – The World as Will and Representation, 2 vols.*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, 1969, [1819–44]), §56.

[16]*SKS* 4, 321 / *CA*, 13.

[17]See Kierkegaard's note at *SKS* 4, 414 / *CA*, 111–2. Cf. Schelling, *Freiheitsschrift*, *Werke* 7: 382.

[18]*SKS* 4, 414 / *CA*, 112.

Rather, Haufniensis reminds us that "to speak of good and evil as the objects of freedom finitizes both freedom and the concepts of good and evil"—the problem, then, lies in imagining freedom in itself as a neutral capacity that stands before two objective options, one good and one evil.

4.1.2 Freedom and Evil

In the space of a couple of paragraphs, Haufniensis walks a knife's edge concerning the relation of freedom to good and evil: on one side the transcendental notion of freedom (with the attendant danger of freedom disappearing into a pure arbitrariness incapable of connecting with any concrete situation); on the other side the reduction of freedom to law through some sort of autonomism, the illegitimate conditioning of the unconditioned (which introduces the specter of a purely negative conception of evil).[19] Haufniensis' solution is as intriguing as it is simple: the "difference between good and evil is only for freedom and in freedom," for when "sin is posited in the particular individual by the qualitative leap" only then is the "difference between good and evil . . . also posited."[20] In other words, good and evil as distinct, concrete options, do not originally exist for freedom *qua* freedom. Rather, only in the concrete exercise of freedom, which for human beings seems always (but not deterministically) to result in the leap into sin—only then is the difference between good and evil as concrete options posited. Emphasizing freedom's priority over natural causality, Haufniensis, reminds his readers that sin, no less than freedom, "cannot be explained by anything antecedent to it." And yet, freedom is not a pure neutrality in relation to two options. Freedom in itself (as Haufniensis puts it, *in abstracto*) is pure unconditionedness—but humans only have freedom *in concreto*. Once

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[19]See Roe Fremstedal, "Original Sin and Radical Evil: Kierkegaard and Kant," *Kantian Review* 17, no. 2 (2012): 197–225, 197–202. For a more recent and extensive comparison of Kierkegaard's and Kant's attempts to wrestle with this issue, see Roe Fremstedal, *Kierkegaard and Kant on Radical Evil and the Highest Good* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[20]*SKS* 4, 414 / *CA*, 112.

transcendental freedom becomes concretized in the particular individual's consciousness, the difference between good and evil begins to appear—and with the leap into sin, good and evil are concretely posited, brought forth into concrete actuality.[21]

Realizing that this might seem to imply a purely negative conception of evil, a mere appearance that relies simply on deficiencies brought to light through the comparison of finite concretizations, Haufniensis demurs:

> If (*sit venia verbo*) freedom remains in the good, then it knows nothing at all of evil. In this sense one may say about God (if anyone misunderstands this, it is not my fault) that he knows nothing of evil. By this I by no means say that evil is merely the negative, *das Aufzuhebende*; on the contrary, that God knows nothing of evil, that he neither can nor will know of it, is the absolute punishment of evil. In this sense the preposition ἀπό is used in the New Testament to signify removal from God or, if I dare put it this way, God's ignoring of evil. If one conceives of God finitely, it is indeed convenient for evil if God ignores it, but because God is the infinite, his ignoring is the living annihilation, for evil cannot dispense with God, even merely in order to be evil.[22]

In other words, evil is not simply something to be overcome—the mere incompleteness inherent in finite becoming—but rather a non-necessary misconfiguration of the finite world through the concretization of freedom in a sinful mode. Haufniensis is apparently not interested in denying a traditional Christian-Platonic notion of evil as a negative disordering. Rather, his target is the kind of overarching systematization described above—suggested by the early Schelling, and further developed and championed by Hegel and his followers—for which the distinction between good and evil simply disappears in the ultimate identity of the Absolute. In this view, all finite reality, whether "good" or "evil," is in itself a manifestation—no better or worse than any other (absolutely speaking)—of the Absolute in history. Against this notion, Haufniensis persists in making

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[21]Thus, Haufniensis seeks to avoid a mistake that the late Schelling makes: the ethical conditioning of freedom without the preservation of some substantial form of eternal freedom prior to the difference between good and evil. See Schelling, *Freiheitsschrift*, *Werke* 7, 352–3.

[22]From Kierkegaard's note at *SKS* 4, 414 / *CA*, 112.

distinctions: even for God, good is not the same as evil; and when finite creatures posit good and evil through disordered freedom (sin), God's refusal to know evil simply *is* the judgment, the "living annihilation" of those who commit sin and bring evil into positive historical existence.

Haufniensis' analysis of good and evil is fascinating at several levels. But the important point to be made here is that human freedom must not be conceived in terms of the ability to choose between good and evil, as if good and evil are two transcendental realities that sit, fully formed, before an equally transcendentally free agent. Nor is freedom generated by tension between good and evil; rather, good and evil arise "for freedom." Freedom exists only in the concrete, temporal-historical situation of being in the presence of the eternal and the eternal's requirement. Harking back to our discussion of *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits* in chapter two, Kierkegaard takes seriously scripture's assertion in Ecclesiastes 3:11 that God "has also put eternity into the heart of human beings," and this fact carries with it the absolute requirement that pulls humans beyond the kind of relative choices and responsibilities that characterize temporal existence. Such choices and responses cannot in themselves constitute true exercises of freedom or deliberation[23] unless we recognize that the eternal (particularly its presence in human consciousness) permeates and transforms these activities at every stage, actively establishing them as truly free.

4.1.3 Against Schelling's Confusion of Spheres

The central difficulty remains, however—thus far it has only been relocated: *how* can freedom come into relation with concrete reality? In what we have discussed so far, Haufniensis' ideas may not seem to move much beyond the early Kant. The novelty of

[23]Calling to mind chapter three's discussion of various idealist conceptions of freedom, we can imagine that all purely relative-temporal choices and deliberations might qualify only as comparative freedom or the freedom of self-determination, which as Kant and Schelling both realized, can always be reduced to "mere nature again."

Haufniensis' own position becomes most clearly visible by contrasting his own suggestions with both Kant and Schelling. With Kant, Haufniensis recognizes that freedom cannot be thought of as sheer neutrality before two finite objects of choice; as noted above, such a conception of freedom is just that—a conception, a "meaningless reflection" not to be confused with freedom as existing humans actually exercise it in concrete reality. Freedom, for a finite subject, requires some sort of relation, a principle governing its causality—in short, *unconditioned* freedom must be *conditioned* if it is to be anything more than an empty reflection. But Kierkegaard explicitly and repeatedly rejected the notion of autonomy,[24] and Haufniensis in *Concept of Anxiety* never bothers even to flirt with the notion; self-law is mere experimentation and, somewhat paradoxically, results in the denial of freedom.[25]

But here, despite finding inspiration in Schelling's critique of Kant, Haufniensis parts ways decisively with Schelling. As we have seen, Kantian autonomy attempts to condition the freedom of the finite subject in eternity prior to freedom's concretization in conditioned reality. While this seemingly allows for a kind of continuity between the noumenal and the phenomenal, freedom eventually gets relativized into oblivion, sublated into a system (of Reason, Identity, or the Absolute). And Schelling, despite his rejection of autonomy, suggests the same *kind* of solution: he wants to press the paradox of freedom and nature directly into eternity, to *explain* freedom and the possibility of evil through a speculative-theological account of the emergence of divine personality-as-spirit (light) out of the fundamental "ground of existence" (darkness). Schelling describes the latter as God's "*nature*—in God, inseparable from him, to be sure, but nevertheless distinguishable

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[24]Explicit critiques occur on at least four occasions in his journals: see Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant: The Hidden Debt*, 90.

[25]Significantly, Kierkegaard's primary complaint against autonomy is not precisely the same as that voiced by Reinhold and Schelling—namely, the descent into determinism and the attendant absurdity of culpable evil. Rather, as noted above, he finds autonomy objectionable primarily because he cannot imagine an individual bearing within herself the necessary ethical strictness for existential striving toward becoming a self.

from him."[26] This duality of God's nature on one hand and God as absolute on the other—or, the ground of God's existence and God as actualized—is not meant to imply a linear emanation of divine personality out of darkness: "There is here no first and no last, since everything mutually implies everything else. . . . God contains himself in an inner basis of his existence, which, to this extent, precedes him as to his existence; but similarly, God is prior to the basis, since this basis, as such, could not be if God did not exist in actuality."[27]

This distinction of principles within divine personality—the darkness and light which in God are indissolubly and eternally unified as the eternal divine spirit[28]—forms the basis for the possibility of evil. Finite creatures, though like God in that they encompass the dual principles of the ground of existence and their actual existence (i.e., darkness and light) and must unify these principles in spirit or personality, are unlike God in that this union is a process of *becoming* rather than an eternal *being*. This is, for Schelling, the very definition of finitude—the fact that the proper union of the two principles is not eternally realized, but rather must be *accomplished*. Evil is a possibility that inheres in the eternal duality of light in darkness that founds divine spirit; but what in God is only an implicit possibility can (and in fact, does) become an explicit actuality in finite creatures.

Schelling's approach seems to have certain advantages, two of which are especially pertinent for our discussion: *First*, Schelling is able to describe human freedom as a creaturely participation in divine freedom, with the result that Schelling can have a fundamentally positive assessment of creaturely being, in all its relativity and conditionedness. By imagining God-as-spirit as the eternal fruition of the fecund counter-tensions between light and darkness (in a way that he believes avoids the pitfalls of Manicheanism or any

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[26]Schelling, *Freiheitsschrift*, *Werke* 7: 358.

[27]ibid., *Werke* 7: 358 (translation modified).

[28]Schelling strikingly describes divine personality in somewhat Trinitarian fashion, alluding to the eternal "process" by which God holds together darkness and light (or longing and reason) in terms of God's self-imaging as Word and Spirit, Logos and Love.

other crude dualism), Schelling is then able to imagine creation and the world of finite, embodied spirits as participating (in a finite, creaturely way) in this same eternal life of the absolute spirit. Creation is free but dependent, and humans are graciously tasked by their Creator with accomplishing in a creaturely manner what God accomplishes eternally: i.e., becoming spirit, perfectly unifying within personality the principles of nature and will, darkness and light. Relating to God—or better, participating as creatures in the divine life—need not take the form of a choice between the lower things of this world or the higher spiritual principles. Rather, because God's own life is understood as the eternal union of nature and freedom in personal spirit, each individual human's calling can also be understood as a striving toward personal spirit that encompasses and includes nature and freedom. In other words, the unconditionality of pure freedom, even for God, must always come into *relation* and *limitation* in order to find meaningful expression. And this conditionedness of eternal freedom in relation to the darkness of divine nature becomes the ultimate explanatory principle (and absolute resolution) for Schelling's understanding of the tensions in the creaturely world between freedom and nature. Spirit, for Schelling, is not that which stands above or apart from nature; rather, spirit—even Divine Spirit—emerges from the fruitful tension between nature and freedom. Spirit is thus the fulfillment of both nature and freedom, for both God and humans in a qualitatively similar fashion. The striving and longing that characterize human existence (even marred as it is by sin) is simply a creaturely mirror of the striving and longing inherent in the divine life.[29]

Second, and relatedly, Schelling believes he has secured a positive conception of evil without making God the source (strictly speaking) of evil; rather, human freedom alone, in its misrelation of existence and the ground of existence, posits evil. In this way, Schelling recognizes evil as a positive reality without putting the blame on anything other

[29]Schelling, *Freiheitsschrift*, *Werke* 7: 400: "Activated selfhood is necessary for life's intensity; without it there would be complete death, goodness slumbering; for where there is no battle there is no life."

than free human activity. That evil *can* arise remains an implicit possibility within God—a possibility eternally surmounted by God's divine perfection as the absolute. That evil *does* in actuality arise is only the non-necessary (and yet apparently unavoidable) product of finite human freedom. In words that Haufniensis will later echo in *Concept of Anxiety*, Schelling describes the sleeping spirit awakening to its existence at the nexus of darkness and light. In the sudden dizziness of possibility, this finite spirit (unlike the eternal divine spirit) fails to balance or align the dual principles of freedom and nature. With this initial "leap" into sin, the historical distinction between good and evil becomes concretized, thus casting a cloud of melancholy over creaturely existence.[30] Kierkegaard's Haufniensis is certainly influenced by this conception of a possible spiritual misrelation just prior to guilt, and from which guilt and sin suddenly appear—through freedom, not necessity.

But for all the similarities between their understandings of freedom, Haufniensis sees a fundamental problem with Schelling's approach, and marks out his own distinct notion of freedom accordingly. This is where the fatal similarity between Kantian autonomy and Schelling's anthropology becomes evident. Despite the difference between God and creature evident throughout the *Freiheitsschrift*, Schelling ultimately explains the human as spirit through a speculative-theological account of God as spirit. He thus succumbs to the temptation to provide an *explanation* for human freedom. And, in fact, his speculative description of God's freedom is suspiciously similar to Kantian autonomy, in that the divine being, in order to be free in the true sense, must be self-conditioning—i.e., autonomous.[31] Thus, all of the complications that attended Kant's notion of human autonomy are, in Schelling's system, merely transferred to the divine being rather than actually

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[30]Schelling, *Freiheitsschrift*, *Werke* 7: 399. Schelling further asserts that "inasmuch as there is even in God himself a condition at least relatively independent, there is in him, too, a source of sadness which, however, never attains actuality but rather serves for the eternal joy of triumph."

[31]ibid., *Werke* 7: 399.

solved.[32] Additionally, in positing the union of darkness and light in the divine life of spirit, Schelling supposes he is providing an explanation of sorts for sin. As Haufniensis points out repeatedly, neither freedom nor sin can admit of explanation.[33]

For Haufniensis, the problem with Schelling's notion of freedom is ultimately theological. Despite resonating with many of Schelling's emphases and conclusions about human freedom and sin, Haufniensis decries the speculative theology and cosmology that supposedly serves as their explanation.

> Schelling himself has often spoken of anxiety, anger, anguish, suffering, etc. But one ought always to be a little suspicious of such expressions, so as not to confuse the consequence of sin in creation with what Schelling also characterizes as states and moods in God. By these expressions, he characterizes, if I may say so, the creative birth pangs of the deity. . . . Yet, above all, Schelling's main thought is that anxiety, etc., characterize especially the suffering of the deity in his endeavor to create.[34]

Haufniensis goes on to say that the problem is not necessarily that Schelling has anthropomorphized God, "for a vigorous and full-blooded anthropomorphism has considerable merit"; rather, the mistake is a "different one, and here is an example of how strange everything becomes when metaphysics and dogmatics are distorted by treating dogmatics metaphysically and metaphysics dogmatically."[35] This is simply a further application of the methodology outlined in Haufniensis' introduction (and discussed at the beginning of this chapter): each science (or sphere of inquiry) has its own domain, and

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[32]Schelling, *Freiheitsschrift*, *Werke* 7: 395ff. Schelling basically evades the issue of the mutuality of freedom and nature in God by appealing to the notion that love bears within it a kind of necessity. Divine love and goodness can and must overcome the dark ground of the divine nature; and creation is thus the free *and* natural act of divine self-manifestation. There are perhaps things to recommend Schelling's intuition—but there are also potential problems. For instance, Schelling posits such speculations about divine personality as if they are an *explanation* for human freedom and sin, going so far as to identify principles within divine personality that, when translated into temporality and finitude (via the incarnate manifestation of the Logos) cannot help but bring about evil, at least for a time.

[33]*SKS* 4, 414 / *CA*, 112.

[34]*SKS* 4, 363n / *CA*, 59n.

[35]*SKS* 4, 363n / *CA*, 59n.

clarity can only be found by ensuring that each science remains within its proper domain. Logic cannot explain movement; psychology cannot explain sin; and metaphysics cannot deliver up the doctrinal content of dogmatics.[36] To put it simply, Haufniensis rejects Schelling's attempt to explain God through metaphysical extrapolations based on human experiences of freedom, evil, and melancholy, and subsequently to derive insights for dogmatics and ethics from such speculative theologizing.

4.1.4 Freedom and Dogma

Where then does this leave Haufniensis in relation to the idealist discourse on freedom? In many ways, his position is most similar to the early Kant—especially in his insistence that "explanation" only applies to and within the empirical world of conditions. Human freedom, God, and the relation to God are not subject to explanation, nor are they available for speculative knowledge. Thus, at least in a certain sense, Haufniensis takes very seriously Kant's early critical epistemology—which, as we have seen, entails the difficulty of imagining how freedom relates with the empirical world in which ethics pertains. Kierkegaard rejects Kant's solution of autonomy. And Haufniensis clearly finds inspiration in Schelling's re-emphasis on transcendental freedom: he even appropriates Schelling's description of transcendental freedom finding expression in the finite human spirit, making a kind of leap into sin, and thus positing the difference between good and evil. But in rejecting Schelling's complex speculative-theological foundation not only for connecting freedom and nature in the human person, but for connecting God and humanity in a qualitatively similar pursuit of spiritual personhood (understood as the union of nature and freedom), Haufniensis in many ways repositions himself squarely in the original problematic posited by Kant.

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[36]However, as noted in this chapter's introductory comments, dogma can inform and contribute content to other sciences—it is a "transcendence" in which the sciences of psychology, ethics, and philosophy rest, and from which they can proceed. See *SKS* 4, 318ff, 355 / *CA*, 10ff, 50.

However, Haufniensis also refocuses the problematic somewhat. Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms seem to resonate with the generally Kantian assertion of a persistent interval between our *concepts* of actuality and actuality itself.[37] And against the post-Kantian drive toward some sort of Reason beyond mere understanding (for Kierkegaard, especially represented by Hegel and his Danish followers) capable of bringing together ideality and reality in a unified transfiguration, Kierkegaard insists that all philosophical mediation is mere conceptualization—and no matter how dialectical such concepts may be, they are fundamentally abstractive, resulting in the transmutation (and eventual loss) of concrete reality. But Haufniensis also insists that the concrete world of experience is something more than the mere spatiotemporal structures of causal determination available to the understanding. He is not so much concerned with the epistemological problem of the relation between mind and world, or the representing activity of the intelligible self in relation to the thing-in-itself that gives rise to the phenomenal world of experience; rather, he is concerned about the tendency to reduce existence to thought—and this concern maps on to what is perhaps Kierkegaard's primary concern—the loss of freedom, responsibility, and ethics to the realm of empirical causality, or as Kant said, the reduction of freedom to "mere nature again."

However, unlike Kant and Schelling, Haufniensis is not overly concerned with explaining or securing certain fundamental aspects of human existence—notably freedom, and by extension the concrete state of ethical responsibility and the reality of human sinfulness. For Haufniensis, these realities are simply the obvious and necessary implications of dogmatics. As noted earlier, Haufniensis' method for conducting his anthropological investigation is ultimately to ask, "What kind of understanding of the human being answers to the doctrinal pronouncements of dogmatics?" Thus, Haufniensis in his investi-

[37]For a helpful discussion, see Michelle Kosch, "'Actuality' in Schelling and Kierkegaard," in *Kierkegaard und Schelling*, ed. Jochem Hennigfeld and Jon Stewart, vol. 8, Kierkegaard Studies Monograph Series (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 235–52.

gation of original sin, while taking seriously Kant's early assertion that extra-empirical realities cannot be subject to explanation, is quick to assert that dogma—divinely revealed truths—can inform and situate the other sciences. For instance, ethics alone can never arrive at the notion of sin, but simply projects (in an imaginative and quantitative manner) its own ideals or abstract conceptualizations regarding "the good," and then goes about attempting to actualize these self-generated ideals through ethical striving. But when dogmatics introduces the idea of sin and Atonement, ethics becomes something entirely new—dogmatics initiates a "second ethics" (a subject to which we will return).

Regarding this methodology, in the introduction to *Concept of Anxiety* Haufniensis argues that every science or discourse must be clear about and faithful to its own content and limits—only then can each discourse participate harmoniously with "the whole."[38] However, Haufniensis also points out that "every science lies either in a logical immanence or in an immanence within a transcendence that it is unable to explain."[39] Dogmatics, in this case, supplies the transcendent presuppositions that decisively condition and transform anthropology and various anthropologically significant sciences. Thus, sin belongs to dogmatics: it cannot be discovered or explained by psychology or ethics or metaphysics. Psychology can orient one's thinking toward the mental states that border on the breaking forth of sin, but actual sin occurs only by a leap, not as the causal outcome of a sequence of psychological states. Nor can ethics generate the notion of sin, although here things become more complicated: ethics, like any other science, is purely ideal, but it uniquely "proposes to bring ideality into actuality"—a project that inevitably becomes shipwrecked upon the incommensurability of the ideal and the real. In the failure of ethics, sin "shows itself" but only fleetingly . . . it eludes description or explanation. Enter dogmatics, which uniquely proceeds from actuality and diagnoses the concrete human

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[38] *SKS* 4, 317 / *CA*, 9.

[39] *SKS* 4, 355 / *CA*, 50.

condition as sinful, thereby providing the presupposition for a "second ethics"—an ethics that still "sets ideality as a task," but which proceeds from the actuality of human sin.[40]

Thus, dogmatics determinatively conditions anthropology: it can reveal or assert something about concrete human existence in actuality, and thereby transform what would otherwise be an exercise in abstract or speculative ideality. Although Haufniensis' return to an emphasis on divine revelation seems to mirror Schelling's own trajectory, there are decisive differences in their understanding of the significance of revelation. Schelling extrapolates from an immanent investigation of the phenomena of human freedom and sin, and ultimately comes to a plethora of conclusions about the inner working of the divine personality, the eternal drive toward self-manifestation in love represented by the Incarnation, and so forth; and from these speculations, Schelling hopes to illuminate what was in fact his starting point—the human condition.

Conversely, Haufniensis, rather than seeking metaphysically to explain what God must be like in Godself in order to "explain" various dogmatic notions (especially sin and ethical responsibility), argues that such dogmatic notions are not *conclusions* of some particular science—not even of dogmatics itself. As he notes, "every science must vigorously lay hold of its own beginning and not live in complicated relations with other sciences. If dogmatics begins by wanting to *explain* sinfulness or by wanting to *prove* its actuality, no dogmatics will come out of it, but the entire existence of dogmatics will become vague and problematic."[41] Instead, the only sense in which dogmatics "explains" sin is by asserting and presupposing it: human sinfulness "belongs in dogmatics, in the Atonement, in the explanation by which this science explains the presupposition of sinfulness."[42]

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[40] *SKS* 4, 328 / *CA*, 20.

[41] *SKS* 4, 363n / *CA*, 58n, emphasis added.

[42] *SKS* 4, 363 / *CA*, 58.

In other words, dogma, and specifically the doctrine of the Atonement, implicitly contains within itself the notions of ethical responsibility and freedom, the universality of sin, and so forth. Dogmatics does not seek to explain these realities, but simply tells us that this is in fact our condition in relation to Christ. Thus, for Haufniensis, dogmatics expresses revealed truth, and divine revelation happens within the world of human experience. We do not discover the truths of revelation via human understanding, nor are the deliverances of revelation to be seen ultimately as abstract concepts available to the understanding. Rather, dogmatics is the most concrete of all sciences, for in it we encounter the truth of our actual existence as free, ethically culpable sinners in the presence of the eternal God.

In a way that sets him apart from Kant and Schelling, Haufniensis insists that freedom and sin, while unexplainable, are presuppositions of dogmatics. More specifically, he asserts that freedom and sin are contained implicitly within the doctrine of the Atonement—a *Christological* doctrine. The Atonement necessarily implies sinners as its object, sin implies culpability, and culpability implies freedom. Thus, freedom and sin are accepted as dogmatic truths which, rather than receiving explanation or justification from some prior intuition or separate science, stand as fundamental presuppositions in Haufniensis' anthropology. Haufiensis' position is further set apart from Kant and Schelling by his rejection of each of their attempts to tie together freedom and nature—the unconditioned noumenal-ideal and the conditioned phenomenal-real. And yet, the critical appropriation of this discourse shapes the project in *Concept of Anxiety*. The rejection of Kantian autonomy and Schelling's metaphysical-theological speculations maps directly on to the acceptance of a basically Kantian articulation of the problem: how can human freedom avoid both *dissolution* into a system of causality ("mere nature again") or un-concretized *isolation* due to the sheer incommensurability of freedom and nature as purely parallel realms. Schelling attempted to solve this problem through speculative theology, with the human's emergence as a free spirit framed in terms of

her finite participation in divine spirit. Kant attempted to solve the same problem by enclosing the entire problematic within his concept of the human. *Concept of Anxiety* takes a different approach. Agreeing that freedom only makes sense if it is related to law in some sense, Haufniensis suggests that freedom emerges along with the self when the eternal addresses humans with the unconditioned requirement—not in terms of a choice between good and evil (for that distinction does not even exist for the innocently anxious human consciousness prior to the leap) but in terms of obedience to God.

We can summarize Haufniensis' attempt to mark out his own stance regarding the dilemma that so exercised Kant and Schelling as follows: (1) With the early Kant and late Schelling, Haufniensis wants to preserve transcendental freedom—the only kind of freedom that can qualify as ethically significant since it does not boil down to mere nature. (2) Haufniensis avoids the problem of a sheerly arbitrary (and thus utterly tractionless) form of transcendental freedom by putting it in relation to a law or requirement. (3) He avoids the ethically flimsy (and philosophically problematic) Kantian solution of autonomy by positing the idea that the law comes from God. (4) He avoids the danger of freedom becoming mired in natural determinism by affirming the eternal persistence of God's utterly unconditioned transcendence and thus the unconditionedness of the law that conditions freedom. (5) But here things get complicated: Haufniensis attempts to keep transcendental freedom (conditioned by the divine requirement) connected to concrete reality by positing the idea that a transcendentally free spiritual self "emerges" from and expresses body-soul when it is addressed by the eternal *within temporality*—in other words, Haufniensis avoids the dilemma of a transcendental "I" that stands over against temporality and which must subsequently somehow reintegrate ethically with temporality by locating the site of the eternal-temporal intersection *within* human consciousness. He effectively sidesteps the challenge of integrating the free self with the natural world by positing freedom and history as aspects of finite consciousness that arises in and through the eternal's address. And yet, vitally, Haufniensis carefully preserves the truly transcendent

otherness of the eternal. This strategy at once keeps the free human being originally and fully engaged with concrete temporality *and* truly free by virtue of the fact that the choice it is presented with comes not from relative or conditional phenomena but directly from the unconditioned requirement of the eternal God.

Even so, Haufniensis has not really solved the challenges that attend any discussion of freedom, sin, and ethical responsibility against a broadly idealist backdrop—rather, he has relocated and reconfigured them. For while the free, ethically responsible self of *Concept of Anxiety* is firmly embedded within concrete historical-temporality as the context for becoming a self before God (thus eliminating or sidestepping Kant's and Schelling's dilemma revolving around the ethically meaningful reintegration of a transcendentally free self into the empirical world of natural causality), the human self's involvement with concrete historical-temporality suddenly and irrevocably takes on a dark, dangerous aspect. Everywhere in Kierkegaard's writings the result of eternity's and temporality's intersection in the human being is a two-edged sword: on one hand, it raises up human life to a unique place of honor and glory in relation to God; but on the other hand, it initiates the possibility (and apparent inevitability) of every kind of existential suffering, from the vague dread or anxiety that attends a dreaming spirit's first moments of awakening to the various forms of despair, both petty and demonic, that can grip the human creature tasked with becoming a self before God. Indeed, all of human history and temporal existence becomes not only the context for the anthropological task but also, inevitably, the site of human failure in relation to that task. Throughout *Concept of Anxiety* and elsewhere, Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms carefully preserve the distinction between temporality and sin, sensuousness and sin, and so forth. Sin never arises necessarily or quantitatively, but like freedom arises by a qualitative leap. And yet, temporality as such, along with all relative and conditional aspects of existence—which is to say, every aspect of human life other than the spiritual relation to God—is continually called into question and judgment by eternity, by the unconditioned, by God.

The net result is that while Kierkegaard's (and his pseudonym's) anthropology gives a fairly positive account of temporality and temporal existence as the starting point and continuing context for the task of becoming spirit before God, progress in that task is always framed in terms of suffering, isolation, self-effacement, and self-abnegation. Kierkegaard never allows a simplistically mystical approach to the task of becoming a self—existing humans are never afforded the luxury of mere detachment or ascetic flights from earthly cares. This is because the human being is not a composite, with a fully-formed spirit that can simply shed its earthiness in pseudo-gnostic fashion; rather, the self truly emerges and grows—the dreaming, latent spirit must awaken, become conscious, and constitute itself in obedience to the eternal. Thus, for Kierkegaard, the struggle and the suffering are the essential means by which a personality is gained.[43]

But this is hardly a ringing endorsement of temporality; while it remains always the site of the *opportunity* to become a self, it also (as we will see in the next two chapters) turns out to be the site of the utter failure of every human being to become a self. While sin is properly attributed only to human freedom, Kierkegaard's readers cannot help but wonder whether the failure of every human being in the anthropological task of becoming a self before God is somehow an unavoidable consequent of the incommensurability of eternity and temporality. Can human consciousness or historical actuality ever be the scene of the obedient harmony between the eternal and the temporal that Kierkegaard identifies as true humanness?[44] Or does the sheer "overweight" of eternity, despite God's present patience and grace, eventually overwhelm temporality?[45]

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[43]Kierkegaard uses this notion of gaining oneself through adversity throughout his authorship. For example, see *SKS* 1, 37 / *EPW*, 82; *SKS* 7, 91 / *CUP1*, 92; *SKS* 8, 420, 431 / *UDVS*, 328, 341; *SKS* 10, 63 / *CD*, 53; *SKS* 12, 77 / *PC*, 65–6.

[44]*SKS* 8, 355–7 / *UDVS*, 257–9.

[45]*SKS* 8, 400 / *UDVS*, 307.

Answers to these questions will be developed in chapters five and six. But first, it is time to begin the specifically Christological turn in what up to this point has been a philosophical (and only generally theological) discussion of Kierkegaard's anthropology. While we have seen hints of the anthropological importance of Christ in Haufniensis' insistence that human freedom and sin are dogmatically presupposed concepts which must be worked out in light of the Atonement, it is now time to examine the ways in which Kierkegaard's Christ conditions and determines his vision of human existence in the world. I accomplish this by a brief comparison of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's deeply Kierkegaardian dissertation, *Sanctorum Communio*, and *Concept of Anxiety*, from which Bonhoeffer borrowed heavily. The similarities between the two works only serve to make the difference more striking, and help highlight the source of a very persistent (and what I take to be legitimate) concern about Kierkegaard's anthropology: that he tends toward the individualistic and even acosmic.[46] This concern is, of course, the same concern mentioned in the previous paragraph about the ultimate status of temporality in its fundamentally asymmetrical relation to the eternal.

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[46]For expressions of these concerns, see: Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, trans. R. Gregor-Smith (London: Routledge, 2004); Louis Mackey, "The Loss of the World in Kierkegaard's Ethics," in *Kierkegaard: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Josiah Thompson (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972), 141–59; Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd (University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 39–56; Theodor W. Adorno, "Kierkegaard noch einmal: Zum hundertundfünfzigsten Geburtstag," *Neue Deutsche Hefte* 95 (1963): 5–25, 12–14; Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, "Modernity, Mass Society, and the Media: Reflections on the Corsair Affair," in *The Corsair Affair*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, vol. 13, International Kierkegaard Commentary (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990), 23–62, 57; Peter George, "Something Anti-Social about Works of Love," in *Kierkegaard: The Self in Society*, ed. George Pattison and Steven Shakespeare (New York: Macmillan, 1997), 70–81, 75.

4.2 History, the Individual, and the Race: Grasping Reality Concretely in the Notion of the Person

Dietrich Bonhoeffer framed humanity's ethical-social existence in terms of the relation to Christ. In "Outline for a Book," written shortly before his execution, he writes: "Our relation to God is not a 'religious' relationship to the highest, most powerful, and best Being imaginable—that is not authentic transcendence—but our relation to God is a new life in 'existence for others,' through participation in the being of Jesus."[47] Bonhoeffer is known for pressing Christologically toward a deeply this-wordly Christianity—apparently in stark contrast to the increasingly asocial and acosmic individuality that some detect in Kierkegaard's thought.[48] Bonhoeffer's trajectory toward this-worldly Christianity through "participation in the being of Jesus" can be traced to his dissertation, *Sanctorum Communio*, where he argues for a fundamentally social anthropology that funds his definition of the church: "Christ existing as community." In this work, Bonhoeffer explicitly contrasts his anthropology with Kierkegaard's: after briefly alluding to Kierkegaard's valiant attempt to "grasp reality concretely in his notion of the person," he argues that Kierkegaard's anthropology remains "bound to the idealist position,"[49] resulting in an individualism that undermines ecclesiology.

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[47]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. John W. de Gruchy, trans. Isabel Best et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 381.

[48]Readers will notice that I do not subject Bonhoeffer to the same kind of in-depth critical treatment I gave Kant and Schelling earlier in my contextualization. This should not be taken to mean that I think Bonhoeffer's anthropology is simply "correct" over against Kierkegaard's, or anything else so blunt. My reasoning for declining to undertake an in-depth engagement with Bonhoeffer's anthropology is twofold: first, unlike Kant and Schelling, Bonhoeffer obviously had no bearing on the development of Kierkegaard's thought; second, the merits or weaknesses of Bonhoeffer's positions are in no way pertinent to his rhetorical function in this chapter. I am merely seeking to leverage the striking similarity of Kierkegaard's and Bonhoeffer's Christological methods of approaching anthropology against their sharply divergent conclusions, thereby locating more precisely where and how Kierkegaard's Christ determines his anthropology. For this leveraging to work, assessing the nuances of Bonhoeffer's communitarian anthropology is rather beside the point—all that really matters is *that* his anthropology was communitarian (in contrast to Kierkegaard's), and that this happened despite their nearly identical Christological methodology.

[49]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, ed. Clifford J. Green, trans. Reinhard Krauss and Nancy Lukens (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 57n12.

Bracketing for a moment whether Bonhoeffer's critique is valid, there is nothing particularly surprising about it, aligning as it does with typical interpretations of the time. What *is* surprising is that Bonhoeffer's proposed corrective sometimes reads like a wholesale paraphrase of *Concept of Anxiety*, repeating key phrases nearly verbatim from Haufniensis' "simple psychological investigation." My aim in this section, expanding on Kierkegaard's dogmatic-theological methodology and anthropological insights described in the previous section, is twofold: 1) First, I trace out two key ideas from *Concept of Anxiety* that figure significantly in *Sanctorum Communio*. 2) This sets the stage for my contention that, although Bonhoeffer's use of these Kierkegaardian ideas highlights promising avenues for efforts to find positive social implications in Kierkegaard's thought, the crucial *differences* between Bonhoeffer and Kierkegaard (especially given their striking similarities) help diagnose exactly why there has been—and continues to be—such difficulty deriving a positive account of temporality (and more specifically, sociality and the church) from Kierkegaard.

4.2.1 Kierkegaardian Echoes in Sanctorum Communio

There are several unacknowledged Kierkegaardian notions in Bonhoeffer's *Sanctorum Communio*; I will focus only on two, drawn from *Concept of Anxiety*.[50] The first regards Kierkegaard's and Bonhoeffer's methodological approach to the Christian understanding of the primal state and original sin; the second explores social implications of their shared understanding of the mutuality of the individual and the race.

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[50]To my knowledge, there has never been a substantial study of Bonhoeffer's use of *Concept of Anxiety* in his dissertation. One recent study approaches this issue: Matthew D. Kirkpatrick, *Attacks on Christendom in a World Come of Age: Kierkegaard, Bonhoeffer, and the Question of "Religionless Christianity"* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011). However (and understandably, given his larger goal of assessing Kierkegaard's overall significance for Bonhoeffer), Kirkpatrick never moves beyond acknowledging the presence of parallel themes and phrases in these two books, and simply asserts that Bonhoeffer's idea of community seems to draw upon Kierkegaard's understanding of the individual.

The Primal State and Original Sin as Dogmatic Projections. The similarities between Bonhoeffer's and Kierkegaard's understanding of original sin (and, to a certain extent, the primal state of innocence) are striking. Both identify persistent confusion between *sin* and *sinfulness* as the root of the doctrine's difficulties. As Bonhoeffer puts it, there has been a tendency to mix "ideas intended to prove the universality of sin" into inquiries about the "proliferation of sin."[51] In other words, we must distinguish between the question "How is it that each and every person sins?" and the question "What are the historical effects of sin?" He concludes that while sin's effects *accumulate* socio-historically, each sin-act happens when "the individual spirit rises up against God . . . occasioned by nothing else." Haufniensis likewise points out the vital difference between the *qualitative* "leap" into sin (as the free act of an innocent but anxious person, not the culmination of a series of prior states) and the *quantitative* accretion of sin's consequences (which condition history and contribute to each new individual's innocent anxiety).

Through this distinction, Bonhoeffer articulates the core problematic: "How can one conceive of the individual culpable act and the guiltiness of the human race together without making one the reason for the other, that is, excusing one by means of the other?"[52] He then examines the failures of traditional approaches to this question, closely mirroring Haufniensis' analysis. Haufniensis concludes with a warning against placing Adam fantastically outside of human history or outside of the human race in such a way that his individual sin uniquely "causes" all subsequent sins; to do so, as Haufniensis so succinctly puts it, is to "fall either into the Pelagian, Socinian, and philanthropic singular or into the fantastic."[53]

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[51]Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 109.

[52]ibid., 115. He continues, "Everything obviously depends upon *finding the act of the whole in the sinful individual act*, without making the one the reason for the other."

[53]*SKS* 4, 335 / *CA*, 28. This dilemma could be rephrased into two questions: "If it was Adam's fault, how can it be our fault?" But "If it wasn't Adam's fault, how could it be *anyone*'s fault?"

For both, the key to the dilemma lies in the connection between individuals and the race: Bonhoeffer writes, "The individual culpable act and the culpability of the human race must be connected conceptually"; and Kierkegaard likewise insists, "To explain Adam's sin is to explain hereditary sin" (*CA*).[54] Up to this point, Haufniensis' and Bonhoeffer's arguments have developed in merely similar language; but to this crucial question they posit the same answer in nearly identical language. Haufniensis writes: "Man is *individuum* and as such simultaneously himself and the whole race."[55] Bonhoeffer echoes: "*The human being, by virtue of being an individual, is also the human race.*"[56]

We will examine the social implications of this connection between the individual and the race in the next section. But first we turn to the similarities and differences in the theological method that supports both thinkers' ideas about original sin and the primal state. Both argue that the idea of the primal state and the fall arises when dogmatic content is "projected backward," generating a myth that provides dogma with historical trappings and augmenting its concreteness.[57] Both argue that the revealed dogmatic notion of sin (as the condition of humanity and as an act that every person commits) gets projected into the past as the narrative of Adam's fall. Additionally, their dogmatic projection is

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[54]See Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 110–11 and *SKS* 4, 335 / *CA* , 28.

[55]*SKS* 4, 335 / *CA*, 28.

[56]Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 117.

[57]The actual phrase "projected backward" comes from ibid., 61. I say that both Kierkegaard and Bonhoeffer see the creation and fall narrative as a myth, knowing that this brings up many things that need explaining—something I'm not able to address adequately in this context. Leaving aside Bonhoeffer's understanding of myth and his complex relationship to Bultmann, I will make a couple of comments about Kierkegaard's understanding of myth. I believe his argument in *Concept of Anxiety* §6 is especially illuminating: "Let us now examine the narrative in Genesis more carefully as we attempt to dismiss the fixed idea that it is a myth, and as we remind ourselves that no age has been more skillful than our own in producing myths of the understanding, an age that produces myths and at the same time wants to eradicate them." I take this to mean that he doesn't want to allow the modern age to dismiss the scriptural account of the fall "as merely a myth." But he goes on to say of the Genesis narrative: "Even though one may call this a myth, it neither disturbs thought nor confuses the concept, as does a myth of the understanding. The myth allows something that is inward to take place outwardly." Thus, Kierkegaard distinguishes between a *myth of the understanding* and a *proper myth*, which truly describes and externalizes an existential truth. Cf. Jason A. Mahn, *Fortunate Fallibility: Kierkegaard and the Power of Sin* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 18–9,

explicitly Christological. Haufniensis focuses especially on the Atonement, noting that doctrine about Christ's work is the source of the dogmatic presupposition of sinfulness.[58] His argument for the idea that all humans (including Adam) are "participants in" and not merely "spectators of" guiltiness is rooted in the dogmatic concern that it will not do "to make all men into interested and sympathetic spectators of the Atonement but not participants in the Atonement."[59] Likewise, Bonhoeffer consistently derives the logic of humanity's relation to Adam from the notion of Christ's "vicarious representative action."

However, Haufniensis and Bonhoeffer have very different notions of the primal state of innocence. Haufniensis argues that, in the face of conceptual difficulties surrounding hereditary and individual sin, "a fantastic presupposition was introduced, the loss of which constituted the fall"—and while this mythical "godly prelude" neatly secures the truth that a state of sinlessness nowhere exists in the world (rightly establishing the universality of sin), it has the unfortunate side effect of drawing attention away from concrete dogmatic truth and initiates abstractive theologizing about un-fallen humanity.[60] Haufniensis boldly dismisses Catholicism's notion of Adam's prelapsarian supernatural gifts and federal theology's idea of Adam as a unique "plenipotentiary for the whole race": the first "merely explains away what it has fictitiously composed; the other merely composes fiction that explains nothing."[61] Instead, Haufniensis defines the primal state of original innocence as something like an implied addendum to the backward projection of the dogma of sin's actuality, the point of which is simply that "*sin came into the world*

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[58]*SKS* 4, 363 / *CA*, 58: "all this [i.e., corruption of creation, the sinful misuse of freedom, the seeming unavoidability of sin, etc.] has no place in a psychological deliberation but belongs in dogmatics, in the Atonement, in the explanation by which this science explains the presupposition of sinfulness."

[59]*SKS* 4, 342 / *CA*, 36.

[60]*SKS* 4, 338–9 / *CA*, 32–3: "By Adam's first sin, *sin came into the world*. This statement, which is the common one, nevertheless contains an altogether outward reflection that doubtless has contributed greatly to the rise of vague misunderstanding." Haufniensis goes on to describe how this statement about Adam applies in essentially the same way to all human sin: "sinfulness is in the world only insofar as it comes into the world by sin."

[61]*SKS* 4, 332–3 / *CA*, 25–6.

by a sin."[62] When human understanding "takes to the mythical," it tends to distort the biblical revelation: "denying the leap [into sin] and explaining the circle as a straight line," it reframes the qualitative leap as something quantitatively explainable, thereby conflating sin and sinfulness.[63]

Bonhoeffer, however, maintains that "the doctrine of the primal state is hope projected backward."[64] On one hand, Bonhoeffer is operating with a logic rather similar to Haufniensis' interpretation of hereditary sin as a myth that must be understood in terms of the Atonement. But, on the other hand, Bonhoeffer is extending this Christocentric logic. Haufniensis, as we have seen, limits his projection of Christian dogma onto the Genesis narrative to the Atonement and its ramifications for the fall into sin—but he radically subordinates the notion of the primal state of innocence, describing it as an ultimately negligible feature that simply attends the mythical explication of the universality of sin. Bonhoeffer takes a somewhat different approach. Specifically, he projects not only the Atonement, but also the eschatological hope of the new heavens and new earth—understood in fundamentally social and communal terms—and thus ascribes much greater significance to the primal state of innocence than Kierkegaard does. For Bonhoeffer, the biblical narrative of a primal state is not a vague and easily misused codicil to the notion of the fall. Rather, the primal state of innocence described in scripture carries within it the seeds of the church's eschatological hope, understood in terms of restored community—both amongst humanity and between humanity and God:

> The Christian concept of person should be thought of historically, i.e., in the state after the fall, for history in the true sense only begins with sin and the fate of death that is linked with it. From this it follows that the concept of person in the primal state must be understood differently, corresponding to the idea of the

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[62] *SKS* 4, 338 / *CA*, 32.

[63] *SKS* 4, 338 / *CA*, 32.

[64] Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 60–1. Bonhoeffer will later expand on this specifically Christological and eschatological hope that serves as the source of the biblical notion of the primal state in *Creation and Fall*.

> new humanity which, in hope, overcomes the history of sin and death. . . . It is not that community with God subsequently leads to social community; rather, neither exists without the other . . . even the formal concept of person can be conceived only in terms of community. Thus unbroken social community belongs to primal being, in parallel to the eschatological hope we have for it in the church.[65]

Bonhoeffer's emphasis on the primal state, not simply as the conceptually expedient prelude to the Christologically-induced idea of the fall, but as a vital statement of an all-pervading, all-transforming eschatological hope conceived as the communion of God and humanity in Christ, marks a difference between Kierkegaard and Bonhoeffer. Although Kierkegaard's anthropology is not quite so straightforwardly idealist or individualist as Bonhoeffer supposes, it may well be that Bonhoeffer's critique lands at just this point.[66]

The Individual and the Race. We return now to an examination of Haufniensis' and Bonhoeffer's shared assertion that each individual is both herself and the race. Consider these nearly identical statements, the first from Haufniensis and the second from Bonhoeffer: "each individual has the same perfection, and precisely because of this individuals do not fall apart from one another numerically"; "[in sin], one falls away not only from one's personal vocation but also from one's generic vocation as a member of the human race. Thus all humanity falls with each sin, and not one of us is in principle

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[65]Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 63.

[66]This is not the place for a full critical description of Bonhoeffer's theology; I only bring him up by way of comparison. I am not trying to make the point that Bonhoeffer is better than Kierkegaard, or that Bonhoeffer is right while Kierkegaard is wrong. Rather, the salient points are as follows: Kierkegaard's Christ determines his anthropology, but Bonhoeffer, who shares Kierkegaard's Christological method, comes to a radically different vision of the human person, one which fundamentally includes sociality rather than seeing sociality as secondary to the individual person. This signals what I take to be a very important observation: if Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology proves to be radically individualistic, anti-social, acosmic, etc., it is not simply because of its Christologicality per se. Rather, there may be something defective or incomplete about Kierkegaard's Christology. To anticipate my conclusions in chapter eight, this incompleteness lies precisely in Kierkegaard's misunderstanding of the nature of the eschatological hope that Christians have in Christ, Kierkegaard's limited understanding of the Atonement in largely substitutionary terms, and a notion of selfhood or personhood (*Personlighed*) that misses important Christian theological dimensions.

different from Adam."[67] For both thinkers, the individual and the race are united in ethical solidarity, in responsibility before God.

However, Bonhoeffer stops where Haufniensis begins. Bonhoeffer simply correlates this observation about the individual and the race with an analysis of "social basic-relations." But Haufniensis elaborates on the inward unity between individual and universal sin: "The most profound reason for [the connection between corporate and individual sin] is what is essential to human existence: that man is *individuum* and as such simultaneously himself and the whole race, and in such a way that the whole race participates in the individual and the individual in the whole race."[68] The human race is a historical actuality that subsists in *individuals*—and therefore "the race" does not simply indicate "species" or "kind." More importantly, "race" is not an abstract conceptual universal, of which individuals are simply particular instantiations: "Every individual is essentially interested in the history of all other individuals, and just as essentially as in his own. Perfection in oneself is therefore the perfect participation in the whole. No individual is indifferent to the history of the race any more than the race is indifferent to the history of the individual."[69]

Haufniensis clarifies by contrasting humans with animals and angels. Although animals, like humans, extend their species across temporality through biological descent, this temporal succession does not truly constitute a history. Mere biological descent cannot bring forth an individual. An animal species is not a race because it has no individuals and no history. Nor is an angel either an individual or a member of a race, but "only himself without participating in any history."[70] Thus, although biological

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[67]*SKS* 4, 336 / *CA*, 29; Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 115.

[68]*SKS* 4, 335 / *CA*, 28.

[69]*SKS* 4, 336 / *CA*, 29.

[70]*SKS* 4, 341 / *CA*, 34. Cf. Arne Grøn, "The Human Synthesis," in *Anthropology and Authority: Essays on Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. Poul Houe, Gordon D. Marino, and Sven Hakon Rossel (Amsterdam: Rodopi,

descent is not sufficient to bring forth the individual or the race, without it, humans could be neither: apart from descent, each instantiation of a human being would be an "empty repetition," like an abstract truth of logic or mathematics, or like an angel. "Every particular Adam would have become a statue by himself, and hence qualified only by an indifferent determination."[71] What, then—beyond the temporal continuity of the species through biological descent—is required to produce the individual and the race? The answer lies in Haufniensis' account of "the moment," and in his closely related concept of the human person as a synthesis—not only of the finite and the infinite, but particularly of the eternal and the temporal, as a temporal creature in relation to God. Haufniensis sets up his anthropology in connection with the decisive notion of the moment by noting that the human

> is a synthesis of psyche and body, but he is also a *synthesis of the temporal and the eternal*. . . . As for the latter synthesis, it is immediately striking that it is formed differently from the former. In the former, the two factors are psyche and body, and spirit is the third. . . . The latter synthesis has only two factors, the temporal and the eternal. Where is the third factor? And if there is no third factor, there really is no synthesis, for a synthesis that is a contradiction cannot be completed as a synthesis without a third factor.[72]

Haufniensis further argues that a life that is "only in time has no present"—it is simply infinite succession in which the moment can only appear as an abstract parody of eternity. Conversely, the moment, properly understood, is "an atom of eternity"; it is "that ambiguity in which time and eternity touch each other . . . whereby time constantly intersects eternity and eternity constantly pervades time."[73] Here, Haufniensis attempts to accomplish what Bonhoeffer excellently described as "grasp[ing] reality concretely in his notion of the person." Drawing together the concepts of the moment, the human as spirit,

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2000), 27–32, 27–8.

[71] *SKS* 4, 341 / *CA*, 34.

[72] *SKS* 4, 388 / *CA*, 85.

[73] *SKS* 4, 382 / *CA*, 88–9.

and history, Haufniensis argues that the synthesis of the temporal and the eternal is not a different synthesis than the psyche-body synthesis, but is its "expression." The moment is present as soon as the spirit is posited, when the dreaming body-soul animal known as a human awakens to the eternal, and realizes that she exists before God. And "only with the moment does history begin"—history as opposed to the mere succession of time.

To sum up, the individual is more than a particular instantiation of a conceptual universal or an animal species; rather, precisely because of the spiritual "synthesis" in which the psyche-body entity relates to God, there is the moment, and there is history in the fullest sense of the word—not simply the unfolding life of a plant (for causally conditioned sequential development is really nothing more than a state[74]) but a history characterized by freedom and responsibility before God. This *historical* life is rooted in humanity's peculiar identity as spirit in relation to God; and as we have already seen, individual history can never be abstracted from that of the race: "As the history of the race moves on, the individual begins constantly anew, because he is both himself and the race, and by this, in turn, the history of the race."[75] In the essential God-relationship whereby the individual arises, in that very moment the mutuality of the individual and the race in a shared history is established.

4.2.2 Some Preliminary Concerns Regarding Christology

Kierkegaard is not simply, as Bonhoeffer charged, an individualist who remained "bound to the idealist position."[76] Rather, if we let Haufniensis speak for him, Kierkegaard

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[74]*SKS* 4, 329 / *CA*, 21: "[B]ecoming by necessity is a state, as, for example, the whole history of the plant is a state." Haufniensis contrasts this with the kind of existence that a free creature has, whose actions cannot simply be explained by a preceding state. Obviously, this maps onto his analysis of the difference between sin and sinfulness.

[75]*SKS* 4, 335 / *CA*, 29.

[76]By "idealism," Bonhoeffer was specifically referring to the Fichtean self-establishing I=I. Kierkegaard clearly differentiates himself from this formulation. Additionally, our contextualization work earlier in this chapter and in chapter three should show that while Kierkegaard takes cues from idealism, his appropriation is both critical and transformative.

is perhaps better understood as a personalist for whom the self-as-spirit only arises relationally, when God relates Godself to a finite, ensouled body. And even if the decisive spirit-producing relation is between the individual and God, this concept of the person seems inseparable from the historical and the social, given the interconnectedness of the individual and the race, and the co-inherence of the moment (the intersection of temporality-eternity in human consciousness) and history (the shared life all conscious humans). This, as I noted above, seems to offer an extraordinarily fertile theological and anthropological ground for developing not only sociality, but a robust concept of the church. Indeed, given Haufniensis' account of the person, what could prevent Kierkegaard from affirming with Bonhoeffer that the "experience of the *peccatorum communio* . . . anticipates the experience of the church"?[77]

Yet, it is just this move—from the inward spiritual relation to God to the outward interrelatedness of temporal life—that Kierkegaard consistently struggled to describe. In *Concept of Anxiety*, Haufniensis notes that the religious design of every human life, upon which the "concepts of individuality, race, and immortality" depend, introduces "very difficult problems," namely, "how my religious existence comes into relation with and expresses itself in my outward existence."[78] But other than the vague affirmation that the inwardness of religion is "absolutely commensurable" with outward social life, Haufniensis stops short of offering an answer for *how* this might happen.[79] As Kierkegaard's authorship

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[77]Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 118. Again, I do not mean to lift up Bonhoeffer as the "correct" standard by which to measure Kierkegaard; the correctness or incorrectness of Bonhoeffer's views is beside the point at this juncture. Rather, I am attempting to leverage the simultaneous similarity of method and divergence of conclusions to locate precisely where Kierkegaard's thought edges toward the anti-social and, by extension, the anti-temporal. In this way, I both highlight the fact that from early on Kierkegaard let dogma (and especially Christology) determine his anthropology (the heart of my thesis), and gesture toward the possibility that this method, while it in fact yielded a problematic view of temporality and sociality (the center of my critique) *need not have done so* (which constitutes the starting point for re-appropriating rather than dismissing Kierkegaard's anthropology).

[78]*SKS* 4, 407 / *CA*, 105.

[79]We could perhaps turn to *Fear and Trembling*, with the Knight of Faith transcending the Knight of Infinite Resignation in his ability to receive back temporality; but even here, Johannes *de silentio* never

progresses and his message becomes more pointedly theological and direct, social and ecclesial involvements are increasingly set in opposition to the person as individual. The anthropology described in *The Sickness unto Death*, though somewhat parallel to that in *Concept of Anxiety*, develops largely without reference to positive social implications.[80] And in his late journals, Kierkegaard appears to set the spirit in explicit opposition to the body-psyche synthesis.[81] Consider this rather telling journal entry from 1851 in which Kierkegaard criticizes a theologian for deducing the church from humanity's social nature:

> Without wanting to deny the reality of the Church or that Christianity affirms it, I would take objection, however, to this kind of deduction. To be specific, Christianity is related to spirit—and sociality is related essentially to the body-soul synthesis. Aristotle says correctly that "the crowd" is an animal

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offers an explanation for how this reintegration of the spiritual and social can take place . . . he simply asserts that it can, and marvels at it. I will have more to say about the kind of "commensurability" described in *Fear and Trembling* in chapter six.

[80]Those sympathetic to Kierkegaard generally argue that in *Sickness Unto Death* Kierkegaard never intended to exclude other relations; rather "it is by no means clear that Kierkegaard thinks God is the only 'other' who is significant in forming the self's identity" (see C. Stephen Evans, "Kierkegaard's View of the Unconscious," in *Kierkegaard in Post/Modernity*, ed. Martin J. Matuštík and Merold Westphal (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 76–97, 83. Cf. Sylvia Walsh, *Living Poetically: Kierkegaard's Existential Aesthetics* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 258 n38; Arnold B. Come, "The Implications of Søren Kierkegaard's View of Sexuality and Gender for an Appraisal of Homosexuality," in *Anthropology and Authority: Essays on Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. Poul Houe, Gordon D. Marino, and Sven Hakon Rossel (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 33–40, 34; Pia Søltoft, "Anthropology and Ethics: The Connection between Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity as the Basis of a Kierkegaardian Anthropology," in *Anthropology and Authority: Essays on Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. Poul Houe, Gordon D. Marino, and Sven Hakon Rossel (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 41–48, 41. I will return to the significance of this seeming shift toward imagining the self's development in a solely dyadic self-God relation in subsequent chapters; for now, suffice to say that while Kierkegaard certainly believes that the human other (i.e., sociality) plays a role in the self's formation, that role is radically relativized. Such social relations are not positive constituents of the self, but either preliminary movements toward selfhood or temporary concessions to each individual's weakness and inability to be spirit. The social realm is, at best, a secondary aspect of the lenient pole in the Christian dialectic of existence which I describe in chapter five. This supports the idea that the dyadic self-God relation described in *Sickness unto Death* should be allowed to stand as an essentially complete account of Kierkegaard's relational account of the self—ultimately, the self becomes itself essentially in relation to God alone.

[81]*SKS* 26, 156 / *JP* 4, 250. Cf. *SKS* 21, NB7:58 / *JP* 2, 1377: "Right at this point the real meaning of religious sociality is to be found—that is, when the ideality of the God-relationship has become too strong for an individual (since he cannot, after all, demand direct revelation from God, and his reflection traps him), he must now have another person to discuss it with. From this we see that sociality is not the highest but is really a concession to human weakness. Here, also, is the significance of the idea that God relates himself to the whole race. The idea of the race, of sociality, is then a middle term between God and the single individual."

> qualification. Christianity teaches also that eternal life is simply not social. Society cannot be deduced from "spirit," and the Church exists precisely because we are not truly spirit or pure spirit. "The congregation" is an accommodation, a concession in view of how little we are able to endure being spirit.[82]

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Drawing a final conclusion about Kierkegaard's anthropology in relation to his assessments of temporality, sociality, and ecclesiology would be premature at this point. However, in the conclusion we will return to the concerns raised in this chapter. For now it is enough to note that the differences between Bonhoeffer's and Kierkegaard's assessments of the human self and the social realm (despite their extraordinarily similar Christological methodologies) highlight both what is most promising and most devastating for attempts to derive an anthropology that can support a positive account of sociality and the church from Kierkegaard. In *Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard's Haufniensis offers an extraordinarily rich account of how the individual's spiritual relation to God is intimately connected with history and sociality. But, as we will see in the next two chapters, Haufniensis' approach ultimately founders upon problematic intuitions that Kierkegaard increasingly emphasizes, namely: (a) the conviction that the spirit *opposes* the body-soul (thus calling into serious question Christianity's commensurability with sociality), and (b) that Christ relates only individually to the individual (calling forth perpetual striving toward an impossible ethical ideal). I suspect that because Kierkegaard's Christology is "incomplete" in significant ways (a critique I spell out more fully in chapter eight), his understanding of original sin and historical sinfulness is not sufficiently bracketed by either the primal state of unbroken communion between God and humanity, or the eschatological hope from which that notion proceeds—a hope which in turn entails a Christological understanding of the church as the proleptic historical instantiation of the eschaton.

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[82] *SKS* 24, 312 NB23:216 / *JP* 4, 4341 (translation modified).

In the following chapters, we will investigate more closely how exactly Christ conditions and determines Kierkegaard's anthropological vision; but even at this early juncture, we are beginning to see that, for good or ill, the *kind* of dogmatic, Christological content that Kierkegaard chooses to project into the science of anthropology has a profound impact on what he is and is not able to say about the life of the spirit in relation to the world. More to the point, it decisively shapes the overall character of the dynamic process of the body-soul/spirit's task of becoming a self before God.

CHAPTER FIVE

Christ and Anthropology I: The Christian Dialectic of Existence

Christ has many names in Kierkegaard's writings: the God-man, the prototype, the Redeemer, the Absolute Paradox. But what does the Christ signified by these names mean for Kierkegaard's anthropology? My assertion that Kierkegaard's anthropology is Christological requires a clear understanding not so much of Kierkegaard's Christology but of Kierkegaard's Christ—for Kierkegaard's understandings of Christian doctrine, rather than receiving explicit formulations, are more often than not implicitly embedded within his drive toward subjective appropriation. Such is certainly the case for his Christology. It should be noted that we have seen that the doctrine of the Atonement, in its close connection with Christ's death on behalf of sinners, figures significantly in Kierkegaard's anthropology as it appears in *Concept of Anxiety*. And I have hinted (especially at the end of chapter four) at an incompleteness in Kierkegaard's Christology in relation to the Atonement. These are details that I draw out more fully in subsequent chapters. But in the present chapter, I opt not to unearth Kierkegaard's Christological doctrine (i.e., the traditional dogmatic questions of Christ's two natures, his redemptive work, and so forth) and then append it to the anthropology outlined in previous chapters; rather, I believe that a fuller picture of Christ's significance for our reconstruction of Kierkegaard's anthropology becomes most clear through attending to the ways Kierkegaard's Christ functions in his anthropologically-oriented discussions in the late theological discourses. In short, my goal in this chapter (as well as the next) is to show explicitly how Christ informs and determines Kierkegaard's vision of the existing human being—the free, ethically responsible, and relationally-defined synthesis of body-soul/spirit.

The chapter is laid out in two sections, mapping onto the two primary roles that Christ plays throughout Kierkegaard's theological discourses: the prototype (or exemplar,

Forbillede) and Redeemer. Section 5.1 demonstrates that for Kierkegaard, in order truly to become a self before God the human being must have Christ as her prototype or exemplar. Focusing especially on "The Cares of the Pagans" (Part One of *Christian Discourses*), I show how the sheer historical reality of the God-man issues an implacable call to the existing human, pulling her beyond both a purely animal immediacy on one hand and a pagan despair on the other—a despair over the interval between what one is and what one is not yet in a worldly sense of comparison and calculation. Christ's example calls the human instead to become *spirit* before God, to in some sense embody the eternal in temporality, to live in and from "the moment" (in the peculiarly Kierkegaardian sense of the word). Indeed, for Kierkegaard, the human being is ultimately called to attain a kind of self-identity, to become oneself before God.[1]

According to Kierkegaard, this journey to selfhood is uniquely pressed forward by Christ's divine-human life—and therefore being human in the fullest sense means, for Kierkegaard, "becoming a Christian."[2] Further developing the key categories of freedom and ethics discussed in the previous chapter, so central to Kierkegaard's anthropology, we find that the shape and direction of every human life is essentially beyond itself in some sense. And it is specifically Christ who alone provides the content of this call, applies it to each existing individual in the form of "the ethical" (which in the Christian sense corresponds to the "second ethics" described in *Concept of Anxiety* rather than the ethical-universal of *Fear and Trembling*), and is himself "the Way." The significance of obedience should be highlighted here. We saw in chapter four how Christ implicitly grounds the dogmatic claims regarding human freedom and ethical responsibility in *Concept of Anxiety*, thereby founding the "second ethics." Thus, Kierkegaard decisively re-envisions

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[1] *SKS* 10, 92 / *CD*, 84: "This love [a human's love for God] unifies a person, makes him eternally at one with himself and with the master who is one; and it unifies a person in likeness to God."

[2] Cf. Mark C. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood: Hegel and Kierkegaard*, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy 14 (New York: Fordham University Press, [1980] 2000), 171–2.

ethics not as the rational determination of various action's rightness wrongness, but as *obedience*. Christ not only implies human sinfulness and freedom; his historical actuality immediately transforms ethics and thus the nature of the journey toward selfhood. No longer can ethics and ethical responsibility be thought of as the kind of abstract idealizing and compromise that characterized "pagan" ethics. Rather, Christ as the full *actualization* of the ideal both *reveals* the requirement with greater precision than would otherwise be available, and *renders* the ideal into an utterly serious, *actual* requirement upon existing humans. This is not to make the broader argument that Kierkegaard leaves no place for deliberating about the moral law; it is simply to say that, when it comes to his anthropology, the *crucial* factor in ethical striving is the self's transparent obedience to God and God's requirement.[3]

And yet, this high calling—this perfection of needing God[4] and having God as one's prototype or exemplar—runs up against the question of commensurability—identified in chapter two as the problem facing all existing humans: can the human express the life of the spirit (being a self before God) fully and without remainder within the conditions of temporal existence, social relationships, and daily cares? Kierkegaard assures us that Christ achieved just this sort of existence, and calls Christians to the same. But to what

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[3]Similarly, *Works of Love*, often identified as the explication of the "second ethics" introduced in *Concept of Anxiety*, makes much of the fact that love is *commanded* absolutely by God; it is not just an abstraction that hovers above existence, providing an airy ideal that must be approximated in the messiness of day-to-day life. This fact—the centrality of the command and human obedience to the command—makes *Works of Love* a rather equivocal work, with some claiming it as proof that Kierkegaard believed it was possible to hold together an absolute relation to God with relative relations with others. For further discussion, see Claudia Welz, *Love's Transcendence and the Problem of Theodicy*, vol. 30, Religion in Philosophy and Theology (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 170ff; M. Jamie Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving: A Commentary on Kierkegaard's Works of Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Pia Søltoft, "Anthropology and Ethics: The Connection between Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity as the Basis of a Kierkegaardian Anthropology," in *Anthropology and Authority: Essays on Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. Poul Houe, Gordon D. Marino, and Sven Hakon Rossel (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 41–48, 46–7. Relatedly, we will see in chapter six why Kierkegaard believes any true relation with God must take place within the context of obedience to the unconditional requirement placed by God on the individual. Cf. Ronald M. Green, *Kant and Kierkegaard on Time and Eternity* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2011), 140ff.

[4]For an early expression of this notion, see the appropriately titled "To Need God Is a Human Being's Highest Perfection" (*SKS* 5, 291–316 / *EUD*, 297–326).

extent can humans follow Christ's requirement? At least two factors impede humanity's Christlikeness. As sinners, all humans are always already in a state of infinite debt, having already fallen short of the kind of truly spiritual existence exemplified by Christ.[5] Furthermore, beyond the infinite debt each sinner discovers at the outset of her journey toward becoming a self before God, even Christians do not attain a once-and-for-all transition from worldliness to a properly spiritual life. Every person's life is punctuated by repeated failures and new revelations of the inability to rest transparently in God within the context of temporal existence.

These failures—the essential sinfulness of every human and the ongoing failures even of those who have embarked upon the way of Christ—call for a Redeemer, a topic I take up in Section 5.2. Kierkegaard's emphasis on Christ as both prototype and Redeemer initiates a distinctively Christological dialectic of existence, a constant and fruitful tension between the strenuousness of the ethical requirement the lenience of divine grace. The former protects against spiritlessness, the latter against despair.

5.1 Christ as Prototype: Strenuousness

We have already seen that Kierkegaard was using Christ implicitly to inform his anthropology at least as early as 1844, with the publication of *Concept of Anxiety*. As shown in the previous chapter, Kierkegaard views freedom and sin as direct correlates of the Atonement, with sin in particular shaping the "second ethics," in which humans are in a state of personal, direct responsibility to God. In the later theological discourses Kierkegaard continues to fill out this Christologically-conditioned view of the human being by introducing the notion of a Christian dialectic of existence. The dialectic is kept in fruitful tension by the twin emphases on ethical strenuousness and the leniency of grace,

[5] *SKS* 9, 107–8, 135 / *WL*, 102–3, 132. Cf. Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 119-20.

both of which Kierkegaard relates to Christ.[6] Against the backdrop of his increasingly vociferous contention that Christianity had disappeared from Christendom (due in large part to a misappropriation of Luther's emphasis on grace), Kierkegaard insists that the full Gospel must continue to press rigorousness even within the context of gracious leniency.[7]

According to Kierkegaard, the official Christianity of the Danish Church had "abolished the imitation [*Efterfølgelse*] of Christ, so that one relates oneself to the prototype [*Forbillede*] only through the imagination but oneself lives in totally other categories," and eventually "discards the prototype altogether."[8] Because of this loss of the prototype, "it is Christ as the prototype which must now be stressed dialectically, for the very reason that the dialectical (Christ as gift) which Luther stressed, has been taken completely in vain, so that the 'imitator' [*Efterfølgeren*] in no way resembles the prototype . . . and then grace is merely slipped in."[9]

Thus, Kierkegaard's emphasis on Christ as the prototype often appears along with corresponding designations for Christ that emphasize his gracious work and, by extension, map onto the concept of leniency. Designations of this sort include "Savior" and "Redeemer." Kierkegaard encapsulates his dialectic of Christian existence in a prayer addressed to Christ in *Judge For Yourself!*

> Help us all, each one of us, you who both will and can, you who are both the exemplar and the Redeemer, so that when the striving one droops under the

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[6]Discussions of this dialectic of Christian existence abound. Some of the best examples include: David J. Gouwens, *Kierkegaard as Religious Thinker* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 127–8; David D. Possen, "The Voice of Rigor," in *Practice in Christianity*, vol. 20, International Kierkegaard Commentary (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2004), 161–85; Murray Rae, *Kierkegaard and Theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 145–55, Gregor Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard's Concept of Existence*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2003), 127–31; Sylvia Walsh, *Living Christianly: Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Christian Existence* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), especially 157–9. See also Walsh's seminal work in Sylvia Walsh, "Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Christian Existence" (PhD diss., Emory University, 1975).

[7]See *SKS* 23, 32, NB 18:101 / *JP* 3, 2518.

[8]*SKS* 13, 173 / *MLW*, 129.

[9]*SKS* 22, NB13:88 / *JP* 6, 6521, *Pap.* X2 A 361.

> exemplar, crushed, almost despairing, the Redeemer, raises him again; but at the same moment you are again the exemplar so that he may be kept in the striving.[10]

Clearly, Christ plays a central role in Kierkegaard's vision of Christian existence. But simply recognizing Christ's significance for Christians still does not show the deeply Christological nature of Kierkegaard's anthropology. Regarding the striving that Kierkegaard saw as the existential heart of his anthropology, we must investigate the sense (or senses) in which humans have Christ as their prototype. Furthermore, we must answer a vital question: Does Christ's status as the exemplar merely engender an appropriately Christian existential mood? Or does Christ as the exemplar in fact relate vitally to the *human being as such*—thus bearing fundamental significance for Kierkegaard's anthropology rather than functioning only as a sort of addendum to a prior philosophical anthropology? Only if Christ bears fundamental anthropological significance can I claim, as the title of this dissertation suggests, that Kierkegaard's anthropology should properly be called "Christological."

5.1.1 Creaturely Prototypes

Christ is not the only prototype in Kierkegaard's writings.[11] Throughout the authorship, various figures are presented as prototypes of one sort or another—patterns

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[10] *SKS* 16, 199 / *JFY*, 147.

[11] For additional insights about Kierkegaard's understanding of the category of the *Forbillede* through studies of specific examples of prototypes in Kierkegaard's writings, see Jolita Pons, "On Imitating the Inimitable: Example, Comparison, and Prototype," in *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, International Kierkegaard Commentary (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 173–98; Lee C. Barrett, "Simeon and Anna: Exemplars of Patience and Expectancy," in *Kierkegaard and the Bible, Tome 2*, ed. Lee C. Barrett and Jon Stewart, vol. 1, Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 3–16; Paul Martens, "The Woman in Sin: Kierkegaard's Late Female Prototype," in *Kierkegaard and the Bible, Tome 2*, vol. 1, Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 123–38; Kyle A. Roberts, "Peter: The 'Pitiable Prototype'," in *Kierkegaard and the Bible, Tome 2*, vol. 1, Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 79–92. For overviews that focus on Christ as the prototype, see Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard's Concept of Existence*, 183–5; Gouwens, *Kierkegaard as Religious Thinker*, 127–8; Rae, *Kierkegaard and Theology*, 145–55; Eric Ziolkowski, *The Literary Kierkegaard* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2011), 165–6.

of existence or exemplars of some existential quality. A brief look at a few key examples will both reveal the significance of the general category of "prototype" in Kierkegaard's writings and highlight the unique significance of Christ as prototype—indeed, as *the* prototype of whom all other prototypes are but shadows.

Kierkegaard or his pseudonyms occasionally use the term *Forbillede* in a general sense to describe an example one could follow—but without ascribing any particularly existential significance to such a prototype.[12] Additionally, Kierkegaard sometimes calls certain poetic or mythological figures "prototypes" in the sense that they are paradigmatic of some characteristic or existential condition.[13] But these kinds of general examples fail to uncover the specialized sense that Kierkegaard began developing even in some of his earliest writings.

In an early upbuilding discourse framed as a meditation on Job 1:20–21, Kierkegaard defines a prototype as one who is "a teacher of humankind" and whose "life is a guide for everyone."[14] Job, Kierkegaard tells us, is just such a teacher and guide. Two important features of Kierkegaard's category of the prototype (in the more specialized sense) are on full display in this discourse. The first is the concrete, existential quality of a true prototype.[15] Job was a prototype not because he taught with words (though he did teach

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[12]For example, in *Philosophical Fragments* Johannes Climacus jokes that perhaps a person whose "intellectual pursuits" do not "coincide happily with the interests of the public" could be thought of as having taken Diogenes as his prototype. Diogenes, upon seeing his fellow citizens of Corinth busily preparing for a siege, began trundling his tub up and down the streets—not with any concrete goal in mind, but simply to ensure that he would not be "the one and only loafer among so many busy people." See *SKS* 4, 215–16 / *PF*, 5–6.

[13]See, for instance, Johannes Climacus' description of Don Quixote as "the prototype of the subjective lunacy in which the passion of inwardness grasps a particular fixed finite idea" (*SKS* 7, 179 / *CUP1*, 195).

[14]*SKS* 5, 115–28 / *EUD*, 109–24.

[15]Whether Kierkegaard thought of Job as historical, in contrast to the mythological-poetic figures described above, is not exactly pertinent—the point seems to be that Job, in keeping with Kierkegaard's view of Scripture in general, is especially geared toward the concrete existential. Inasmuch as the story of Job occurs within Scripture, we can perhaps assume that it can be included within the umbrella of the unique status Kierkegaard ascribes to Scripture. Scripture is the "mirror of the Word" which reveals the true self rather than distracts in the outward manner of comparison (see *SKS* 13, 64ff / *FSE*, 37ff). I will say

in this way as well), but precisely because his life *was* the teaching: "He did indeed leave a statement that by its brevity and beauty has become a proverb . . . but the statement itself is not the guide, and Job's significance consists not in his having said it but in his having acted upon it."[16] The statement in question serves as the title of the discourse: "The Lord gave, and the Lord took away; blessed be the name of the Lord."[17]

The second feature of the Kierkegaardian prototype arises here: a prototype, properly speaking, embodies a particular kind of existence *in relation to God* (or the eternal, the unconditioned). In Job's case, the confession that "the Lord gave, the Lord took away" reflected a commitment to accepting both blessing and misfortune as the gracious activity of God.[18] It also indicated Job's own existence of radical surrender and receptivity—epitomized by his silence in the presence of God, "quiet until the Lord's explanation again came to him and found his mind, like good earth, well cultivated in patience."[19] Kierkegaard concludes the discourse by drawing connections between the many qualities of Job and the various conditions or aspirations of his readers. Whether young or old, wealthy or poor, wise or inexperienced, Job was all of these things at various times. He thus stands as a teacher for any human. Kierkegaard reminds us that "there is no hiding place in the whole wide world where trouble will not find you. . . . So, then, be earnest with yourself; fix your eyes upon Job"; by doing so, we learn from him to be able to say in all circumstances, "Blessed be the name of the Lord."[20] Job's exemplary life thus makes him a fitting prototype—his life expressed a particular kind of existence before God.

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more in subsequent paragraphs about Kierkegaard's efforts to sidestep the dangers of comparison in his development of the category of prototype.

[16]*SKS* 5, 115 / *EUD*, 109.

[17]See Job 1:21.

[18]*SKS* 5, 124–5, *EUD*, 119–20, 21.

[19]*SKS* 5, 123 / *EUD*, 118–9.

[20]*SKS 5, 128 / EUD*, 123–4.

And yet, even concrete human prototypes such as Job pose certain challenges due to the unavoidable aspect of *comparison*. Comparison occupies an ambiguous status in Kierkegaard's authorship. On one hand, comparison is one of the hallmarks of a temporality that has forgotten eternity, the epitome of worldliness expressed in the desire either to be something in relation to the rest, or else the desire to soothe oneself and avoid the task of becoming a self before God by merging into "the crowd": the danger of the sidelong glance is the temptation to pick an earthly criterion instead of Christ, echoing Haufniensis' description of the primordial and universal sin of laying hold of the finite in the instant we become conscious.[21] But on the other hand, comparison is a required moment in the human task of becoming, and intrinsic to the very notion of a prototype—for how can a prototype exert existential pressure unless the existing person has made a comparison and found herself lacking?

Yet, even this positive form of comparison remains problematic, on at least two levels: First, inasmuch as one's gaze is turned outward rather than remaining occupied with one's own interiority, comparison turns us into "spectators" and "admirers," distracting us from the existential task. Second, even if a prototype inspires one to action, such action is of an outward sort and the individual runs the risk of seeking to become another person rather than seeking to become herself:

> [C]omparison leads to imitating another in the sense of wanting to be someone else, which is not a true imitation. Kierkegaard thinks that another person's actuality cannot be directly transferred to our own existential situation. The fact that somebody else leads an "exemplary life" is something "indifferent," something in which an individual cannot be interested in a decisive way. Nevertheless, comparison is an essential and unavoidable phase . . . the question is how to compare without shifting the focus from one's internal life to the "other" and how to use imitation to become oneself and not another.[22]

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[21] *SKS* 11, 265 *WA*, 129; *SKS* 9, 185 / *WL*, 186; *SKS* 4, 365 / *CA*, 61; *SKS* 20, 55–6 / *JP* 5, 5948. For a helpful discussion of "comparison" in Kierkegaard, see Patrick Sheil, *Starting with Kierkegaard* (London: Continuum, 2011), 32ff.

[22] Pons, "On Imitating the Inimitable: Example, Comparison, and Prototype," 177.

It is perhaps for this reason that Kierkegaard emphasizes not only the importance of the sheer existential presence of his prototypes—almost a *transparency* that allows the object of comparison to transcend mere outward comparison—but also the notion of *silence*. For language (on Kierkegaard's understanding) is an interpolative abstraction—a kind of reflection. I will speak more about this issue in chapter four, but our current discussion of prototypes will benefit from a brief overview of reflection and immediacy in Kierkegaard's writings, and their bearing on the ideas of silence and transparency. In short, Kierkegaard develops the notion of a kind of "second immediacy"—the first immediacy of pure, natural self-identity (such as the sheer animal sensuality of Mozart's Don Giovanni[23]) is an incomplete, even despairing version of selfhood, lacking reflection and therefore freedom. It is not yet the distinctively human sort of selfhood before God. Don Giovanni simply is what he is, without deliberation or choice. And yet, the act of reflection (which includes the abstractions of thought and language) divides the self from itself, and leads it continually out of existence and into endless flights of speculation or calculation. Witness the Diapsalmata and the implosion of the "Seducer's Diary" that bracket the first volume of *Either/Or*: both pieces wrestle in different ways with the impossibility of avoiding or putting an end to reflection, and the despair of the one who attempts to remain in a state of pure immediacy.[24] Judge William, in the second volume of *Either/Or*, posits a passionate decision for the ethical way of life as the proper method for overcoming the endless reflection.[25] But Kierkegaard's authorship reveals a trajectory toward expressly Christian faith as the true second immediacy—the immediacy, we might say, of resting silently and transparently in God.[26]

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[23]*SKS* 2, 90–7 / *EO1*, 85–92.

[24]*SKS* 2, 45, 294 / *EO1*, 36, 304.

[25]*SKS* 3, 198 / *EO2*, 206.

[26]For a series of helpful examinations of reflection, immediacy, and the possibility of a second immediacy in Kierkegaard's thought, see Paul Cruysberghs, Johan Taels, and Karl Verstrynge, eds., *Immediacy and*

With this bit of background in mind, we can see why silence and transparency remain such abidingly important aspects of Kierkegaard's prototypes. Nearly every prototype (*Forbillede*) in Kierkegaard's works is described as a picture or image (Billede) which, in its silence and almost iconic transparency, makes a bid to overcome the problems of comparison (and language). By disappearing and becoming silent, the prototype (hopefully) allows and encourages "self examination," the interior comparison of the self with oneself—thus sidestepping the problem that most forms of comparison suffer from—the distraction from interiority.[27]

It is just this concern about comparison that drives, in part, Kierkegaard's penchant for non-human prototypes, most notably the "birds of the air" and the "lilies of the field." Kierkegaard largely uses these two prototypes as analogies of the kind of immediate relationship of trust, patience, and obedience that humans are supposed to have in God. Lilies do not deliberate about whether they should be what God wants them to be—they simply *are*. Birds do not worry about making a living and thus stand as analogues of a childlike trust in God's provision. But beyond this, in their effortless silence and immediacy (which Kierkegaard describes as a kind of natural "obedience"[28]), these nonhuman prototypes can point individuals toward the peculiarly human forms

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Reflection in Kierkegaard's Thought, vol. 17, Louvain Philosophical Studies (Leuven University Press, 2003).

[27]As has been pointed out by many commentators, Kierkegaard's interest in indirect communication is also related to this problematic of comparison, reflection, and language. Even in his seemingly "direct" writings, such as the non-pseudonymous upbuilding discourses that accompanied his early pseudonymous works, Kierkegaard wrestles with the problem of linguistic communication and its pernicious entanglement with the very forms of speculative abstraction he was so concerned to avoid. Indeed, the first six pages of the discourse on Job discussed above make a tortuous case for the value of language and deliberation, forming a kind of preliminary apologetic for Kierkegaard's decision to talk about something that has its essence precisely in being more than mere talk or deliberation. Near the end of this apologetic he writes, "Fine words of human persuasion . . . are exceedingly sterile—it by no means follows that deliberation and elaboration would not have their importance." Rather, Kierkegaard hopes that perhaps "the deliberation would at some time . . . become vivid and present in [the reader's] soul just when he needed it . . . ; perhaps it would happen that what deliberation understood in pieces would suddenly come together reborn in the moment of decision, that what deliberation sowed in corruption would rise up on the day of distress in the incorruptible life of action." See *SKS* 5, 119–20 *EUD*, 113–4.

[28]*SKS* 11, 32 / *WA*, 27–8.

of learned silence and transparent immediacy—which for humans can only be gained through the exercise of patient reflection and freedom's struggle to dispossess itself in obedience to God. Furthermore, the silence of these prototypes contributes to their ability to sidestep the temptation toward external comparison. Rather than being caught up in the indirect, speculative, and outward forms of comparative reason-giving, the birds and lilies offer a different kind of persuasion rooted in their self-effacing presence: "No, out where the lily blooms so beautifully, in the field, up there where the bird is freely at home, in the heavens, if comfort is being sought—there is unbroken silence; no one is present there and everything is sheer persuasion."[29] Kierkegaard then draws a connection between this kind of transparent presence and silence. In the presence of

> another human being the agitated thoughts of comparison come so readily and promptly. . . . [T]he lily, however, cannot speak, but simply because it cannot speak, simply because there is utter silence out there and no one is present, simply for this reason the worried one, if he speaks and if he speaks with the lily, is in the situation of *speaking with himself*. Indeed, little by little he discovers that he is speaking about himself, that what he says about the lily he says about himself. It is not the lily that is saying it; the lily cannot speak.[30]

Of course, lilies and birds are imperfect prototypes; Kierkegaard employs them in a "jesting" manner (though in service to earnestness).[31] Furthermore, the very things that make a bird or lily so useful as prototypes—their inability to speak or worry or disobey—also limit them: "The bird, then, which is free from worry about making a living, is indeed a prototype for the human being, and yet, by being able to have worry about making a living, a human being has a perfection the prototype does not have."[32]

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[29]*SKS* 8, 261 / *UDVS*, 161.

[30]*SKS* 8, 265 / *UDVS*, 165 (emphasis added).

[31]*SKS* 10, 21 / *CD*, 9. Cf. Kierkegaard's claim that Christ, "the one who referred [humans] to the bird of the air, as if for initial, childish instruction, is the very one who in earnestness and in truth is the actual prototype, that he is the very one who is the prototype of the essential human perfection" (*SKS* 8, 294 / *UDVS*, 197.)

[32]*SKS* 8, 294 / *UDVS*, 196. Cf. Pons, "On Imitating the Inimitable: Example, Comparison, and Prototype," 190: "[W]e are supposed to learn from the birds, although they lack an essential constitutive

Job also displays the qualities of silence and transparency in the early upbuilding discourse discussed above. But silence and transparency are perhaps nowhere more pronounced than in the prototype of the "the woman who was a sinner" from Luke 7:47, who is the central figure in both a communion discourse and a late upbuilding discourse.[33] In the communion discourse, in a devastating sequence of self-effacement, the woman's love for Christ is expressed in four intensely negative movements: self-hatred, powerless passivity, self-forgetfulness, and finally, silence. The self-hatred is an expression of confession and repentance; knowing full well that Christ, as the Holy One, annihilates sin as surely as the dawn annihilates the night, the woman nonetheless throws herself at the feet of Christ in an act of reckless self-disclosure.[34] The powerless passivity of the woman's silent tears are likewise a form of unfiltered self-disclosure, "powerfully manifest[ing] the powerlessness that she is capable of literally nothing."[35] In a further intensification of self-effacement, the woman forgets herself in order to move past every preoccupation with the various cares of the world—Kierkegaard reasons that in order truly to forget all worldly distractions "one must forget oneself."[36] Only the movement of self-forgetfulness, as the annihilation of the very one for whom such worldly concerns and distractions are a temptation, can succeed in overcoming the cares of the world. These movements culminate in the woman becoming a silent, transparent picture (*Billede*), a creaturely prototype *par excellence*:

> She says nothing and therefore is not what she says, but she is what she does not say. . . . She is the symbol, like a picture. She has forgotten speech and language and the restlessness of thoughts, has forgotten what is even greater restlessness,

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part of a human self, namely the consciousness of temporality."

[33]Both of these discourses are entitled "The Woman Who Was a Sinner." See *SKS*, 11, 271–80 / *WA*, 135–44; *SKS* 12, 257-73 / *WA*, 145–60.

[34]*SKS* 11, 274–6 / *WA*, 138–40.

[35]*SKS* 11, 276 / *WA*, 140.

[36]*SKS* 11, 276 / *WA*, 140.

> this self, has forgotten herself—she, the lost woman, who is now lost in her Savior, who, lost in him, rests at his feet—like a picture.[37]

Significantly, Kierkegaard is careful to ensure that the woman as prototype does not simply dissolve into symbolism or myth—she is actual, and her situation occurs in actuality. Noting that Christ does not speak *to* her but speaks *about* her when stating that her many sins are forgiven, Kierkegaard muses,

> It is almost as if the Savior himself momentarily looked at her and the situation that way, as if she were not an *actual* person but a picture. . . . It is almost like a story a sacred story, a parable—and yet at the same moment the same thing was *actually* taking place on the spot."[38]

We will return to the woman who was a sinner and Kierkegaard's notion of the "picture" in chapter seven, where I will offer a more complete contextualization of Kierkegaard's anthropology in terms of a coherent trajectory in the authorship. The point here is simply to uncover the key qualities of a prototype in Kierkegaard's thought, which we can now summarize. First, a prototype embodies a particular existence—it is a teacher whose life *is* the teaching, thus sidestepping (to a certain extent) the problems of purely speculative or conceptual teachings. Second, a true prototype must present this embodied teaching in a way that is sheer presence—such is the advantage of nonhuman prototypes such as birds or lilies, which in their very non-humanness and silence can easily disappear, thus sidestepping the problems of comparison. But, third, this sheer presence must not be allowed to dissolve into a mythological, poetic abstraction—the prototype must maintain its concreteness, its existential quality. Finally, each prototype in Kierkegaard's authorship presses toward a particular kind of existence in the presence of God, a mode of temporal existence that is thoroughly saturated by the eternal—what Kierkegaard, as we saw in chapters two and four, describes as existing in "the moment."[39]

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[37] *SKS* 11, 277 / *WA*, 141.

[38] *SKS* 11, 277 / *WA*, 141, emphasis added.

[39] Cf. *SKS* 4, 235 / *PF*, 28; *SKS* 4, 392 / *CA*, 89.

5.1.2 Christ as the Prototype

Given these qualifications of prototypes in Kierkegaard's thought, we are now in a position to understand the unique significance of Christ as *the* prototype, the prototype of whom all other prototypes are mere shadows. This special significance is grounded in Christ's unique identity as the God-man. There are at least four key aspects that we can identify here, all of which correspond with the qualifications of true prototypes in Kierkegaard's thought. *First*, as human, Christ is of course a truly *human* prototype—having the advantage of direct earnestness unlike the "jesting" prototypes of birds and lilies (or worse, the abstract ideality of poetic or mythological prototypes). His concrete humanity places his example directly before existing humans, an unavoidably present and pressing prototype:

> The lowly Christian, who before God is himself, *exists* as a Christian *before his prototype*. He believes that God has lived on earth, that he has allowed himself to be born in lowly and poor circumstances, yes, in ignominy, and then as a child lived together with the ordinary man who was called his father and the despised virgin who was his mother. . . . The lowly Christian believes that this prototype exists right before him. . . . To be sure, he has not seen the prototype with his own eyes, but he believes that he has existed. . . . He has not seen the prototype with his own eyes; neither does he make any attempt to have his senses form such a picture. Yet he often sees the prototype.[40]

Second, as divine, Christ's exemplarity has in addition to its sheer presence the imperious force of a divine command. Christ is not simply one human option among many; as the God-man, his existence constitutes the ethical requirement at the heart of Christianity. *Third*, and relatedly, Christ's divine status as the unconditioned allows him to transcend—at least to a certain extent—the entanglement of comparison that plagues even the greatest creaturely prototypes.[41] For while Christ is indeed a concretely existing

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[40] *SKS* 10, 54–5 / *CD*, 42–3.

[41] The importance of Christ's status as the *unconditioned*, despite his existence within the conditions of temporality, cannot be overstated. I deal with it more fully in chapter six. However, let me note briefly that Kierkegaard wrestles extensively with just this issue, attempting to frame how God-in-Christ is both unconditioned and yet somehow involved with temporality. Consider, for instance, his attempts to

human whose life expresses a teaching, he is also the unconditioned, eternal God, the only one before whom an individual can become a self, truly herself and not someone else.[42] This brings us to the *fourth* and final point, which we may well think of as the culmination of the previous three points. Christ the prototype is truly *the ideal made real*. He is not a fleshless and bloodless abstraction, ideality or poetic myth; but neither is he merely a creaturely prototype that only approximates or imperfectly expresses the ideal. To put it in familiarly Kierkegaardian terms, not only does Christ's life express the teaching—he *is* the teaching.[43] Where every creaturely prototype is only an approximate expression of an existential ideal (thus remaining incapable of true existence-communication), Christ is the one true Teacher and Teaching, the only true prototype. Furthermore, Christ as the

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understand divine Governance, a broader version of the problem of Christ's status as the unconditioned in time. Kierkegaard was particularly concerned to ensure that Governance did not illegitimately dissolve God into the world of spatiotemporal relations or "turn the unconditioned into the conditioned": "Governance is indeed everywhere present and thus in one sense is the closest of all. But in another sense he is infinitely far away. That is—he refuses to intervene forcibly, he omnipotently constrains his own omnipotence because it has pleased him to want to see what will become of this whole existence" (*SKS* 26, 340–1, NB34:29 / *JP* 2, 1450). In this same entry, Kierkegaard goes on to assert that "in a certain sense it can be said that there is no providence at all"—just as a scientific experimenter restricts himself to "sheer awareness and attention" God "refrains completely from intervening." In another late journal entry, Kierkegaard briefly alludes to the philosophical concerns that persistently complicated his commitment to divine governance in the sense of God's special providential care. Here, Kierkegaard concedes that God is not "directly related to the world of appearance" since this is "at variance with God as spirit and in general with the entire outlook of Christianity"; rather, God is related "paradoxically to [the world of] appearance, only tangentially, just as one may be able only to touch something but nevertheless can gear into it decisively, yet without being in continuity with it" (*SKS* 26, 227, NB32:133 / *JP* 2, 1444). Whether a relationship of discontinuous causality really makes sense is questionable; but this highlights something I treat more fully in chapter six, namely, why Kierkegaard will gravitate toward the notion that God as the unconditioned must relate to finite creatures through an unconditional requirement, i.e., the requirement initiated by Christ the prototype.

[42]Here, if anywhere, Kierkegaard could make room for a positive version of the outward and the social, with Christ at the center. As with all of his prototypes, Kierkegaard is extremely careful to ensure that Christ is never simply an internal reflection of the self, a danger that could attend having the lilies and birds as prototypes (if not for the fact that it is Christ, the true prototype, who points us to these creaturely prototypes in the first place). Christ remains an external, historical reality, yet transcends the normal conditions of merely external comparison. And yet, to anticipate my eventual argument, Kierkegaard does not ultimately develop his project in this direction. Christ's ability to hold together the eternal/unconditioned and the temporal/conditioned within his concrete existence as the God-man proves to be utterly unshare-able—a reality that separates existing humans from the God-man just as surely as it calls them toward God.

[43]*SKS* 4, 258 / *PF*, 55.

God-man has both the transparent ideality of non-human, symbolic prototypes such as the bird or the lily, but also the concrete actuality of an existing human prototype.

5.1.3 Prototypes and Being Human in "The Cares of the Pagans"

Now that we have a sense of Kierkegaard's category of the prototype in general and an understanding of Christ's unique status as the one true prototype, over against the partial and incomplete creaturely prototypes that populate Kierkegaard's writings, we are in a position to say something more about prototypes and their importance for Kierkegaard's anthropology.

But beyond this significance, we must still ask and answer, "What exactly constitutes the ethical call that prototypes in general and Christ in particular issues to existing humans?" As noted above, a prototype's primary function is to draw people into a particular kind of relationship to God, a specific existential attitude toward the eternal. Part One of *Christian Discourses*, "The Cares of the Pagans," though not Kierkegaard's final vision of Christ as prototype, is an important step toward that final vision.[44] It defines in vital ways the sense in which Christ's life presents not so much a set of external rules but an interior disposition that constitutes the truly human. To this end, Kierkegaard

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[44]In keeping with my statements in chapter one, this is not to deny the continuity of the authorship, nor am I suggesting a sharp disjunction between a late Christological anthropology and an early non-Christological anthropology. As we saw in chapter four, the anthropology in *Concept of Anxiety* was significantly Christologically-determined. All I mean here is that Kierkegaard's authorship displays a development through time in terms of how extensively certain key insights have been followed through to their conclusions. While *Concept of Anxiety* positioned Christ decisively vis-à-vis freedom, sin, and ethical striving, the full ramifications of those insights were not yet expressed in that work. Similarly, *Christian Discourses* stands in developmental continuity with the earlier *Concept of Anxiety* and what I have called Kierkegaard's "final vision" of Christologically-conditioned human existence. *Christian Discourses*, produced in a flurry of authorial activity between 1847–48, was published in 1848. The public took little notice of the work; it apparently went unreviewed at the time. See the Hong's "Historical Introduction" to *Christian Discourses* (xiii-iv), where they note that no reviews of the work are listed in Jens Himmelstrup, ed., *Søren Kierkegaard International Bibliografi* (Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck, 1962). Yet this volume is an important addition to a trajectory in Kierkegaard's authorship toward the "specifically Christian" See *SKS* 20, 187, NB2:115 / *JP* 5, 6037: "From now on the thrust should be into the specifically Christian." Kierkegaard wrote this journal entry a few months after the publication of *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, Part Three of which, "The Gospel of Sufferings," was the first of Kierkegaard's writings that he labeled a "Christian discourse." *Christian Discourses* was published the next year.

critiques a set of attitudes toward the conditions and relations that make up temporal existence (which he here calls "the cares of the pagans"); more importantly, Kierkegaard here develops the notion of a peculiarly Christological form of existence that has been entirely transformed by eternity.

Kierkegaard provides a helpful assessment of "The Cares of the Pagans": despite the fact that it contains an admittedly "polemical element," as a specifically *Christian* discourse it displays an "altogether milder tone"—it provides the antidote of Christian hope that should follow upon the more polemical "thoughts that wound from behind—for upbuilding."[45] The mildness of "The Cares of the Pagans" is perhaps signaled by the fact that it so heavily utilizes the prototypes of the birds and the lilies as "assistant teachers."[46] Paganism and Christianity, Kierkegaard writes, are opposites and "contending parties," but the lily and the bird "play outside, if one may put it this way, and shrewdly keep out of all oppositions." And precisely because of this they are able to "succeed in being helpful with the instruction in Christianity." Like Christ who "gives heed to no one"[47] the lily and the bird are without judgment or condemnation or comparison: they "are solely occupied with and absorbed in instructing, appear totally unconcerned, look neither to the right nor to the left"—and because of these features, they are able to function as prototypes for the Christian, for the essentially human.

> Pay attention to the lily and the bird; then you will discover how pagans live, because they do not live in exactly the same way as do the bird and the lily. If you live as the lily and the bird live, then you are a Christian—which the lily and the bird neither are nor can become.[48]

And yet, in spite of the mild, even jesting tone interpolated by the lily and bird prototypes, the latent earnestness continually surfaces throughout "The Cares of the

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[45] *SKS* 20, 324, NB4:76 (translated and quoted in the "Historical Introduction" of *CD*, xiii.)

[46] *SKS* 10, 21–3 / *CD*, 9–10 (this reference covers all quotes throughout the remainder of the paragraph).

[47] Here Kierkegaard is referencing Mark 12:14.

[48] *SKS* 10, 21 / *CD*, 9.

Pagans," punctuated especially when Kierkegaard shifts from the "assistant teachers" and explicitly ties some aspect of Christian existence to Christ, the true prototype. The discourse itself proceeds by listing the various "cares of the pagans," first in a series of contrasting pairs—poverty and abundance, lowliness and loftiness, presumptuousness and self-torment; and finally in a single group of interrelated cares—indecisiveness, vacillation, and disconsolateness. Within each section the same three subsections are repeated, each denoted by the following phrases (or some minor variation thereof): "This care the lily and the bird do not have"; "The Christian does not have this care"; "The pagan, however, does have this care."

Before going further, I should say a quick word about the relationship between the *human* and the *Christian* in Kierkegaard's thought—for, as noted earlier, unless Christ as prototype is *essentially* applicable to becoming human (and not just a peculiarly Christian addendum to a purely neutral philosophical conception of humanness), Kierkegaard's anthropology ought not be thought of as *Christological* in a proper sense. That Kierkegaard's anthropology *is* fundamentally Christological is evidenced by the especially explicit equation of Christianity with the truly human in this discourse. Relatedly, Kierkegaard repeatedly asserts that paganism, the "opposite" of Christianity, is a descent into a peculiarly inhuman animality that renders the human being even lower than other creatures.[49] Admittedly, Kierkegaard's use of the term "human being" in this discourse is somewhat ambiguous. At times he sets up a strong contrast between the mere human being and the Christian. Take, for instance, this pivotal passage:

> What, then, is the lowly Christian who before God is himself? He is a *human being*. Inasmuch as he is a human being, he in a certain sense is like the bird, which is what it is. But we shall not dwell further on this here. But he is also a *Christian*, . . . Consequently the lowly Christian has become something in the world; the bird, alas, cannot become something—it is what it is. The lowly

[49]Kierkegaard applies this judgment especially to "pagans" within Christendom, those who have heard of God but have "completely forgotten him"—these, he says, are "worse than the beasts, because the beasts have *forgotten* nothing" (*SKS* 10, 68 / *CD*, 64.)

> Christian was a human being, just as the bird was a bird, but then he became a Christian; he became something in the world. . . . As a *human being* he was created in *God's image* [*Billede*], but as a *Christian* he has God as the *prototype* [*Forbillede*].[50]

Here Kierkegaard connects mere humanness with animal immediacy, simply being what one is. Conversely, Christianity is connected with *becoming*, "becoming something in the world," what we might think of as free and responsible striving toward the second immediacy of faith in God. And yet, it would be a mistake to say that Kierkegaard thinks the essentially human is one thing, and the essentially Christian another. Rather, Christianity (defined as having Christ as one's prototype) is, for Kierkegaard, the expression of true humanity toward which merely animal humanness must be directed. And, significantly, there is no neutral "humanness"—either one is directed toward the truly human in Christ, or one is descending into the inhuman preoccupations of temporality, the "cares of the pagans." Kierkegaard asserts outright that the pagan attitude towards temporality results in the loss of humanity: the pagan in the worldly circumstance of poverty, for instance, is "tortured by being nothing, futilely tries to become something. . . . It is not the fruits that withdraw themselves from him; it is he himself who withdraws himself even from being what he is. For he is not a human being."[51] Kierkegaard follows up with an even harsher assessment of the zombie-esque inhumanity of the pagan who attains some degree of worldly grandeur:

> Finally the care [of loftiness] swallows its prey. Just as . . . the nebulous will-o'-the-wisp of miasma tricks the senses in the fog, so in this glittering of his earthly loftiness he exists before others.[52] But his self does not exist; his innermost being has been consumed and depithed in the service of nothingness; slave of futility, with no control over himself, in the power of giddy worldliness,

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[50]*SKS* 10, 52 / *CD*, 41.

[51]*SKS* 10, 56 / *CD*, 46.

[52]It should be noted that the term "before" in the phrase "before others" refers not only to social eminence, but specifically to the sense in which a "pagan" has his or her being through *comparison* with the others, rather than in and through existing in the presence of (or "before") God. As the next line indicates, the self (or spirit) does not exist through existing before others.

> godforsaken, *he ceases to be a human being*; in his innermost being he is as dead, but his loftiness walks ghostlike among us—it lives. When you speak with him, you do not speak with a human being.[53]

Continuing the equation of worldly success with spiritual death, Kierkegaard says, "Death will not make him into nothing; he does not need to be buried; while he is still living, it can already be said of him as is otherwise said at the grave."[54] Conversely, Christianity (though occasionally contrasted with the *merely* human) is regularly equated with the *truly* human: "The Christian knows that to need God is a human being's perfection. . . . Thus the Christian is wide awake, which neither the innocently ignorant bird nor the spiritlessly ignorant human being is; he is wide awake, awake to God."[55] We cannot help but think of this as an allusion to Kierkegaard's anthropology in *Concept of Anxiety*, in which a human is a body-soul synthesis that finds further expression as a "dreaming" spirit. Only when the spirit "awakens"—through being addressed by God with the ethical requirement—only then does the human become free and responsible, and, at least potentially, a *self* before God. And as we saw earlier, the human being can only ever be itself (or become a self) when she "as a Christian" has God as her prototype.[56]

This brings us, finally, to the particular kind of existence that prototypes in general and Christ in particular call forth: a truly human existence defined as a temporal life utterly reconfigured by its relation with eternity. "The Cares of the Pagans" outlines a series of existential moods and attitudes that Christ, as well as the bird and the lily as "assistant teachers," exemplify for all humanity. Rather than providing a complete summary of the discourse's teachings, a few representative examples should suffice. In "The Care of Poverty," the bird teaches immediate reliance upon God for daily temporal

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[53] *SKS* 10, 64 / *CD*, 58 (emphasis added).

[54] *SKS* 10, 64 / *CD*, 58.

[55] *SKS* 10, 68 / *CD*, 64. Cf. "To Need God Is a Human Being's Highest Perfection" in *SKS* 5, 291–316 / *EUD*, 297–326.

[56] *SKS* 10, 52 / *CD*, 41.

needs as opposed to faithlessly worrying about future provisions. Likewise, the Christian relies upon God, but in a deeper sense—for she understands the meaning of Scripture's claim that "life is more than food": she understands that although "temporal life is surely more than food . . . an eternal life is nevertheless certainly beyond all comparison with food and drink, in which the *life of a human being* does not consist any more than does the kingdom of God!"[57] Furthermore, what the bird simply is and does by nature, the Christian must become through ongoing acts of freedom and reflection—the "Christian *prays* for the daily bread," and "thus knows that the daily bread is *from God*."[58] In other words, while the bird certainly receives daily sustenance from God, the Christian receives daily sustenance from God and faithfully persists in *recognizing it as coming from God*.

Similarly, in "The Care of Abundance," the wealthy Christian views her wealth in an eternal manner. She understands the illusion of the "possession" of temporal goods: "losability is an essential feature of riches" and thus "no essential change occurs in it by being lost."[59] She therefore learns to become "ignorant" of her wealth and measures her abundance only in terms of the "good and perfect gifts that come from above."[60] Clearly, the prototypes call Christians toward a complete reconfiguration of temporality in light of eternity, a thorough-going revaluation of every aspect of temporal existence through an immediate awareness of the eternal.

One final example should suffice, after which I can draw out a full picture of the kind of prototypical humanity that lies at the center of Kierkegaard's anthropology, at least in this discourse. In "The Care of Self-Torment," Kierkegaard points out that the bird has no notion of "the next day"—and because of this, it is not subject to the care of self-torment,

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[57] *SKS* 10, 28 / *CD*, 16.

[58] *SKS* 10, 26–7 / *CD*, 14–5.

[59] *SKS* 10, 38 / *CD*, 27.

[60] *SKS* 10, 43 / *CD*, 32. Kierkegaard is here alluding to what is probably his favorite verse in Scripture, James 1:17

for "care about the next day is precisely self-torment."[61] The lesson, therefore, is to "be like the bird: remove the next day and then you are without the care of self-torment—and this can be done just because the next day lies in the self."[62] This tantalizing notion that the next day "lies in the self" finds explanation in the next paragraph:

> All earthly and worldly care is basically for the next day. The earthly and worldly care was made possible precisely by this, that the human being was compounded of the temporal and the eternal, became a self, but in his becoming a self, the next day came into existence for him. And basically this is where the battle is fought. [63]

Calling to mind the discussion in chapter two about *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, Kierkegaard here identifies this battle with earthly or worldly care as the battle between "eternity and temporality," and insists that the entire task of becoming a self is wrapped up in this battle. Worldly care, on one hand "an enormous compendium of dissimilarities" and a "motley multitude of passions" is on the other hand "only one battle, the battle of the next day!"[64] Beginning an extended nautical metaphor, Kierkegaard describes the next day as "the grappling iron with which the huge mass of cares seizes hold of *the single individual's* small craft."[65]

The Christian attitude toward the next day—to forget or "turn away" from it—includes a particular disposition toward eternity, which Kierkegaard illustrates with the notion of a rower in a rowboat: "The one who rows a boat turns his back to the goal

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[61] *SKS* 10, 80 / *CD*, 70–1.

[62] *SKS* 10, 80 / *CD*, 71. This parallels Kierkegaard's suggestion in "The Woman Who Was a Sinner" that the only sure way to forget earthly cares is to forget oneself—rather than focusing on being a self that constantly attempts to forget the various worldly concerns that press so insistently on every existing human, why not simply forget yourself entirely? If you have forgotten yourself you obviously will not be thinking about the self's concerns. Similarly, rather than trying to focus on the cares of the next day in a godly manner, why not simply delete "the next day" from your existence? The combination of conceptual simplicity and existential impossibility is not facetious on Kierkegaard's part—as noted above, the prototype

[63] *SKS* 10, 80 / *CD*, 71.

[64] *SKS* 10, 80 / *CD*, 71.

[65] *SKS* 10, 81 / *CD*, 72.

toward which he is working."[66] Constantly turning around, inspecting landmarks on one side or the other—such activities result in slow, lopsided progress, if any. But the rower who resolutely turns her back to the goal is paradoxically closest to the goal. Likewise, the believer who has "completely turned his back and is living today" (unlike the "glimpser [who] stands and looks for" the eternal) is "closest of all to the eternal." Calling to mind his notion of the moment, Kierkegaard tells us that "faith turns its back to the eternal expressly in order to have it entirely present with it today. But if a person turns to the future, and especially with earthly passion, then he is most distanced from the eternal."[67]

Kierkegaard further equates this attitude toward present-day tasks (as opposed to worrying about the future in a pagan manner) with personal unity, or becoming "totally contemporary with oneself today with the help of the eternal," which is "most formative and generative; it is the gaining of eternity."[68] Such "contemporaneity today is the very task"; when worked out existentially, "it is faith."[69] Living faithfully—filling up today with the eternal rather than with "the next day"—is not simply a lesson we learn from the bird as prototype; it is an ideal actualized by Christ. In one of the most striking and Christologically-rich sections of the discourse, Kierkegaard says that this kind of life is learned from Christ, who conducted himself "in living without care about the next day—he who from the first moment he made his appearance as a teacher knew how his life would end, that the next day would be his crucifixion."[70] Kierkegaard continues, saying that Christ did not come

> to the world in order to give us subjects for erudite research. He came to the world to set the task, in order to leave a footprint so that we would learn from

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[66] *SKS* 10, 82 / *CD*, 73.

[67] *SKS* 10, 83 / *CD*, 74.

[68] *SKS* 10, 83–4 / *CD*, 74–5.

[69] *SKS* 10, 84 / *CD*, 75.

[70] *SKS* 10, 85 / *CD*, 76.

> him. . . . we are to learn: he had the eternal with him in his today—therefore the next day had no power over him, it did not exist for him. It had no power over him before it came, and when "the next day" came and was "the today," it had no other power over him other than that which was his Father's will, to which he, eternally free, had consented and to which he obediently submitted.[71]

Thus, "The Cares of the Pagans" can be thought of as an exercise in renewed perception, or as Kierkegaard says, an overcoming of the "optical illusion" of temporality in favor of the true perspective of eternity, which fundamentally transforms and revalues all temporal realities. Here the external marks of poverty and wealth, loftiness and lowliness—these things are outward illusions that do not reflect on the eternal (i.e., *real*) state of each person. The goal of the Christian is to remain in temporality while yet remaining "ignorant" of her temporal conditions, temporally understood. And paradoxically, through a single-minded focus on the eternal, she becomes like someone in a rowboat: she remains focused on "today," yet is straining toward eternity; she is ignorant of her wealth and status (or lack thereof) and yet remains capable of thankfulness for her temporal conditions, all of which are capable, through different analogies, of leading a person toward the eternal.

Additionally, this renewed perception is attained in part by attending to prototypes, and this discourse contains a particularly robust version of Kierkegaard's anthropology in light of the various prototypes, both creaturely and divine. Creaturely prototypes, especially the bird and the lily, display an analogy of the immediacy of faith. Their natural, unreflective submission to the will of God coincides with their attendant freedom from worries about temporal goods, preoccupations with their social status in relation to their peers, cares about the future, and so forth. However, the very fact that humans are *able* to have cares—are capable of descending into an inhuman mis-relation with eternity—indicates at the same time the beauty and value of a human in relation to God: each human is called beyond merely animal existence toward becoming a self (or spirit)

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[71] *SKS* 10, 85–6 / *CD*, 76–7 (translation slightly modified for clarity).

before God, something that can only happen through free, reflective obedience. This relationship of faith is an immediacy that goes beyond the merely animal (i.e., unreflective, unfree) immediacy of the bird or lily, and involves the free dispossession of of self-will: "So diminished is the Christian with regard to self-will that in relation to God's grace he is weaker than the bird in relation to instinct, which has it completely in its power, is weaker than the bird is strong in relation to its instinct, which is its power."[72]

Significantly, in this discourse the various prototypes work together in harmony. Kierkegaard is very clear that being like the bird or lily is to be a Christian. The birds and lilies prefigure Christ as the true prototype, but all of the prototypes teach essentially the same thing: live within the temporal moment in a way that is saturated by an overwhelming consciousness of the eternal (rather than faithless, worried preoccupation with temporal conditions, the crowd, or the future). Such an existence leads to the true enjoyment of temporal existence—since the person who attains the immediacy of faith has reconfigured her perception of temporal conditions and received them back as good and perfect gifts from God. As we shall see later in this chapter, this is not Kierkegaard's final anthropological vision: by the time he writes "Christ the Prototype," the relation between Christ and other prototypes has shifted decisively, resulting in a departure from the surprisingly harmonious vision of temporal existence in relation to eternity depicted in "The Cares of the Pagans." But before we look at that shift, we must examine the other pole of Kierkegaard's Christological dialectic—leniency and grace through Christ the Redeemer.

5.2 Christ as Redeemer: Leniency

If Christ as prototype provides the pattern of truly human existence and calls forth the ethical strenuousness of relating oneself properly to eternity, Christ's roles as both the Holy One and the Redeemer come immediately to the foreground in relation to every

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[72] *SKS* 10, 68 / *CD*, 64.

human's failure to relate properly to eternity. Christ's status as the Holy One highlights human sinfulness (thus joining Christ as prototype in emphasizing humanity's failure to be truly human), while Christ's identity as the Redeemer (or Savior) provides an answer to and remedy for this failure—as well as bringing psychological comfort to the one who fully understands the terrifyingly strenuous standard set by Christ:

> And in our striving to approach the prototype, the prototype itself is again our very help. It alternates; when we are striving, then he is the prototype; and when we stumble, lose courage, etc., then he is the love which helps us up, and then he is the prototype again. It would be the most fearful anguish for a person if he understood Christ in such a way that he only became his prototype and now by his own efforts he would resemble the prototype. Christ is simultaneously "the prototype" and precisely because he is that absolutely he is also the prototype who can be approached through the help of the prototype himself.[73]

5.2.1 Help for the Sin-Burdened

Appearing at least two dozen times throughout *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, *Christian Discourses*, and the discourses collected in English under the title *Without Authority*, "Holy One" emerges as one of Kierkegaard's preferred designations for Christ.[74] Kierkegaard often employs this term in relation to Christ's suffering at the hands of sinners. This juxtaposition of Christ's holiness and his suffering is strikingly consistent, and points to a Kierkegaardian emphasis that emerges as early as *Philosophical Fragments*: the absolute difference between God and humanity—beyond even the ontological distinction between the Creator and the creature—is the *oppositional* difference caused by sin.

> Just to come to know that the god is the different, man needs the god and then comes to know that the god is absolutely different from him. But if the god is to be absolutely different from a human being, this can have its basis not in that which man owes to the god (for to that extent they are akin) but in that which he owes to himself or in that which he himself has committed. What, then,

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[73]*SKS* 21, 363–4, NB10:198 / *JP* 1, 334 (1849).

[74]For example, *SKS* 8, 427 / *UDVS*, 337; *SKS* 10, 291 / *CD*, 212; *SKS* 11, 254 / *WA*, 118.

> is the difference? Indeed, what else but sin, since the difference, the absolute difference, must have been caused by the individual himself.[75]

Although most of *Fragments* (and a majority of discussions of Kierkegaard's Christology) focuses on the paradox of the eternal entering time, the infinite becoming a particular, finite human, there is at least a hint here of the later emphasis: the truly significant paradox, the ultimate possibility of offense, is the Holy One coming to suffer with, for, and at the hands of sinners. The basic ontological difference (i.e., the Creator-creature distinction) that often dominates in discussion of Christology function in both *Fragments* and *Postscript* primarily as a way of curtailing the tendency toward speculation. But the difference caused by sin, signaled by Kierkegaard's emphasis on Christ as the Holy One, draws attention to an aspect of Kierkegaard's Christology that has much deeper existential ramifications—the sinner encountering the Holy One.

In order to see more clearly the significance of the distinction between these two emphases in Kierkegaard's thought (the basic ontological difference versus the difference caused by sin), we would do well to note certain remarks Climacus makes regarding the purpose and intended audience of *Fragments* and *Postscript*. Climacus emphasizes that these writings are not intended for the "simple-believer"; rather, Climacus views his project in both these works as a humbling, disciplining stratagem brought to bear against those who consider themselves to have "the ability and the opportunity for deeper inquiry."[76] As Climacus notes, it is more difficult for the cunning and the capable to understand their sinfulness and utter need for God—thus, the notion of the "absolute paradox" performs a preliminary intellectual humbling, signaling the limits of reason.[77]

Conversely, the signed theological discourses, in which "absolute paradox" is entirely absent, emphasize far more strongly the difference of sin rooted in "humanity's qualitative

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[75] *SKS* 4, 251 / *PF*, 46–7.

[76] *SKS* 7, 157 / *CUP*, 170n.

[77] *SKS* 7, 348 / *CUP*, 383.

defection from an original likeness to God."[78] According to this emphasis on the humanly initiated difference of sin rather than the fundamental difference of Creator and creature, the incarnation is not only (or even primarily) a speculative absurdity, in the face of which one must either be offended or respond with faith. It also functions as a revelation of and judgment upon human sinfulness. The emergence in the late signed works of "Holy One" as an important Christological term, along with the simultaneous abandonment of the term "absolute paradox," highlights this increasingly Christian emphasis in Kierkegaard's anthropological considerations. For instance, In *Christian Discourses*, Kierkegaard reiterates the theme of the passage quoted above from *Fragments*, further demonstrating a decisive shift toward the emphasis on the absolute difference of sin: in the midst of discussing salvation, Kierkegaard describes the fear and trembling caused by the thought of our "distance" from God: "I here on earth, you in heaven, and alas, the infinitely greater difference, I a sinner, you the Holy One!"[79]

Kierkegaard describes the suffering of Christ the Holy One as a mystery, in the face of which worshipful silence is the only appropriate response (calling to mind the silence of the prototypes). For Kierkegaard, the uniqueness of Christ's salvific suffering as the innocent Holy One highlights the fact that every other human suffers as guilty. This calls forth two further observations: an awareness of sin puts humans in a relationship with God that is predicated purely on divine love and grace; yet it also calls forth the task of perpetual repentance. Thus, the tension of the Christological dialectic of existence is echoed here in Kierkegaard's vision of Christ as the Holy One. This brings us to Kierkegaard's emphasis on Christ as Redeemer and Savior.

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[78]Walsh, *Living Christianly*, 68.

[79]*SKS* 10, 221 / *CD*, 212. This assertion is repeated nearly verbatim in "The High Priest," a communion discourse based on Hebrews 4:15: "If the difference is infinite between God, who is in heaven, and you, who are on earth, the difference between the Holy One and the sinner is infinitely greater" (*SKS* 11, 258 / *WA*, 123).

Although Christ's suffering as the Holy One clarifies the absolute difference between humans and God due to sin, Kierkegaard also connects Christ's suffering with his work as the Savior and Redeemer of the world. Kierkegaard refers to Christ as "Savior" or "Redeemer" nearly seventy times throughout the later discourses,[80] sometimes in passing, but often in connection with the idea of the forgiveness of sins—undoing or overcoming, in a sense, the absolute difference caused by sin. Returning for a moment to "The Woman Who Was a Sinner," the woman's increasing self-forgetfulness, her ultimate disappearance, is geared toward becoming a transparent picture of the one she loves—the Savior in whom and through whom sins are forgotten by God.[81]

Even within the context of divine leniency—the gracious forgiveness available in and through Christ the Redeemer—Kierkegaard retains some sense of human responsibility, even if the responsibility takes the form of learned silence and powerlessness. In a particularly fascinating passage he writes

> It is true, in Christ your sins are forgiven you, but this truth, which therefore is said also to each one individually, is yet in another sense still not true; it must be made into truth by each one individually. This is how that woman is an eternal picture; by her great love she made herself, if I dare to speak this way, indispensable to the Savior. That there is forgiveness of sins, something he acquired for us, she makes into truth, she who loved much.[82]

Thus, the dialectical tension remains even in the moments of resting most profoundly in divine grace; there remains the concurrent rigorousness of making Christ's work into the truth for oneself. Or, in the language of "The Cares of the Pagans," the Christian's task involves continually remembering the eternal and forgetting the temporal.[83] This is

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[80]The terms often appear together, and apparently synonymously, for emphasis. See, for example, *SKS* 10, 265 / *CD*, 251; *SKS*, 9, 12 / *WL*, 3.

[81]*SKS* 11, 278–9 / *WA*, 142–3. Cf. *SKS* 10, 54 / *CD*, 43, in which the person gazing upon Christ "forgets herself in faith's joy over the glory of this prototype."

[82]*SKS* 11, 279 / *WA*, 143.

[83]Cf. Walsh, *Living Christianly*, 40–1.

not to say that forgetting temporality means a simple wish for death. I will have more to say about Kierkegaard's increasingly harsh attitude toward temporality, but it is safe to say that his attitude is never simply escapist—the task of existing cannot be sidestepped, and the hard work of learning to live in light of eternity and in light of the atonement must take place within the context of temporal existence.

Take for example a communion discourse on Luke 22:15, in which Kierkegaard closely connects the idea of the suffering Holy One with Christ's status as Savior and Redeemer; here, he characterizes the life of the Christian as a life of longing—longing to escape "from this evil world where sin prevails," to be in "fellowship with him, who has atoned for my sin . . . has atoned for my every slightest actual sin."[84] The Holy One introduces and exacerbates the consciousness of sin, but his suffering also brings atonement, ushering in the possibility of fellowship. In this passage, Kierkegaard points out that although our longing for fellowship with the Savior seems to call us out of the world, this is not simply a longing for the grave, not a longing to be with "one who is dead and departed but one who is living. Indeed, you are really to live in and together with him; he is to be and become your life, so that you do not live to yourself, no longer live yourself, but Christ lives in you.[85]

Kierkegaard elsewhere says that the Atonement has the existential effect of inspiring "confidence and boldness" in relation to Christ the prototype. Certainly the Atonement is a completed work: Christ's "holy suffering and death . . . made satisfaction for everyone and everything."[86] But although Christ has decisively earned eternal salvation on behalf of each sinner, he yet left behind "footprints" so that by the "Atonement the saved might at every moment find the confidence and boldness to want to strive to follow [Christ]."[87]

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[84]*SKS* 10, 274 / *CD*, 260.

[85]SKS 10, 275 / *CD*, 261.

[86]*SKS* 16, 199 / *JFY*, 147.

[87]*SKS* 16, 199 / *JFY*, 147.

5.2.2 Christ as the Substitute

One more thing needs to be said about Kierkegaard's understanding of Christ as Savior and Redeemer. Thus far, we have associated Kierkegaard's usage of these terms with one end of a paradoxical dialectic at the center of Christian existence, focusing especially on the subjective effects of the Redeemer's Atonement. But what, objectively speaking, does Kierkegaard understand Christ's work as Savior and Redeemer to entail? Kierkegaard affirms explicitly in "The High Priest," a communion discourse on Hebrews 4:15, a basic notion of substitutionary atonement in relation to Christ as Redeemer and Savior.[88] He affirms that Christ, the "Savior of the world," "put himself completely in your place," and identifies several important consequences.[89] He does mention the subjective aspect of both Christ's solidarity with humanity and his offer of grace and mercy: it enables Christ to comfort and console the sufferer, the one who is crushed under the awareness of sin, the holiness of God, the example of the prototype. And Kierkegaard also highlights again the existential dialectic between Christian striving and divine grace, rooted in the absolute difference between the Holy One and the sinner: Christ, as the human prototype demonstrates that resisting temptation is a human "possibility";[90] yet, every human is a sinner, and requires "the Redeemer's suffering and death" to be the "satisfaction for

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[88]Walsh makes use of this passage in arguing against J. Preston Cole's assertion that for Kierkegaard, the atonement does nothing more than "excite our admiration and console us in our misery"—beyond the subjective effects of the atonement, Kierkegaard clearly preserves a notion of the objective efficacy of Christ's atoning work. See Walsh, *Living Christianly*, 45 and J. Preston Cole, "Kierkegaard's Doctrine of the Atonement," *Religion in Life* 23 (1964): 592–601, 599. Also pertinent to this discussion is the broader question of the role of doctrine in Kierkegaard's thought, especially given his tendency to refrain from explicit doctrinal formulations. Lee Barrett offers perhaps the best treatment of this issue. See Lee C. Barrett, "Doctrines and Undecidability: Kierkegaard on the Indeterminacy of Christian Teachings," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 26 (2010): 59–74; Lee C. Barrett, "The Significance of Doctrine in Kierkegaard's Journals: Beyond an Impasse in English Language Kierkegaard Scholarship," *Zeitschrift für neuere Theologiegeschichte* 15 (2008): 16–31.

[89]*SKS* 11, 252–4 / *WA*, 116–8.

[90]SKS 11, 256 / *WA*, 121: "Therefore, you who are tempted, whoever you are, do not become silent in despair, as if the temptation were suprahuman and no one could understand it."

your sin and guilt."[91] Christ as prototype paradoxically reveals both the possibility and impossibility of overcoming sin.[92] And it is the burden of the impossibility that Christ's Atonement addresses, both subjectively and objectively.

Lest there be any doubt that Kierkegaard, at least in this passage, intends a substitutionary Atonement as the meaning of Christ's work as Redeemer and Savior, it seems appropriate to quote the passage at length:

> [I]f the Redeemer's suffering and death is the satisfaction of your sin and guilt—if it is the satisfaction, then he does indeed step into your place for you, or he, the one who makes satisfaction, steps into your place, suffering in your place the punishment of sin so that you might be saved, suffering in your place death so that you might live—did he not and does he not then put himself completely in your place? Here it is indeed even more literally true that he puts himself completely in your place than in the situation we described earlier, where we indicated that he could completely understand you, but you still remain in your place and he in his. But the satisfaction of Atonement means that you step aside and he takes your place. . . . Thus when punitive justice here in the world or in judgment in the next seeks the place where I, a sinner, stand with all my guilt, with my many sins—it does not find me. I no longer stand in that place; I have left it and someone else stands in my place . . . my Redeemer, who put himself completely in my place—for this accept my gratitude, Lord Jesus Christ![93]

5.3 From Dialectic to the Question of Commensurability

For Kierkegaard, the Christological designations "Savior" and "Redeemer" (along with "Holy One") are all terms that work together in a theological context in which Christ appears less as a conceptual mystery or paradoxical absurdity and more as the central locus of God's relating to humans—and by extension, the humans existential task of becoming herself before God. Christ is the one in whom the absolute difference between a holy God and sinful humans finds both its fullest expression and its ultimate resolution. The Holy One's suffering presence in the world is a kind of judgment (though

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[91] SKS 11, 258 / *WA*, 123.

[92] Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood*, 131–2.

[93] *SKS* 11, 258–9 / *WA*, 123; cf. *SKS* 11, 272–3 / *WA*,158–60.

he did not come into the world to judge), his suffering is itself an act of love, and his death is the gracious, effectual work of the Savior and Redeemer.

What remains to be seen, however, is the final outcome of Kierkegaard's Christologically-conditioned dialectic of existence. A profound dissonance remains within this dialectic, one that is crucial for our understanding of Kierkegaard's anthropology. Put bluntly, the sheer impossibility of the task that Christ the prototype calls us toward has now turned out to be the sheer impossibility of existing temporally as a human in the truest sense. And the way in which Christ the Redeemer accomplishes this task on our behalf—with Kierkegaard's emphasis on the substitutionary nature of his atoning work—calls into doubt the extent to which existing humans can actually appropriate or participate in the new life available in Christ. Wrapped up in this question is the final status of finite, temporal existence (and hence things like sociality, marriage, and the political) in Kierkegaard's thought. We can approach this issue, as noted earlier, through the question of commensurability: can the life of the spirit be expressed (either faithfully or truly) within the context of the many social relations and responsibilities that unavoidably characterize temporal human existence? To put the question in terms familiar from chapter two, if the self is the spirit and the spirit always emerges oppositionally out of the body-soul synthesis, can there be any final return to the temporal that remains faithful to the eternal? Can the knight of faith finally receive back the temporal?

CHAPTER SIX

Christ and Anthropology II: *Imitiatio Christi* and Suffering

In the last chapter, we saw how the distinctive ethical responsibility that defines the truly human, hinted at in *Concept of Anxiety* through the contrast between the first and second ethics,[1] is more fully fleshed out in Kierkegaard's vision of the Christological dialectic of existence. Christ as the human prototype *defines* the truly human, but Christ's divinity renders his status as prototype uniquely and utterly imperative: Christ is himself the unconditional requirement, the unremitting *telos* that human's must live into in their free responsibility before the eternal. Christ's existential actualization of ideality ensures that the ethical requirement at the heart of becoming a self before God is never an abstract ideal that admits of mere approximation.

We have also seen how this ethical requirement remains impossibly high—not only does every human discover and (perhaps) enter upon this task from a place of infinite debt, but she remains incapable at each and every moment of living fully in accord with "the moment," in complete purity of heart. Thus, Christ is and remains the Redeemer and the giver of grace. Christ's substitutionary atonement means that he is eternally in our place—Christ accomplishes and *is* righteousness on our behalf.[2] For while Christ's status

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[1] As noted in chapter four, whereas the first ethics has for its ideals the abstract moral laws that the rational human mind can discover or generate, the second ethics portrays humans as radically free and thus responsible to the summons to obey (i.e., conform to) Christ, who is the ideal actualized in temporality, the sole prototype/exemplar of the truly human.

[2] *SKS* 11, 258–9 / *WA*, 123. Cf. *SKS* 11, 272–3 / *WA*,158–60. Contra a basically Hegelian notion (popularized in Denmark by H. L. Martensen) of Christ's Incarnation—and especially the Atonement—as the central expression of a "pre-established harmony" between God and humanity, Kierkegaard insists on the uniqueness of Christ coupled with a substitutionary view of the Atonement that portrays the Christian's right standing before God as a matter of forensic imputation, rather than participation. Or, to put it in Kierkegaard's own terms, we remain "accomplices" who stand alongside Christ, rather than becoming members of Christ's body as the church: "Alas, we human beings, even if we are of the truth, are still alongside *the truth*; when we walk side by side with the man who is *the Truth*, when *the Truth* is the criterion, we are still like children alongside a giant; in the moment of decision we still remain—accomplices"

as the human prototype issues the inexorable and unremitting call toward the complete embodiment of the spiritual life in relation to the eternal—a high calling unmitigated by circumstances or conditions—Christ's divinity also sets the boundary and limit of earthly temporal existence. The absolute paradox of the union of the eternal and the temporal in Christ is not a reality in which existing Christians participate; it is an "impossible possibility" intended to press each individual into the perpetual struggle of becoming a self before God. This struggle, for Kierkegaard, culminates in dying to the world so that, in the words on Kierkegaard's tombstone, each spirit may finally "rest in halls of roses, and unceasingly, and unceasingly, speak with my Jesus."[3] We can now see the distinctively Christological background for Kierkegaard's framing of human existence as a perpetual dialectic of *becoming*: Christian existence is an endless striving toward more closely approximating Christ's example, punctuated by moments of resting in his grace—sitting silently in the presence of Christ and becoming a "nothing" that corresponds inversely to the "everything" of divine love and forgiveness, as in the example of "the woman who was a sinner."[4]

What must now be made explicit is how this Christological dialectic relates to the question that remained at the heart of Kierkegaard's anthropology throughout the authorship—the question of whether (and if so, how) the life of the *spirit* might be expressed in the *body-soul* realm of temporality and sociality. In this chapter, my task is to explore this question of "commensurability" in light of Kierkegaard's Christologically-

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(*SKS* 10, 299 / *CD*, 278). There is something right about this. But this phrasing hints at a lacuna in Kierkegaard's Christology, which has significant anthropological and ecclesiological ramifications. In short, Kierkegaard fundamentally fails to see the Christian life in terms of our corporate identity as the body of Christ (not "accomplices"), such that we are members of Christ's body and thus active participants who share in his life, death, and resurrection, not simply individuals who seek to approximate Christ's individual life. I expand on this concern in chapter eight.

[3]From a hymn by Hans Adolf Brorson. See Joakim Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography*, trans. Bruce H. Kirmmse (Princeton University Press, 2007 [2000]), 811.

[4]*SKS*, 11, 271–80 / *WA*, 135–44.

conditioned vision of human existence. Section 6.1 provides a brief outline of the options Kierkegaard or his pseudonyms present or allude to regarding the issue of commensurability, thus providing a general sense of the kinds of options that might be available (a typology, if you will) and revealing more clearly Kierkegaard's own trajectory.

In Section 6.2 I examine the question of commensurability within the context of what I take to be the culmination of Kierkegaard's development of the theme of *imitatio Christi* in "Christ the Prototype" (Part Two of the posthumously published *Judge for Yourself!*). In this work, Kierkegaard joins the Christological themes of imitation and prototype with his view of the struggle between eternity and temporality.[5] By building on the explicit contrasts between this discourse and the relative leniency of "The Cares of the Pagans," we can see what I take to be the final, unrelentingly anti-temporal logic of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology.

In the third and final section, I summarize how Kierkegaard frames his Christological anthropology (with its emphasis on imitation and suffering) within a philosophical and theological vision that equates God and eternity with "the Unconditioned," defines tem-

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[5]It is here that we can truly understand the significance of what is perhaps Kierkegaard's most familiar designation for Christ—the Absolute Paradox. The term "absolute paradox" appears most famously in *Philosophical Fragments* (1844), a work pseudonymously attributed to Johannes Climacus. *Fragments*' discussion of the "absolute paradox" has traditionally been regarded as the *locus classicus* of Kierkegaard's Christology, and with good reason: it is perhaps the most sustained treatment of the incarnation as a doctrine in Kierkegaard's authorship. However, focusing exclusively or even primarily on Christ as the "absolute paradox" gives only a partial picture of the significance of Christ in Kierkegaard's thought (and of Christ for Kierkegaard's anthropology). I believe that a much richer account of Kierkegaard's Christ emerges by giving increased priority to the later signed discourses. The sheer number and variety of references to Christ in these discourses suggests just how important they ought to be in any discussion of Kierkegaard's Christology: in *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits* (1847), *Works of Love* (1847), *Christian Discourses* (1847–48), certain discourses collected in English translation under the title *Without Authority* (1849–51), *For Self-Examination* (1851), and the posthumously published *Judge For Yourself!* (apparently written between 1851–52), Kierkegaard mentions Christ by name on nearly four hundred separate occasions, and he uses over fifty distinct terms or phrases to designate Christ. (Incidentally, "absolute paradox," the term most readily associated with Kierkegaard's Christology, does not appear at all in these later works.) The late theological discourses thus constitute a rich resource for understanding Kierkegaard's Christ, and introduce dimensions of his Christology that, in my estimation, provide a necessary context for understanding the significance of Christ's status as the Absolute Paradox. See Daniel Marrs and Ian Panth, "Beyond the God-Man: Exploring Kierkegaard's Christological Terminology in the Late Discourses," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* (forthcoming).

porality as "the conditioned," and accordingly contextualizes the God-human relationship in terms of the "unconditional requirement of the Unconditioned." His final logic of the inverse relationship between temporality and eternity (characterized by their fundamental opposition) issues in a bifurcation that extends all the way to his anthropology, in a way that has decisive bearing on the perennially-raised concerns about Kierkegaard's views on sociality and ecclesiology.

6.1 Commensurability: The Options

I have claimed throughout this dissertation that our assessment of Kierkegaard's anthropology (and especially its ramifications for the charges of anti-sociality and acosmism) hinges upon the question of commensurability. We saw in chapters two through four how Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms navigate the polemically charged territory surrounding this issue in relation to Kant and Schelling. And we have gained a sense of how Kierkegaard's notion of the human as body-soul/spirit enables the human being to inhabit the all important intersection of temporality and eternity, a fact which lies at the heart of the question of commensurability. Each person exists *at* the point of intersection (the moment) and has her history in and through eternity's permeation of temporality. And yet eternity is always extrinsic, a divine address from without, rather than some aspect of the immanent development of spirit. This fundamental anthropological structure in relation to the eternal undergirds the important anthropological categories of freedom and sin, and hence the notion of a dynamic self that must *become* itself in relation to the eternal—before God. Beginning in chapter four and continuing into chapter five, we saw the Christological nature of this task—the dialectic of existence—which both fleshed out Kierkegaard's earlier anthropological insights but also turns out to have been a determinative source for Kierkegaard's anthropology: for it is through Christ and especially the doctrine of the Atonement that Kierkegaard views the human person as free and sinful, the anthropological task as a second ethics, etc. Christ's dual role as prototype

and Redeemer uniquely initiates the ethically strenuous task but also provides comfort and redemption in response to humans' inevitable failure. It is specifically within this anthropological context that the question of commensurability arises: can the requirements of eternity—which always appear in temporality and must be lived out in the context of temporality—actually be reconciled with temporal existence? And if so, what might this look like? We are now approaching the Kierkegaardian answer to these questions, but it is vital that we have a clear sense of the kinds of options Kierkegaard himself has made available to his readers: what follows is a brief typology of the possible answers Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms have gestured toward.

6.1.1 Parallel Incommensurability

By parallel commensurability, I am referring to a kind of compatibility that arises from the idea that the inward life of faith and the outward life of actions are such radically different spheres that they cannot contradict each other—they simply run parallel. The best example of this is Johannes de Silentio's imaginative construction of the knight of faith:

> Here he is. The acquaintance is made, I am introduced to him. The instant I first set eyes on him I push him away; I jump back, clap my hands, and say half aloud: "Good Lord! Is this the man, is this really the one? He looks just like a tax collector!" . . . I examine his figure from top to toe, to see if there might not be some crack through which the infinite would peek. No! He is solid all the way through. . . . Nothing is detectable of that distant and aristocratic nature by which the knight of the infinite is recognized. He finds pleasure in everything, takes part in everything.[6]

Here, the spiritual life of faith is so inward, so hidden, that it simply cannot be perceived or communicated in terms of actions, demeanors, etc. True, de Silentio's knights of faith may find themselves doomed to the "martyrdom of unintelligibility"[7] should

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[6] *SKS* 4, 133–4 / *FT*,38–9.

[7] *SKS* 4, 171 / *FT*, 80, translation modified.

God ever make an extraordinary demand upon them. But in all likelihood—especially in the safe cradle of Christendom—they will be allowed to pirouette jauntily through life, synthesizing the eternal in the realm of temporality so heartily and thoroughly that only the most careful observer might recognize that they are "aliens in the world."[8]

6.1.2 Harmonious Commensurability

In some ways this option is very like the first in that it refuses to tie a rightly-oriented spiritual life with particular temporal expressions. The difference is really one of accent: rather than *Fear and Trembling*'s emphasis on the sheer incommensurability of the religious and the ethical such that the external and inward have no bearing on one another, the accent here falls on the ways in which the external can reflect or express the spiritual—not because of some essential relation but because of the temporal's ability to receive (and be transformed or informed by) the eternal.

For example, we saw in "Cares of the Pagans" the possibility that the temporal could truly be received back, transformed by eternity. Kierkegaard speaks of the way consciousness of the eternal subverts or negates temporal values—but this process is not necessarily absolute. The battle between temporality and eternity in the human heart issues in renewed ways of valuing temporal realities; it allows a person to revalue temporal things in terms of eternity. Thus, although Kierkegaard will describe wealth and loftiness as entailing unique dangers for the life of faith (akin to inspecting a munitions room with a lit candle, as he puts it so memorably), he seems to maintain, at least in that discourse, that there is nothing intrinsically problematic with temporal wealth and loftiness. Indeed, worldly riches and power can be analogues of spiritual wealth and loftiness. Rather than an ultimately indifferent coexistence of temporality and eternity through utter incommensurability (a rather facile option that de Silentio in *Fear and Trembling* seems to leave open), Kierkegaard appears to hold out hope that countless

[8] *SKS*, 4, 136 / *FT*, 41.

forms of temporal existence *could* reflect and express the life of the spirit—provided the person is rightly oriented toward God inwardly.[9]

6.1.3 Commensurability through Inversion and Contradiction

Even so, hints of a harsher assessment of temporality are evident throughout Kierkegaard's writings. For example, although in some contexts (such as "The Cares of the Pagans") Kierkegaard claims that a variety of outward forms of life or social conditions *could* reflect a life of faith, elsewhere he clearly prioritizes suffering and lowliness—in large part because these conditions quite literally reflect Christ's own life. The underlying implication here seems to be that Christ's concrete form of historical existence was not indifferent: it reflected (or better, initiated) an eternal either-or that mapped certain forms of temporal existence onto the dogmatic notions of good and evil—not just as improperly ordered choices between greater and lesser goods, the misrelation of which constitutes the distinction for humans between good and evil, but the eternal distinction between obedience and sin, between singlemindedly willing the unitary Good or doublemindedly descending into temporal multiplicity. Contrary to the possibility that a "knight of faith" might appear as a "bourgeois philistine," Kierkegaard sometimes insists that a life of genuine faith—as spirit before God—will have the external, observable qualities of Christ's own life, a life which causes no small measure of discomfort for those who encounter it:

> Yes, truly, upon earnestly examining myself, I have been obliged to make the confession that if I were *contemporary* with someone whose life expressed that he was seeking *first* the kingdom of God, consequently expressed the unconditioned, and that he unconditionally related himself to the unconditioned, that he was *spirit*—lost to, alienated from, and dead to all temporal, finite, earthly considerations—I would find him unbearable; at every moment it would get the better of me.[10]

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[9]Judge William provides an excellent example of this kind of commensurability. See, for example, *SKS* 3, 99–100 / *EO2*, 97–98. Cf. *SKS* 9, 54–6 / *WL*, 47–9.

[10]*SKS* 16, 168 / *JFY*, 113.

Kierkegaard almost always affirms at least the possibility that a life of lowliness and suffering in relation to temporality could express a genuine life of spirit. But at times, Kierkegaard seems to posit an *essentially* inverse and contradictory relation between temporality and eternity: a life of spirit means being unconditionally related to the unconditioned, which in turn entails in no uncertain terms an externally visible (and thus discomfiting to others) alienation from temporality—a life that is "dead to all temporal, finite, earthly considerations." This is a far cry from de Silentio's knight of faith's vigorous enjoyment of life's pleasures.[11]

In this third option, the logic of Christ as prototype extends in a particular direction in relation to the question of commensurability. Perhaps *Fear and Trembling*'s option could be allowable from a purely philosophical perspective. But given the historical facticity of Christ the God-man, the proper relation of eternity and temporality has taken an undeniable, fully actualized form in Christ's own existence, with definite, concrete parameters: suffering in the world. Yet, even with this option, various possibilities for how the human being relates to, appropriates, or follows Christ as prototype leave some interpretive flexibility. Perhaps the notion of commensurability through inversion and contradiction as exemplified by Christ could include aspects of the first two options for answering the question of commensurability.

The three options described above constitutes the topography of the question of commensurability. In order to assess Kierkegaard's own stance and its ramifications for his anthropology, we must look more carefully at the meaning of *imitatio Christi*, especially in Kierkegaard's later writings. And we must also see how this vision of the Christian life (in terms of following after Christ in order to become spirit before God) maps on to Kierkegaard's most deeply held theological convictions about God as the unconditioned, and Christianity as the unconditional relation to the unconditioned.

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[11] *SKS* 4, 143-4 / *FT*, 38–9.

6.2 The Gospel's "Smiling Cruelty": Suffering and the Imititatio Christi

Two questions guide this section's investigation into Kierkegaard's understanding of *imitatio Christ*.

1) In what does the imitation of Christ consist? This can be seen as a further specification of Kierkegaard's already-established notion of Christ as prototype. Does imitation consist only in some inward, spiritual disposition that might result in any number of outward activities and circumstances, as in the case of the bourgeois philistine of *Fear and Trembling*? Or is there some identifiable, concrete activity or circumstance that belongs essentially to having Christ as one's prototype? Various sorts of answers to this question appear throughout Kierkegaard's writings. In "The Cares of the Pagans," as described above, a very carefully qualified kind of harmony can exist between eternity and temporality, such that various external temporal situations and actions *could* express or reflect the eternal—provided the individual is herself inwardly oriented toward the eternal. But as we shall see, the posthumously published "Christ the Prototype" reveals a decisive rejection of that form of commensurability between eternity and temporality.[12]

2) Relatedly, we must ask, to what extent can existing humans actually follow Christ? This question is especially important given the fact that Kierkegaard identifies Christ as *the* human prototype, the one whose own life determines the pattern of truly human existence. Kierkegaard very clearly sets aside Christ's redemptive work as utterly unique and unrepeatable. But beyond this, there is the question of Christ's example of faithful temporal existence in obedience to the Father. Kierkegaard, quite rightly, cannot posit a sharp division between Christ's work as human and Christ's work as divine—as he notes in *Christian Discourses*, the life of the one person is at once an expression of the eternal freedom of the Son and a human life of faith and obedience. Thus, Christ's entire

[12]It could be argued that already in "The Cares of the Pagans," Kierkegaard anticipates and prefigures the stance that becomes more explicitly solidified in "Christ as the Prototype," which I discuss below. Even so, my point is this: the earlier discourse seems to leave just enough room to entertain several options, whereas "Christ as the Prototype" considerably tightens the specific criterion of suffering, as we shall see.

life (not just what one might call the "divine" aspects of Christ's uniquely redemptive death) is the absolute paradox, the perfect union of eternity and temporality in a unified life. So we must ask: does the fact that humans have this God-man as their exemplar finally result in an unrealizable humanity? If, according to Kierkegaard's framing of the issue, something about temporal life actually bars humans from living in a manner that is faithfully and truly human, what does this say about Kierkegaard's anthropology? Does Kierkegaard perhaps leave room for an incomplete (i.e., not yet perfected) human existence that can yet be called a true participation in the pattern set by Christ, beyond the mere approximation he so vigorously condemns? Or is temporality inherently inimical to such an existence? These kinds of nuances prove to be vital for understanding and assessing Kierkegaard's anthropology.

These two questions inform the following reading of "Christ as the Prototype," which sets the stage for the next section's analysis of Kierkegaard's notion of Christianity as the unconditional requirement of the Unconditioned. In relation to these questions, my reading of "Christ as the Prototype" is guided first and foremost by what I see as *developments* in notions pertinent to Kierkegaard's anthropology; as I see it, Kierkegaard in "Christ as the Prototype" solidifies a stance about which his earlier writings displayed a degree of ambivalence—or better, his earlier writing explored various options, declining to give direct voice to a particular conclusion. However, in what follows, we can readily detect an interlocking set of developments: the rejection of all prototypes apart from Christ for defining Christianity in the strictest sense; the explicit connection of suffering with *imitatio Christi*; and, in light of this Christological sharpening of human existence in relation to the prototype, the ratification and essentialization of a logic of opposition and inversion between eternity and temporality. The following subsections trace out Kierkegaard's assertion of the enmity between temporality and eternity (6.2.1), the radicalization of Christ's unique status as *the* Prototype (6.2.2), and the identification of *imitatio Christi* with external (not just inward) suffering in relation to temporality (6.2.3).

6.2.1 Two Masters, Two Worlds: Temporality versus Eternity

"Christ as the Prototype" begins with a lengthy discussion of Christ's words from the Gospel of Matthew: "No one can serve two masters."[13] Kierkegaard admits that the phrase seems strange—speaking in worldly terms, it seems that everyone does in fact serve two (if not more more!) masters: "There has never lived a single human being who has not more or less served two masters"—leading us to suppose that what the Gospel really intends is that humans must strive to become *most* faithful to one of the many masters that require and divide human attention and loyalty.[14] But, Kierkegaard insists, Scripture's words mean exactly what they say. The "world and the Gospel are talking about entirely different things": the world speaks only about "this world," while the Gospel speaks "eternally . . . about eternity," an entirely different world, which is indeed a "perilous discovery for 'this world.'"[15] Eternally speaking, each person can only serve one master: either she serves God, with purity of heart willing one thing; or else she is divided, distracted, and lost. Here at the outset, Kierkegaard sets the terms: the Gospel, with its insistence that no one can serve two masters, is speaking in terms of eternity (which is truth) and *not* in terms of temporality (which is illusion):

> No one can serve two masters, no, not in all eternity, and if no one can do it eternally, then of course no one can do it. That it appears as if one could do it—yes, even if it were the case that in these few seconds of temporality one could do it—whether one can or cannot is irrelevant to that which is the truth. How a person will get on in the world is something the Gospel (unlike stories, novels, lies, and other time wasters) does not waste many moments thinking about—no, for the Gospel these seventy years are but a moment, and its discourse hurries on to eternity's decision; neither does it dangle bright prospects for this life and this world before a person when it, eternally unchanged, proclaims the eternal truth, "No one can serve two masters."[16]

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[13] *SKS* 16, 200ff / *JFY*, 150ff. The text itself is a meditation on Matthew 6:24–34.

[14] *SKS* 16, 200 / *JFY*, 150.

[15] *SKS* 16, 201 *JFY*, 150.

[16] *SKS*, 16, 201 / *JFY*, 150–1.

The Gospel's status as "good news" seems to be jeopardized—and as it turns out, it is not good news at all—not for a worldly way of thinking in particular, and not for "this world" in general. In fact, to a worldly way of thinking, the Gospel is harsher than the Law—whereas the law is merely "inflexible severity," the Gospel is "smiling cruelty" which makes demands that are "too lofty for us human beings." As in "The Cares of the Pagans," Kierkegaard here argues that only the perspective of eternity allows humans to recognize the Good News as "good"—for the Gospel speaks in terms of the reality of eternity, not according to the illusion of temporality. Although humans remain fundamentally alienated from "truly serving only one master," this is in fact the good news—for it presses us toward two things: readiness for grace and the ability to worship. Kierkegaard writes that with the "unconditioned requirement" of Christ the prototype we will simply be crushed if we suppose that we are "supposed to lift [the burden]"; but "this is not the intention of the Gospel. Its intention is that by means of the impossible requirement and my humiliation I shall be lifted, believing and worshiping."[17] Kierkegaard further defines worship as follows:

> You cannot worship God with good deeds, even less with misdeeds, and just as little by sinking into a flabby comatose state and doing nothing at all. No, in order to worship God properly and to have the proper joy from worshiping, a person must . . . strive with all his might, spare himself neither night nor day; he must accumulate . . . what people of integrity, speaking humanly, would call good deeds. And when he then takes them and deeply humbled before God sees them transformed into something miserable and base—this is what it is to worship God.[18]

6.2.2 Christ, the Only Prototype

Kierkegaard eschews the idea that imitating Christ involves the concrete imitation of particular aspects of Christ's life—indeed, he pokes fun at tendencies in certain circles of

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[17] *SKS* 16, 202 / *JFY*, 153.

[18] *SKS* 16, 203 / *JFY*, 154.

Pietism to imagine that imitating Christ might involve outward things like wearing sandals, or, conversely, avoided certain activities (such as dancing) on the basis that it was difficult to imagine the incarnate Christ taking part in such frivolity.[19] Furthermore, Kierkegaard often describes *imitatio* as an inward spiritual disposition that somehow revalues external temporality without necessarily changing external circumstances in concrete ways. Of course, this inner disposition has everything to do with the individual's relation to the eternal, but occasionally it appears that Kierkegaard wants to maintain that this spiritual relation changes all other relationships—even if the changes are not observable.

However, the status of external (not just spiritual) suffering as a sign of having Christ as one's prototype develops greater specificity over the course of Kierkegaard's writings. An important aspect of this development involves the radicalization of Christ's status as prototype, and the attendant rejection of other prototypes. In "Cares of the Pagans," as discussed in chapter five, Kierkegaard equates being like the bird or lily to being a Christian. The birds and lilies prefigure in a genuinely analogous manner Christ's own prototypicality. Despite varying degrees of applicability, all of the prototypes teach essentially the same thing: live within temporality saturated by the overwhelming consciousness of the eternal, which counteracts faithless, worried preoccupation with temporal conditions, the crowd, or the future. Kierkegaard at least does not rule out the possibility that such an existence could lead to truly receiving back the temporal.[20]

"Christ the Prototype" calls into question this analogous continuity between creaturely prototypes and Christ. Framing Christ's "jesting" command to look to the birds and lilies as a concession to human frailty (for sinful humans could only be crushed by looking directly at Christ as the prototype), Kierkegaard first reaffirms much of what he had said in earlier discourses about the function and value of various creaturely pro-

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[19]NB23:92 / *JP* 3, 3322; NB20:175, NB20:175a / *JP* 3, 3318. Cf. Christopher B. Barnett, *Kierkegaard, Pietism, and Holiness* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 89–90.

[20]*SKS* 10, 26, 27, 28, 43, 68, 80–86 / *CD*, 14, 15, 16, 32, 64, 70–77.

totypes.[21] But from the outset of the discussion, Kierkegaard decisively undermines the role of the birds and lilies. It is only in merciful leniency that Christ temporarily deflects attention from himself:

> In order, however, that for us human beings the matter does not become all too earnest, deadly with anxiety, he draws our attention away from himself and directs it toward something else, almost as if it were encouragement, a diversion. . . . He could with truth, with infinitely greater truth, if you please, have said, "Look at me." The lilies and the birds really do not express anything, and only he is the turret of what the lily and the bird symbolize. But then the earnestness would have become deadly. For this reason he uses the lily and the bird.[22]

In and of themselves, the idea that birds and lilies could be prototypes is a nothing more than a bad joke—indeed, if a "frivoler, a wastrel, or a miser in a moment of poetic mood were to voice" the idea, it would be mere "baubles and emptiness. But when the *prototype* says it, then it is earnestness, because his life is the truth thereof."[23] After a brief reiteration of the role the lily and bird *ought* to play as prototypes, Kierkegaard makes explicit his concern about the ultimate inadequacy of such creaturely symbols: they are just as capable of distracting us from Christ as they are of pointing us toward him.

> But then does this whole matter of following [*følge efter*] Christ, of imitation [*Efterfølgelse*], does this perhaps become a jest? He himself helped us . . . He pointed away from [himself], and we—well, we cannot be blamed for doing it—we only all too willingly took the hint. Sagacious as we all are when it comes to sparing flesh and blood, we sagaciously understood all too well what had been granted to us in having such prototypes, and we became inexhaustible in dressing it up—and only with a certain secret horror giving thought to the earnestness: the imitation of Christ.[24]

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[21] *SKS* 16, 227ff / *JFY*, 178ff.

[22] *SKS* 16, 227 / *JFY*, 179.

[23] *SKS* 16, 227 / *JFY*, 179.

[24] *SKS* 16, 234 / *JFY*, 187.

Not only are the bird and the lily "only metaphorical" prototypes "without authority"—they turn imitation into a "poetic expression."[25] And, most damning of all, in Kierkegaard's view, even "if a person, with the lily and the bird as prototypes" followed after them, achieving harmonious engagement with the world, society, wealth, and so forth (as outlined, for instance, in "Cares of the Pagans"), even if they attain a level of piety that is "never seen among men," even this is not sufficient:

> But in the strictest sense this is still not Christianity; it is really Jewish piety. What is crucial in Christianity is not manifested here at all: to suffer because one adheres to God—or, as it is called, to suffer for the doctrine—the true imitation of Christ.[26]

Kierkegaard's radicalization of Christ as the only true Prototype signals a decisive setting aside of the deceptively lenient picture of Christianity afforded by creaturely prototypes in "Cares of the Pagans" and elsewhere. One can only suppose that Kierkegaard sees his own use of the lily and bird as mirroring Christ's parabolic approach: they serve as helpful but ultimately insufficient stepping stones. Obviously one would never want to suppose that a Christian could do without Christ, and focus only on the bird or the lily—but Kierkegaard makes very clear that in the truest sense, the lily and bird as symbol actually exemplify something other than Christ. In "Cares of the Pagans," the bird and the lily may be shadows of Christ, but they are saying essentially the same thing. Here, Kierkegaard abandons all leniency and insists that the birds and lilies say something essentially quite different from Christ; the life they initiate is at best a "Jewish piety" that must be abandoned in favor of genuine *imitatio Christi*.

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[25] *SKS* 16, 234 / *JFY*, 187.

[26] *SKS* 16, 234 / *JFY*, 187. Significantly, Bonhoeffer grounds his own emphasis on the this-worldly character of Christian hope in his renewed attention to the Old Testament; a significant portion of my concern with Kierkegaard could perhaps be framed as a concern that he everywhere prioritizes the New Testament and "what is clearly there and in clear words" over against "Jewish piety" (*SKS* 16, 235 / *JFY*, 188).

6.2.3 Imitatio Christi as Suffering

While the bird and the lily might bring a smile and a poetic mood, "the human race shrinks" from the imitation of Christ.[27] We want to insist that it would be a "ludicrous exaggeration, an effrontery, if someone dared to propose" what is in fact "said in the New Testament."[28] Kierkegaard opens this devastating salvo against imitation-less Christianity by identifying his primary target: those who suppose Christianity is nothing more than a "kind of quiet piety that under the leniency of grace thinks quite often about God, expects every good thing from his fatherly hand, and seeks consolation from him in life's need."[29] This version of Christianity continually attempts to sidestep imitation by replacing it with something else—for instance, the idea that being a Christian means "put[ting] up with life's adversities with patience," or the idea that the essentially Christian consists in "gentle comfort, a kind of insurance for eternity."[30] "*Imitation*, which corresponds to *Christ as prototype*" is suffering—"*to suffer for the doctrine*"—and this is precisely what must be recovered. This *imitatio Christi* as suffering, Kierkegaard insists, is the outward, visible "proof [that] does not precede but follows" the "decisive act" of faith: for in the decision of faith, the human being becomes "heterogenous with the life of this world, cannot have [his or her] life in it, [comes] into collision with it."[31] This heterogeneity does not bear fruit all at once—it progresses through several layers of intensity and alienation (hence the leniency of creaturely prototypes)—but Kierkegaard is now ready to say clearly what the spiritual life of faith means for the Christian's relation to temporality. He begins by outlining two lenient perversions of imitation that infect Christendom. The first and most

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[27] *SKS* 16, 235 / *JFY*, 188.

[28] *SKS* 16, 236 / *JFY*, 189.

[29] *SKS* 16, 236 / *JFY*, 189.

[30] *SKS* 16, 237 / *JFY*, 190.

[31] *SKS* 16, 238 / *JFY*, 191. Cf. David J. Gouwens, *Kierkegaard as Religious Thinker* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 176–9.

lenient form of affirming imitation is as an existential antidote to the doubt-engendering speculations of those "professors" who turn Christianity into a doctrine:

> The most lenient way [imitation] can be affirmed is as possibility, or, as it is called, dialectically, in such a way that it just exerts pressure to reduce doubt to silence and to keep a little order in our lives. . . . This is the most lenient way *imitation* can be affirmed. It is only the "professor" who is shaken off, the importance of scientific scholarliness that is rejected; otherwise everyone who will relate himself appropriately to Christianity is treated gently.[32]

In his own age of spiritlessness, Kierkegaard supposes that even this lenient first step would gain "an advantage" for his proposal to return to imitation—after all, it is indeed true that "under *grace* one breathes freely and with bold confidence."[33] But simply affirming the existential pole of the dialectic, as an ideal that ensures Christianity does not vanish into speculative doctrine, is still a far cry from actually suffering for the Gospel in accord with the Prototype. Recognizing that there is an existential aspect to Christianity is not yet to be a *disciple*.[34]

Next, Kierkegaard assures his readers that even "a Christianity in which the psychical conditions that Christianity presupposes are, as one says of a disease, identifiable, characteristically identifiable, the struggle of an anguished conscience, fear and trembling"—even this, as rare as it may be (due in part to the Danish clergy's insistence upon dismissing such inward anguish as a relic of the unenlightened infancy of the human race), is not true suffering for the Gospel.[35]

The final kind of Christianity that fails to apprehend true imitation equates following after Christ with "a more quiet enjoyment of life, observing civic virtues, also occasionally

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[32] *SKS* 16, 243 / *JFY*, 196–7. Note the way this passage resonates with *Concept of Anxiety*'s description of the way the human consciousness falls into sin by laying hold of the nearest finite thing when first experiencing the dizziness of possibility. In a similar manner, conditional (i.e., deficient) forms of imitation tempt those who are facing intellectual doubts in relation to their faith. See *SKS* 4, 365–6 / *CA*, 61.

[33] *SKS* 16, 243 / *JFY*, 197.

[34] *SKS* 16, 245–6 / *JFY*, 199.

[35] *SKS* 16, 246 / *JFY*, 200.

thinking about God so that the thought of him is also included somewhat but never so deeply as to have the jolt of the collision with the essentially Christian."[36] Significantly, Kierkegaard insists that the essentially Christian, if considered "deeply" enough, will not issue in harmonious engagement with temporality but with the "jolt of collision," with the recognition that it is "an offense to the Jew in me and a foolishness to the Greek in me."[37]

Imitation is neither part of a relatively comfortable existential dialectic (an existential ideal that relativizes and counterbalances speculation and doctrine); nor a purely inward anguish of conscience; nor the harmonious confluence of spiritual life with familial joys, civic duties, and the occasional pious impulse. No, if imitation is to be affirmed it must be affirmed as suffering:

> Christ is the prototype, to which corresponds *imitation*. There is really only one true way to be a Christian—to be a disciple. The disciple has among other marks also this: to suffer for the doctrine. Anyone who has not suffered for the doctrine has in one way or another incurred guilt by using his sagacity to spare himself in a secular way.[38]

Kierkegaard's insistence that the suffering must be visible—in the form of opposition from and rejection by the world—mirrors Christ's own life.[39] It also reflects his intuition that any sort of self-denial that actually issues in some sort of temporal advantage cannot really qualify as self-denial.[40] In order to reap the spiritual benefits of self-denial, Christian suffering *must* entail temporal, visible suffering—put bluntly, "false self-denial is marked

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[36]*SKS* 16, 248 / *JFY*, 202.

[37]*SKS* 16, 248 / *JFY*, 202.

[38]*SKS* 16, 253 / *JFY*, 207. Reading these words, one cannot help but think of that purveyor of Christianity-as-gentle-comfort, Bishop Jakob Mynster, who attracted such ire from Kierkegaard—privately at first, and then publicly after the bishop's death. See *SKS* 25, 409, NB30:34 / *JP* 6, 6880; cf. *SKS* 25, 403, NB30:25 / *JP* 2, 1804. See also *SKS* 12, 115, 135 / *PC*,106, 131. For a historical overview of Kierkegaard's critique of Mynster, see Christian Fink Tolstrup, "Jakob Peter Mynster: A Guiding Thread in Kierkegaard's Authorship?" In *Kierkegaard and His Danish Contemporaries, Tome II: Theology*, ed. Jon Stewart, vol. 7, Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 267–88.

[39]Cf. Sylvia Walsh, *Living Christianly: Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Christian Existence* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 115ff.

[40]*SKS* 16, 250–53 / *JFY*, 204–7.

by this, that it looks like self-denial at first but turns out to be profitable in some other external way, so that basically it is sagacious calculation."[41] As an example, Kierkegaard holds up Luther's suffering through his critique of medieval Catholic asceticism:

> [Luther] was strictly disciplined to be able to express the kind of piety that in the Middle Ages was *honored and glorified* under the name of self-denial—which therefore was not true self-denial. And Luther denounced precisely that kind of piety. Suppose he had chosen to become a very distinguished ecclesiastic in order thereby to be rewarded for his self-denial in witnessing against the false kind of self-denial. In that case, it would again not have been true self-denial. But honest Luther saw properly. He witnessed against what the age regarded as true self-denial; he cut himself off from the opportunity of scoring a success thereby.[42]

In a rather dizzying bit of logic, Kierkegaard suggests that any genuine desire for self-denial is supported by Governance through the addition of outward suffering: God himself *ensures* (graciously!) that the courageous reforming work of someone like Luther (or, if we read between the lines, Kierkegaard himself) will be met not only with physical danger but the added insult of ridicule and rejection by the crowd—for the external mark of genuine self-denial is and must be suffering. Apparently, if Luther's reforming work had resulted in the acclaim of his peers or ecclesiastical superiors, it would have been an indicator of Luther's insincerity.[43] Conversely, when Governance puts the one who is "suffering for the good that one does" (and not merely doing good with the hope of receiving some sort of recognition or glory) into a persistently oppositional and suffering relation with temporality, a transformation can occur: rather than persevering in the hope of some external comfort or justification, the sufferer learns that the suffering itself is in fact joy; and turning to Governance in prayer she says:

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[41] *SKS* 16, 250 / *JFY*, 205.

[42] *SKS* 16, 250–1 / *JFY*, 205–6. See also Kierkegaard's insistence that attending to Luther's life should attenuate the tendency in Kierkegaard's own time to "take Luther in vain" (*SKS*, 13, 44–50, 52 / *FSE*, 15–20, 24).

[43] *SKS* 16, 251–2 / *JFY*, 206–7.

> What I suffered or that which pained me was really that in this adversity I saw a proof that everything had gone wrong for me. But now when you, kind Governance, explain it to me and explain yourself to me, I now wish only to remain out there in an understanding with you.[44]

In other words, the one who suffers externally has the comfort and true joy of knowing she is rightly related with God, in sincere self-denial and purity of heart—and wishes to remain in this kind of temporal suffering, with no admixture of the false comforts afforded by temporal rewards or societal recognition. In the inverse commensurability of opposition that pertains between the eternal and the temporal, suffering in temporality is blessing in eternity.

Kierkegaard closes "Christ the Prototype" with one final reason that *imitatio Christi* must entail external, visible suffering in relation to the world: for clarity of proclamation, namely the proclamation of Christ as the presence in the world of the Unconditioned. Anyone who seeks to spare him- or herself from temporal suffering, Kierkegaard cautions, has "weakened the impression of Christianity, which has become less recognizable to others, and has contributed to confusing the point of view of Christianity."[45] Indeed,

> Christianity did not enter the world so as to be worldly sagacity and human whimpering that thought to win many by scaling down. . . . No, the unconditioned (everyone can certainly see that) cannot enter with the aid of a scaling down, because if it scales down it is not the unconditioned. On the contrary, through a scaling down, the unconditioned goes out of the world or, which amounts to the same thing, broadens out in such a way that it merges with the conditioned.[46]

This immensely significant notion of God as the Unconditioned is the broader theological context that mutually coinheres with Kierkegaard's understanding of temporality and eternality as related inversely and oppositionally and his equation of Christ

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[44] *SKS* 16, 252 / *JFY*, 207.

[45] *SKS* 16, 252 / *JFY*, 208.

[46] *SKS* 16, 252–3 / *JFY*, 208. But cf. *JP* 6, 6966 / *Pap.* XI² A 436, in which Kierkegaard re-emphasizes that even in Christian suffering, the would-be Christian remains but an approximation of "all that is required of all . . . of what it simply means to be a Christian."

as prototype with external, visible suffering. Christianity is meant to be a relation of discipleship—unconditional obedience to the way of Christ. But the imitation of Christ, if Christ himself is the presence of the unconditional requirement of the Unconditioned, simply cannot admit of degrees or approximations if it is to maintain its validity as a true revelation of God in the world.

By way of transition to this chapter's final section, it may be helpful at this point to differentiate my reading of Kierkegaard's understanding of temporality-eternity as inversely related and opposed from Sylvia Walsh's interpretation of Kierkegaard's "inverse dialectic" (*omvendt Dialektik*) of Christian existence.[47] I agree on many points with her careful explication of the way in which Kierkegaard's existential dialectic functions. However, I cannot agree with her assessment that the "radically negative and world-denying" aspects of the late writings stand not as the "logical conclusion of [Kierkegaard's] central vision but rather an abrogation of it."[48]

Walsh's argument is the exact inverse of my thesis—that what the late writings contain are a vital and reliable voice in my polyphonous reconstruction of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology. The nature of my disagreement will become clearer in section 6.3, but to put it briefly: Walsh insists that we must maintain both the positive and negative aspects of the dialectic of existence to the very end—she brackets Kierkegaard's most negative moments within an ultimately hopeful dialectic. The dialectic is hopeful not only about eternity post-death but about temporality as well—precisely because of the grace Christ offers: "When the requirement of imitation is then reintroduced after grace, it comes not as a requirement of the law but as an expression of gratitude *enabled* by grace" (159, emphasis added). But I argue that Kierkegaard's existential dialectic, so admirably described by Walsh, is itself bracketed and relativized by the fundamental

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[47]Walsh, *Living Christianly*, 7ff; cf. *SKS* 24, 483, NB25:66 / *JP* 4, 4289; *SKS* 25, 126–7 / *JP* 4, 4696; *SKS* 23, 153, NB16:88/ *JP* 6, 6593.

[48]ibid., 160.

heterogeneity of temporality and eternity, or, in the terms highlighted in the next section, the heterogeneity of the conditioned and the Unconditioned.[49]

This strikes me as something very easy to demonstrate: the dialectic names conditional tensions and can only describe temporality. For Kierkegaard, the dialectic is initiated *by* eternity's pressure or in-breaking upon temporality, but eternity and temporality are *never* related dialectically.[50] Christ is, paradoxically, the Unconditioned in time, affecting temporality while remaining heterogeneously discontinuous with it. As noted in chapter five, Kierkegaard argues that God is not "directly related to the world of appearance" since this is "at variance with God as spirit and in general with the entire outlook of Christianity"; rather, God is related "paradoxically to [the world of] appearance, only tangentially, just as one may be able only to touch something but nevertheless can gear into it decisively, yet without being in continuity with it."[51] As we shall see in the next section, it is just this aspect of Kierkegaard's Christ (as the sharpest expression of the fundamental opposition of eternity to temporality) that relativizes any existential dialectic as a precursor to genuine selfhood and determines Kierkegaard's vision of the human self before God.

6.3 The Unconditional Requirement of the Unconditioned

I close this chapter by stepping back briefly to contextualize Kierkegaard's Christologically informed opposition between temporality and eternity, as well as his prioritization of suffering as the only true *imitatio Christi*, within a broader theological framework. I do this by unfolding the philosophically rich notion of God as the Unconditioned in relation to the more theologically familiar concept of God as "infinite love"—both of

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[49]In this I am in profound agreement with Paul Martens and Tom Millay, "'The Changelessness of God' as Kierkegaard's Final Theodicy: God and the Gift of Suffering," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 13, no. 2 (2011): 170–89, 187.

[50]However, see ibid., 179–80.

[51]*SKS* 26, 227, NB32:133 / *JP* 2, 1444.

which become especially significant in Kierkegaard's direct theological discourses and in his journals. I intend to show that both God as the Unconditioned and God as Infinite Love work together to press readers toward just the sort of anthropology uncovered earlier in this chapter: the ethical task of becoming a self before God in the Christological dialectic of existence entails temporal suffering.

6.3.1 God as the Unconditioned Being-In-and-for-Itself

Kierkegaard uses two philosophically rich terms—"the unconditioned" (*det Ubetingede*) and "being-in-and-for-itself" (*det Iogforsigværende*)—in an interlocking manner when describing God. These terms, especially "the unconditioned," are deeply embedded in Kierkegaard's broader philosophical context. In European philosophical circles of the late 1700s and continuing into Kierkegaard's own day, the quest for the unconditioned (*das Unbedingte*) was of central importance. This quest was played out within a framework largely dictated by the implications of Kant's assertion in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that in our experience of empirical, sensible reality, we "always remain caught up with conditions."[52] Indeed, the projects of Jacobi, Fichte, the Early Romantics, Schelling, and Hegel can all be seen as attempts to navigate the significance of the notion of the unconditioned for epistemology, aesthetics, and ethics. In short, given a Kantian account of the world of spatiotemporal experience and the limits of reason, options such as a "thing in itself" that underlies our perception of empirical reality, or an ideal realm that funds or determines the realm of phenomena, or even the notion of a God who is understood as having a substantial or personal relation to creation, became increasingly difficult to imagine. This collection of issues was often framed as a search for the unconditioned: "We seek everywhere the unconditioned, and find only the conditioned."[53] Given the idea that

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[52]Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), A483 / B511.

[53]Novalis, "Pollen #1," in *The Political Writings of the German Romantics*, ed. Frederick Beiser (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 9.

knowledge and understanding (in the usual sense) trade upon the mutual conditioned-ness of objects in the empirical world, seeking the unconditioned became an extraordinarily tricky (and perhaps questionable) enterprise. For our present purposes, it should be noted that the notion of the unconditioned clearly carried distinctively theological connotations in Kierkegaard's day. For instance, F. A. Trendelenburg equated "the unconditioned" of the philosophers with the God of religion, and framed the issue in primarily epistemological terms: God in his essence remains unknowable, but analogies and images in the created world (such as frameworks of rationality) yield a kind of theological information, namely the intuition that God must be that which grounds the unity of human experience.[54]

Kierkegaard only uses the term specifically as a way of denoting God very occasionally, especially in the late journals. For instance, in 1854, Kierkegaard states baldly that "God is indeed unconditioned being."[55] But these explicit denotations, few though they may be, resonate with Kierkegaard's frequent insistence that Christianity is the unconditioned, or that the Christian life is one of unconditional commitment or obedience. Primarily, Kierkegaard uses the notion of the unconditioned to emphasize God's utter self-relatedness, which connects directly to Kierkegaard's use of *det Iogforsigværende* as a description of God's personhood.[56] From this primary intuition about God's unconditioned being-in-and-for-Godself, Kierkegaard draws out two implications: God (and Christianity) as the unconditioned resists and even puts an end to reason-giving; and second, the unconditioned tightens up ethical requirements to the highest possible level, casting ethics as a strict either/or that cannot admit of degrees or approximation.[57]

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[54]F. A. Trendelenburg, *Logische Untersuchungen*, 3rd (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1870 [1840]), 473, 509.

[55]*JP* 4, 4918, *Pap*. XI² A 205 (1854).

[56]*SKS* 26, 302, NB33:55 / *JP* 2, 1449.

[57]The direction this is headed vis-à-vis anthropology should be evident by now: the unconditioned names the eternal, and vice-versa. And the human self/spirit, as we have seen, arises out of the tension between between temporality-eternity. However, as has been clear throughout Kierkegaard's authorship,

Much of Kierkegaard's argument with what he frequently denotes as "Hegelianism" consists in his conviction that, through illegitimate speculation, it changes "the unconditioned into the conditioned."[58] Eschewing any transgression of the epistemological barrier between the world of conditions and the divine, Kierkegaard insists "the unconditioned cannot be assisted by reasons—for whatever needs to be supported by reasons is *eo ipso* not the unconditioned."[59] Elsewhere, Kierkegaard elaborates: "Can an unconditioned be praised, commended, served by reasons? No. Anyone who does this reveals that he is a blockhead who cannot think two thoughts together, for 'reasons,' by means of the reasons, transpose into relativity precisely that to which they are added, put it on the same level as that which is such only to a certain degree."[60]

Throughout the authorship, Kierkegaard never ceased his wrestling with the problem this emphasis on God as the unconditioned posed for attempts to come to know God. Indeed, near the end of his life, he confirmed the strict boundary imposed upon human knowledge by the unconditioned, concluding that neither discursive knowledge nor immediate intuition could gain any traction whatsoever beyond the realm of conditions:

> By nature man dreads walking in the dark—no wonder, then, that he by nature dreads the unconditioned, getting involved with the unconditioned, of which it holds true that no night and "no darkness is half so black" as this darkness and this night in which all relative goals (the ordinary milestones and road

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the eternal and temporal (and now, the unconditioned and the conditioned) resist synthesis—they are, in fact, utterly heterogenous. This puts the human self/spirit in an impossible position: the "self will always be wounded by temporality under the unconditional demand of eternity" (Paul Martens, email exchange with the author). Personal selfhood in the highest sense is God's unconditioned being-in-and-for-Godself—and in Christ, humans have as their exemplar precisely this radically anti-temporal, unconditioned (or better, supremely self-conditioned) Person. Thus, although the finite spirit must arise from within the context of the soul-body synthesis, Kierkegaard leaves very little room *not* to see the temporally-bound body-soul as a prison, an impediment to the attainment of genuine spiritual selfhood. Relatedly, see Vanessa Rumble, "Christianly Speaking, Humanly Speaking: The Dynamics of Leveling and Mimetic Desire in Kierkegaard's *Christian Discourses*," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook* (2007): 209–26, 211f.

[58] *JP* 4, 4894 / *Pap.* X^4 A 350 (1851).

[59] *JP* 4, 4894 / *Pap.* X^4 A 350 n.d., 1851.

[60] *JP* 4, 4894 / *Pap.* X^3 A 393 (1850).

> markers), in which all considerations (the lights we generally use to help ourselves), in which even the most sensitive and warmest feelings of devotion—are extinguished, for otherwise it is not unconditionally the unconditioned.[61]

Kierkegaard's statements about the reason-resisting quality of the unconditioned almost always coincide with an emphasis on ethical strenuousness. He argues that since the unconditioned is not subject to approximation, relation, or "to a certain degree," it can only make itself present in the world of finitude as an unconditional requirement, a strict either/or.[62] While "something is better than nothing" holds true for "everything finite, temporal, and earthly . . . it is otherwise with the unconditioned. The relation here is a matter of either/or, either unconditioned or not. Here it is very far from something being better than nothing."[63] Thus, for Kierkegaard, God's status as the Unconditioned puts humans in an oppositional relation to God. "The Divine [and] the human are related to each other as polemically as possible, according to Christian teaching. . . . The human as such is the relative, the mediocre, the bliss-producing 'to a certain degree.' . . . the unconditioned is indeed sheer restlessness, strenuousness, and torment."[64] A finite human, whose very existence consists in various conditions and relativities, can only encounter the unconditionally strenuous ethical demand of the unconditioned (Christianity and God) as torment:

> The unconditioned, the being-in-and-for-itself—yes, show me if you can, but I doubt that there is a single person living who has the remotest impression of such a being or who could entertain the thought of wanting to relate himself to such a being, which of course can be done only by unconditionally obeying, by being willing to let oneself be reduced to nothing, if you please, for the unconditioned is fatal to relative being and only through this fatality can it be given life.[65]

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[61] *JP* 4, 4908 / *Pap.* XI[1] A 95 (1854).

[62] *SKS* 12, 221–2 / *PC*, 227.

[63] *JP* 4, 4905 / *Pap.* X[5] A 118 (1853).

[64] *SKS* 26, 128–9, NB32:16 / *JP* 4, 4911 (1854).

[65] *JP* 4, 4918 / *Pap.* XI[2] A 205 (1854).

In the same entry, Kierkegaard concludes that Christendom's failure to know God as the unconditioned who calls forth ethical strenuousness amounts to a failure to know God in any meaningful sense at all. It seems fair to conclude that in spite of the relatively late and infrequent description of God as "the unconditioned" in Kierkegaard's writings, it is a concept of God that expresses several of Kierkegaard's most cherished theological commitments.

The notion that God is "being-in-and-for-itself" (*det Iogforsigværende*) appears in concert with references to God as "the unconditioned." While Kierkegaard uses both concepts to emphasize that God is not subject to the relations that condition temporality, Kierkegaard's being-in-and-for-itself functions in a very specific way to indicate that the eternal God is personal, and relates personally to the temporally-bound individual.[66] In a journal entry about the unconditionality of God and God's ethical requirement on humans, Kierkegaard addresses the objection that this strenuous definition of Christianity is too high, running contrary to God's "intention" that people would actually become Christians:

> The unconditioned, being-in-and-for-itself, is so frightfully strenuous for a human being, and therefore we would like to get rid of it, force a purpose upon God—and in that very second he becomes dependent upon finitude. Whoever has a purpose must also want the means, and if he must have the means, then he must adapt himself . . . This is why I repeatedly say that God is pure subjectivity, has nothing of objective being in himself which could occasion that he has or must have intentions. Whatever is not purely transparent subjectivity has at some point or other in its objective being a relationship to an environment, a relationship to an other and therefore has, must have, intentions. Only that which infinitely subjectively has its subjectivity infinitely in its power as subject, only that has no intentions.[67]

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[66]While the term is clearly borrowed from Hegel, Kierkegaard predictably subverts what he understood to be the Hegelian sense of the word. Whereas the Hegelian being-in-and-for-itself is the end product of a dialectical process, Kierkegaard argues that being-in-and-for-itself must eternally have been this kind of being, without reference to another. This sets the personal God apart from all finite, temporal persons, who are always within a conditioned process of becoming in relation to various goals and obstacles.

[67]*SKS* 26, 302, NB33:55 / *JP* 2, 1449 (1854).

Kierkegaard thus render's God's eternal personhood as being-in-and-for-itself, a "pure subjectivity" that rules out any conditioning, objective relationship with an external other, since this would "limit God and set him down into the realm of relativities."[68] Interestingly, Kierkegaard adds that God "relates objectively to his own subjectivity"—although this objectivity in God should strictly be understood as a "reduplication of [God's] subjectivity," thus preserving God's unique status as unconditioned.[69] Come aptly interprets this dual emphasis on God's infinite subjectivity and God's relating "objectively" to God's subjectivity as Kierkegaard's way of indicating that God acts purely out of "attention . . . to what God is," rather than reacting to external forces.[70] God as being-in-and-for-itself thus names the infinite difference between temporal creatures and the eternal God.[71] Being-in-and-for-itself is an eternal mode of being, a quality that cannot be arrived at through a series of quantifiable developments in temporality.

And yet, Christianity is precisely that which calls conditioned creatures toward unconditioned being, a requirement that can only be "fatal to a human being."[72] In 1852, Kierkegaard outlines his understanding of Christianity as a relationship with a being-in-and-for-itself, a relationship which is "the occasion and cause of suffering" precisely because it involves the painful extraction of our selves from a conditioned, relative existence in the world: "If someone wants to relate himself to a being-in-and-for-itself and also have the things of this world, then this is a duplicity."[73]

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[68] *SKS* 26, 265, NB33:23 / *JP* 4, 4571.

[69] *SKS* 26, 265, NB33:23 / *JP* 4, 4571.

[70] Arnold B. Come, *Kierkegaard as Theologian: Recovering My Self* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 76–7.

[71] Cf. ibid., 74–5.

[72] *SKS* 26, 302, NB33:55 / *JP* 2, 1449 (1854).

[73] *JP* 4, 4902 / *Pap.* X^5 A 17, (1852).

This account of personhood in terms of God's unconditionedness is especially devastating given the fact that human creatures have this unconditioned personality as their prototype.[74] Defective selfhood for Kierkegaard is always related to a misrelation within the self, but there is also a sense in which the fact of relationality itself appears to be problematic for Kierkegaard's conception of selfhood, as observed in the above paragraph: the subject-object dynamic that characterizes all spatiotemporal existence seems inimical to being truly personal. God as "pure subjectivity" is a self-relation for whom the self-relation does not break apart into a subject-object duality. Rather, the divine subject relates to itself as perfectly reduplicated subjectivity—transparently united rather than divided into subjective-objective poles.[75] And yet, this prototype is just how Kierkegaard defines the goal of human existence. Consider the pseudonymous Anti-Climacus' famous description of the self who has rooted out despair as one who "rests transparently in the power that established it."[76]

The failure to be this sort of transparently resting self is a misrelation that Anti-Climacus names despair and then, more pointedly, sin. This misrelation, like the sin that arises perpetually through the qualitative leap in *Concept of Anxiety*, is always related to the self-as-free. It is not a sickness that, once caught, perpetuates itself and runs its course apart from freedom or responsibility. Always and at every moment, the misrelation is traceable immediately and directly to the free operations of the relation itself—i.e., the complex self-relation I described in chapter two, which is characterized by self-consciousness and freedom.[77] In a manner that mirrors but presses forward the argument in *Concept of Anxiety*, Anti-Climacus does not ultimately locate sin in the self's misrelation with other finite things in the world. While many cares and hopes and distractions of existence surely

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[74]*SKS* 10, 52 / *CD*, 41.

[75]Incidentally, this sets Kierkegaard's theology firmly at odds with that of both Schelling and Fichte.

[76]*SKS* 11, 130 / *SUD*, 14.

[77]*SKS* 11, 133 / *SUD*, 17.

impede genuine selfhood in silent stillness before God, these misrelations are secondary expressions of a deeper illness: "For despair is not attributable to the misrelation [i.e., a prior state of despair] but to the relation that relates itself to itself [i.e., the conscious and free human spirit]. A person cannot rid himself of the relation to himself any more than he can rid himself of his self, which after all, is one and the same thing, since the self is the relation to oneself."

If read in light of the later journal entries about God's unconditioned "subject–reduplicated-subjectivity" self-relation, it seems that Anti-Climacus comes well within striking distance of suggesting that any mode of creaturely temporal selfhood is fundamentally sinful—for according to Haufniensis, the *history* in which humans have their life is a feature of consciousness—consciousness of the self as subject and object and consequently the objectification of the world of experience. Anti-Climacus and Kierkegaard problematize not only self's experience of the objective world, but also the inward subject-object division that seems so fundamental to human consciousness. In keeping with *Concept of Anxiety*, the moment of consciousness and freedom is barely differentiable from the moment of sin. Anti-Climacus is careful to note that sin does not reside in "human nature as such," but he goes on to say,

> No, no, despairing lies in man himself. If he were not a synthesis, he could not despair at all; nor could he despair if the synthesis in its original state from the hand of God were not in the proper relationship. Where, then, does the despair come from? From the relation in which the synthesis relates itself to itself, inasmuch as God, who constituted man a relation, releases it from his hand, as it were—that is, *inasmuch as the relation relates itself to itself*.[78]

Drawing on our discussion in chapters two and four, Anti-Climacus seems to be tying together human consciousness and history within the notion of despair: for here,

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[78] *SKS* 11, 132 / *SUD*, 16, emphasis added. This passage could be interpreted as saying that the *possibility* of sin/despair lies in the human's synthetic structure. But a more natural reading is that the fall itself, the laying hold of something finite, *is* this self-relation of self-consciousness: when God releases the synthesis, it *could* remain perfectly grounded in God in a relation of self-less worship, but each human freely and sinfully turns inward, relating "itself to itself."

sin is not simply the moment when a conscious, free spirit turns away from the eternal and lays hold of finitude, as in *Concept of Anxiety*—sin occurs as soon as a spirit becomes conscious of itself and enters into the changeful κίνησεις of history. As soon as God "releases . . . from his hand" the fragile, complex synthesis of a body-soul/spirit, there is a brief interval of sinless harmony. And with the first stirrings of possibility in this dreaming spirit, which is already freedom at some level, the "proper relationship" still obtains.[79] But the very moment that the spirit, instead of returning to rest transparently in the power that established it, becomes conscious of itself as a self, and objectively lays hold of its own finite objectivity—sin is in the world. This may well be the vital context for understanding the high premium Kierkegaard consistently places upon self-forgetfulness, self-abnegation, or becoming transparent to oneself while in the presence of God.[80] Significantly, Kierkegaard will describe coming into the presence of God in ways that call to mind the innocent, dreaming, pre-conscious spirit: when a person Christianly becomes aware of God, "this knowledge totally engages the Christian's mind and thought, blots out everything else from his memory, captures his heart forever, and thus he becomes absolutely ignorant."[81]

To put this another way, Kierkegaard maintains his ability to affirm that humans are created "good" by ascribing sin solely to human freedom—the act of a free spirit. Each human being, in terms of nature, is created good. In terms of spirit, it is also good, but this goodness is precarious: the spirit/self is latent, a mere potency in the body-soul synthesis, as-yet-unconscious, and free only in the most minimal sense of possibility. But the spirit as conscious and historical is *always* sinful—for it is precisely the movement toward objective

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[79] *SKS* 11, 132 / *SUD*, 16.

[80] For example, in "The Woman Who Was a Sinner," the title character, a prototype, passes through stages of self-hatred, powerless passivity, self-forgetfulness, and finally, silence. See *SKS* 11, 273–80 / *WA*, 137–44.

[81] *SKS* 10, 44 / *CD*, 33.

self-consciousness that sinfully turns the fledgling spirit away from resting transparently in the one who established it—and with this sinful self-consciousness, history is initiated. The rest of life is thus a training ground for maturing the spirit and ultimately extricating it from the cradle (or coffin) of the temporally-bound body-soul.

In summary, the notions of the unconditioned and being-in-and-for-itself are the theological center of Kierkegaard's anthropology—and it would seem that there is a mutual coinherence of this general theological vision and his specific understanding of Christ as *the* Prototype. Although the terms appear relatively late in Kierkegaard's authorship, they do not represent a new development or a shift in his thinking. Rather, they reveal how key Kierkegaardian themes that appear throughout the authorship (such as the insufficiency of speculative reason for coming to a knowledge of God, the ideality of ethics, or the emphasis on Christian suffering in the world) are intimately connected with Kierkegaard's understanding of God. As unconditioned being-in-and-for-itself, God remains radically inaccessible to human speculation; this God can only reveal Godself in the world as the unconditioned by demanding unconditional obedience, by introducing the strictest either-or between the relativities of this world and the absolute relation to God. Entering into this kind of relation to God can only be strenuous for—and ultimately fatal to—finite existence. This accounts, I believe, for the eventual identification of outward suffering as the temporal correlate of becoming spirit before God. The eternal personhood of God as the being-in-and-for-itself is programmatic for human personhood; Christ (the God-man paradoxically existing as the ideal made real) and Christianity (the expression of the unconditional ideality of ethics) initiate a life of suffering precisely because they call the human person to live beyond the conditions and relations that constitute temporal existence while at the same time requiring and initiating a life of ethical strenuousness characterized by suffering—or even martyrdom.[82]

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[82] The question of whether martyrdom is the end point of Kierkegaard's anthropology is hotly contested. What I find particularly interesting here, though, is that martyrdom appears at least as a strong likelihood

6.3.2 God as Infinite Love

One might be tempted to think that the uncompromisingly harsh notion of God as the unconditioned could be balanced against other Kierkegaardian ideas about God's relation to the world—notions such as grace, mercy, or love. Indeed, Kierkegaard is sensitive to the concern "that the conception of God's sublimity, of Christ's sublimity, has become so infinite that it has really become fantastic and that there remains no actual Christian life to speak of."[83] In this same entry, Kierkegaard suggests that the "infinite conception of God's infinite sublimity" should function as a kind of philosophical precursor to "the childlike openness to become involved with [God] earnestly and in truth." This goes along with Vigilius Haufniensis claim that "a vigorous and full-blooded anthropomorphism" in thinking about God "has considerable merit."[84] And Kierkegaard's frequent descriptions of God with richly evocative phrases that emphasize God's love for and involvement in the world seem to function in part to ensure that a properly lofty concept of God will not have the undesired consequence of having "smuggled [God] out of life."[85] Although Kier-

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not because of the world's sinfulness but because eternity fundamentally opposes temporality as such—or, not to put too fine a point on it, because the eternally unconditioned God can only relate unconditionally with creatures, through the unconditional requirement which eventually must annihilate all admixture of temporal conditions and relations if there is any hope of truly relating spiritually (unconditionally) to God. Those who see martyrdom as the necessary culmination of Kierkegaard's anthropology (especially as it relates to *imitatio Christi*) include Joel Rasmussen, "The Pitiful Prototype: Concerning Kierkegaard's Reflections on the Apostle Peter as a Model for Christian Witness," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook* (2007): 271–92; and Marie Mikulová Thulstrup, "Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Imitation," in *A Kierkegaard Critique: An International Selection of Essays Interpreting Kierkegaard*, ed. Howard A. Johnson and Niels Thulstrup (New York: Harper, 1962). For arguments on the other side, see Walsh, *Living Christianly* and Barnett, *Kierkegaard, Pietism, and Holiness*, especially 170ff.

[83] *JP* 2, 1385 / *Pap.* X[1] A 64 (1849).

[84] *SKS*, 4 363 / *CA*, 59. It could be argued, however, that while Kierkegaard recommends the "infinite conception of God" as a precursor to becoming involved with God "earnestly and in truth," this earnest involvement (ethical striving) is in turn a precursor to the existentially fatal relation to God as the unconditioned being-in-and-of-itself, as discussed above. The chronology of Kierkegaard's emphases seems pertinent here: while he earlier emphasizes the need to "think humanly of God" so as to reintroduce ethical striving, Kierkegaard's final emphasis shifts strongly toward the idea that Christian striving toward selfhood in relation to the unconditioned is necessarily directed toward a kind of death, i.e., dying to relative, temporal existence.

[85] *JP* 2, 1385 / *Pap.* X[1] A 64 (1849).

kegaard consistently eschews the idea that any human act could adequately concretize a divine reality, he recognizes that learning to "think humanly of God" is vital if the concept of God is to exercise "power over the lives of humans."[86] Thus, let me turn our attention to a significant term that highlights Kierkegaard's commitment to keeping the conception of God connected with "actual Christian life": God as "infinite love" (*uendelige Kjerlighed*). Far from mitigating or softening the ramifications of the somewhat philosophical notion of God as the Unconditioned, the Christian theological understanding of God as infinite love actually presses the very same point, making it, if possible, even more existentially terrifying: becoming a self before God *requires* temporal suffering and dying to the world.

Kierkegaard frequently uses the phrase "infinite love" (*uendelige Kjerlighed*) either to describe an aspect of God's nature,[87] or to name or directly address God.[88] The general idea of God's love figures significantly throughout Kierkegaard's writings—ranging from his argument that love is the basis and goal of God's eternal resolution to reveal Godself in the Incarnation to his identification of God's infinite love as that which overcomes human sin in the act of forgiveness.[89] But for our purposes, it will be most helpful to focus on the fact that Kierkegaard frequently employs the notion of God as infinite love in connection with two of the existential emphases discussed above: ethical striving and human suffering.

In *Christian Discourses*, as we saw earlier, Kierkegaard outlines a kind of inverse reciprocity that characterizes the relation between God and the human being. He begins by distinguishing between the person's existence in relation to God as omnipotent and

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[86]*JP* 2, 1385 / *Pap*. X[1] A 64 (1849).

[87]*SKS* 1, 107; *SKS* 8, 103. Beyond the appearances in the published writings, the phrase (sometimes spelled *uendelige Kjærlighed*) appears over fifty times in Kierkegaard's journals and notebooks, functioning variously as a worshipful exclamation (*SKS* 26, 217, NB32:127) or a way of describing God or God's works (*SKS* 26, 223, NB32:132; *SKS* 18, 311, JJ:510).

[88]*SKS* 10, 139 / *CD*, 128; *SKS* 13, 116 / *MLW*, 73; *SKS* 13, 327 / *MLW*, 268.

[89]*SKS* 4 193–4 / *PF*, 24–5; *SKS* 12, 267, 301 / *WA*, 157, 186. Additionally, Kierkegaard connects God's infinite love with God's changelessness: "What comfort and blessedness there is in the truth that God who is love is the unchanged (which again, in another sense, one could regard as love or as a characteristic of his love, for a love which changes certainly is not love!)" (*SKS* 21, 137, NB7:113 / *JP* 2, 1379 (1848).

God as love: "God, who creates from nothing, omnipotently takes from nothing and says, 'become'; he lovingly adds, 'Become something even in relation to me.'"[90] Thus, while omnipotence brings a person into existence, it is love that makes that person "come into existence *for* God."[91] This coming into existence for God, something that is only possible because of God's infinite love, puts the person in an asymmetrically reciprocal relationship with God. For bare omnipotence a creature is (and can only be) nothing; for infinite love, the creature becomes free and thus responsible before God:

> It is said that it is the omnipotent God who requires something of human beings, and then, perhaps, it is the loving God who gives in a little. What a sad misunderstanding that forgets that God's infinite love must already exist in order for a person to exist in such a way for God that there can be any question of requiring anything of him. If the Omnipotent One required something of you, then at that very moment you are nothing. But the loving God, who in incomprehensible love made you something for him, lovingly requires something of you.[92]

Kierkegaard goes on to describe infinite love's gift to the person as "independence, the freedom to go his own way"; the natural human tendency is to want to keep for oneself "this something into which love made him, selfishly [to want] to be this something"—this is strength in the worldly sense, and to worldly eyes it may look as if the gift of freedom has been wrested from God by force, as if the person's strength as one who is free before God involves the disempowerment of God.[93] And yet, God intends this inverse reciprocity since it opens up the possibility of a relation between the individual and God—namely a relation rooted in surrender and obedience to God. When a person surrenders rather than grasps at the gift of freedom, when "God perhaps helps him in this regard by hard sufferings, by taking away his dearest possession, by wounding him in the tenderest spot,

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[90] *SKS* 10, 138 / *CD*, 127.

[91] *SKS* 10, 139 / *CD*, 128.

[92] *SKS* 10, 139 / *CD*, 128. Cf. *SKS* 11, 136 / *SUD*, 21: "To have a self, to be a self, is the greatest concession, an infinite concession, given to man, but it is also eternity's claim upon him."

[93] *SKS* 10, 139 / *CD*, 128–9.

by denying him his one and only wish, by taking his final hope away from him," a space is opened up for God's own strength:

> But the one who became utterly weak—in him God became strong. The one who, worshiping and praising and loving, became weaker and weaker, himself less significant for God than a sparrow, like a nothing—in him God is stronger and stronger. *And this, that God is stronger and stronger in him, means that he is stronger and stronger*.[94]

Kierkegaard proceeds to argue that the single-minded worship of God, rooted in the desire to become nothing so that God might become stronger and stronger, reframes human suffering: not only does the sufferer learn to see suffering as a gift from God; in undertaking the ethical strenuousness of pursuing God alone, and in suffering under the pain that accompanies the gradual loss of each and every conditional and relative good that the temporal world offers, she comes to "understand that no harm is done to [her], not in the least, that it is indeed [her] true welfare."[95] It is God as infinite love that undergirds this entire existential framework: because of divine love, the human creature becomes something *for* God—a person who is independently related to God and from whom God requires something. The "something" that infinite love requires is worship—an exclusive love for God, the unconditional relation to the unconditioned being-in-and-for-itself.[96] Christianly relating to the Christian God of infinite love, for Kierkegaard, entails the strenuous task of putting aside temporal, finite pleasures, and suffering in relation to the world of conditions. In *The Moment* 5, Kierkegaard further radicalizes the connection between God as infinite love, the requirement, temporal suffering, and the fatal God-relation. Reminding his readers that "The minor premise in the statement 'God is love' is: he is your mortal enemy,"[97] Kierkegaard explains:

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[94] *SKS* 10, 140 / *CD*, 130.

[95] *SKS* 10, 140 / *CD*, 130. Cf. *SKS* 26, 167, NB32:67.

[96] *SKS* 10, 142 / *CD*, 132.

[97] *SKS* 13, 227 / *MLW*, 178. Cf. Martens and Millay, "'The Changelessness of God' as Kierkegaard's Final Theodicy: God and the Gift of Suffering."

> When Christianity requires that one shall love one's enemy, it could in a certain sense be said that it has good reason to require this, because God does want to be loved, and, to speak merely humanly, God is indeed a human being's most appalling enemy, your mortal enemy. Indeed, he wants you to die, to die to the world; he hates specifically that in which you naturally have your life . . . he [who is] love, he out of love wants to be loved by you, and this means that you must die, die to the world; otherwise you cannot love him . . . [God] loves you and he wants to be loved by you, both out of love; but as soon as there is something you wish for, then you are not thinking of him, just as when there is something you fear. Or if you bring him into connection with your wish and your fear, then you are not thinking of him in and for himself—that is, you are not loving him—and he wants to be loved, wants it out of love.[98]

Kierkegaard's emphasis on God as infinite love includes the comfort of forgiveness and the encouraging thought that God lovingly makes us free. But in the final analysis, "infinite love" functions almost identically with "the unconditioned." One detects echoes of Kierkegaard's horror of any concept of God that turns the unconditioned into the conditioned in his description of the reciprocal relation between humans and God—especially in his definition of worship as an all-exclusive love for God and the simultaneous loss of oneself.[99] Far from softening the unconditional either/or, or mitigating the terror of being creatures before God, the concept of God as infinite love sharpens the requirement, placing the individual under the crushing scrutiny of a God who unconditionally requires her freely surrendered love and worship.[100] Whereas the generalized notion of God as unconditioned might run the risk of smuggling God "out of life," Kierkegaard's unique portrayal of God as infinite love retains divine loftiness while simultaneously bringing the creature into a constant, unavoidable relation to this God: by God's infinite love, she exists for God, and this God requires something—indeed, everything—from her.[101]

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[98] *SKS* 13, 227 / *MLW*, 178.

[99] *SKS* 10, 142 / *CD*, 132.

[100] *SKS* 10, 142 / *CD*, 132. Kierkegaard warns that God, "watches you, knows even the slightest little thing taking place within you . . . your mortal enemy!"

[101] Cf. *SKS* 11, 136 / *SUD*, 21.

Before turning toward my final assessment of Kierkegaard's anthropology, I am going to examine what I call an "exemplary thread" that demonstrates more clearly that the kind of Christological anthropology I have been reconstructing cannot be written off as a late anomaly. By attending to the ubiquitous theme of "transfiguration"—which appears throughout the authorship, from the earliest journal entries to the latest polemical writings—we will be able to see with greater clarity the continuous trajectory of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Transfiguration: An Exemplary Thread

Portions of this chapter adapted by permission of the Publishers from my forthcoming article: "Transfiguration," in *Kierkegaard's Concepts*, ed. Steven M. Emmanuel, William McDonald, and Jon Stewart, Volume 15, Tome VI, Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception, and Resources (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology—its general features, polemical context, and existential outworking—should be relatively clear by now. In establishing the general features of Kierkegaard's anthropology vis-à-vis his polemical context (chapters two through four), I highlighted what I take to be the philosophical framework and Christological method that underlies Kierkegaard's notion of the human person. And by the end of chapter four, we saw how Kierkegaard pressed his distinctively Christological understanding of humans as free, sinful, and directly responsible before the eternal God in the moment (*Øieblikket*) gave rise to his notion of history as an anthropological category with promising social ramifications—while at the same time noting (through a comparison with Bonhoeffer) that already in this relatively early Christological anthropology, Kierkegaard's selection of Christological dogma hinted at problems to come. In chapter five we turned to directly Christological themes, examining how Christ functions in Kierkegaard's vision of the Christian dialectic of existence. Regarding the latter, we have seen that on the one hand Christ conditions Kierkegaard's philosophical anthropology; but on the other hand, the kind of Christ that Kierkegaard operates with reflects his critical philosophical commitments, especially the philosophical notion of God as the Unconditioned.

Thus far I have relied primarily on close readings of key texts related to Kierkegaard's anthropology—especially *Concept of Anxiety* and various theological discourses—supplemented by references to the broader authorship throughout. However, if my

thesis—that we can reconstruct from the entire authorship a highly contextualized Christological anthropology—is correct, we should be able to step back from those close readings of specific works and detect continuity on a meta-scale. I contend that Kierkegaard's many voices—Judge William, the Aesthete, Johannes Climacus, the young Kierkegaard who wrote upbuilding discourses, the more seasoned Kierkegaard who attacked Christendom—come together polyphonously in a presentation of what I have labeled "Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology."

My task in this chapter is to demonstrate this polyphonous continuity. To echo my statements in chapter one, I am not claiming that Kierkegaard's is a static, unchanged anthropology, which can be mined in its entirety from any single work, early or late. Rather, I am arguing for a development-in-continuity. The early works may not contain Kierkegaard's eventual conclusions about human existence, but they do *anticipate* and *prefigure* those conclusions in important ways. And, while the specific manner in which Christ eventually determines Kierkegaard's anthropology can rightly be described as a later development, Christ does not simply drop in out of nowhere and change everything. Rather, Christ appears at key times throughout the authorship, and when he begins to figure more explicitly and determinatively for Kierkegaard's anthropology, it is within an established set of anthropological terms, concepts, and frameworks. This is why I have sometimes referred to a "Christological sharpening" of Kierkegaard's anthropology: As discussed especially in chapters five and six, Christ does not fundamentally change the anthropological task of becoming a self/spirit before God, but he (a) heightens the existential strenuousness of the unconditional requirement through his perfect existence, and (b) uniquely initiates the dialectic of Christian existence between ever-greater ethical exertion and ever-deeper reliance upon grace. In Christ, the ethical ideal is perfectly actualized. And thus, the ideal no longer hovers above human existence as something to approximate—it stands before us as something that offends and judges and *demands* that we fulfill the requirement of holiness before God. Of course, Christ functions also

as the gracious redeemer who covers our inevitable failure. The fundamental character of the earlier anthropology remains intact, but Christ figures decisively in how the anthropological task actually plays out in existence. Conversely, when we look back at the earlier writings, we can see this Christological anthropology anticipated in various way—latent and implicit perhaps, but detectable nonetheless.

It is to this broad development-in-continuity that we now turn. In lieu of an exhaustive cataloging of every anthropologically significant passage, every reference to Christ, etc., I have opted to pick one exemplary thread: the central theme of "transfiguration" (*Forklarelse*). This theme works extraordinarily well for two simple reasons:

(1) The notion of transfiguration figures significantly throughout every stage of Kierkegaard's authorship, from the earliest journal entries to the late theological writings, and thus helps highlight the continuity of Kierkegaard's anthropological thought.[1]

(2) Transfiguration is a readily contextualized, anthropologically rich term. It names the goal of various anthropologically-significant efforts or tasks—and even the final goal of human existence—not only for Kierkegaard and many of his pseudonyms, but in idealist and Romantic anthropologies more generally. In addition to the term's use in discourses about art and ethics in relation to philosophy, transfiguration appears throughout Fichte's, Schelling's, and Hegel's writings on anthropology. It also appears prominently in the works of several of Kierkegaard's contemporaries in Copenhagen, notably in Heiberg's philosophical aesthetics and Martensen's theological ethics—both of which contain significant comments on anthropology. In each case, the term's use maps on to a discourse that has become increasingly vivid throughout this dissertation—the existential experience of an eternity-temporality dissonance, and the (im)possibility of harmonizing that dissonance, whether through art, philosophy, ethics, or religion. By tracking Kierkegaard's employment of the notion of transfiguration through a series of

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[1]See George Connell, *To Be One Thing: Personal Unity in Kierkegaard's Thought* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985), 24ff.

narrative vignettes—ranging from an early literary review, a theological discourse on prayer, the aesthetic musings of the pseudonymous "A," the ethical theory of Judge William, Anti-Climacus' vision of Christ as the uniquely dead and transfigured one, and a late communion discourse on confession—I believe I am able to demonstrate, comprehensively if not exhaustively, the development-in-continuity of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology.

7.1 Some Linguistic Remarks Regarding Transfiguration

In an 1839 journal entry, Kierkegaard notes with apparent delight, "All poetry is life's *Forklarelse* (i.e., transfiguration) in that it is its *Forklarelse* (through its being explained, illuminated, developed, etc.). It is quite strange that language has this ambiguity."[2] The concept of transfiguration (*Forklarelse*), or being transfigured (*at forklare*), appears frequently in Kierkegaard's writings—and perhaps the word's inherent ambiguity accounts to some extent for his fascination with the term. On several occasions, he makes much of the difference between explanation (*Forklaring*) and transfiguration (*Forklarelse*), and between the active and passive forms of *forklare*—"explaining" versus "being explained." As one commentator has rightly noted, "Kierkegaard would not be Kierkegaard if he did not avail himself of this play on words."[3] However, mischievous delight with wordplay is only part of the story. In fact, Kierkegaard appropriates the general notion of transfiguration from contemporary discourses and extends it in a manner both critical and creative. My goal here is not to distill a rigorously defined, technical concept of transfiguration from Kierkegaard's works; rather, we will discover how Kierkegaard's use of the term maps onto

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[2] *SKS* 18, 10 / *JP* 1, 136 (translation modified). The Danish text clarifies Kierkegaard's wordplay: "Al Poesie er Livets *Forklarelse* (ɔ: Transfiguration) ved dets *Forklarelse* (ved at det forklares, oplyses udvikles o:s:v:). Det er ret mærkeligt at Sproget har den Tvetydethed." Note Kierkegaard's use of the non-Danish "transfiguration" (which he repeats in two other journal entries) to indicate this specialized sense of *Forklarelse*.

[3] Isak Winkel Holm, "Poesiens himmelbrev: Søren Kierkegaards kritik af den æstetiske forklarelse," in *Studier I Stadier: Søren Kierkegaard Selskabets 50-Års Jubilæum*, ed. Joakim Garff, Tonny Aagaard Olesen, and Pia Søltoft (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1998), 41–58, 43 (my translation).

some of the themes that occupied him throughout his authorship—particularly the central question of how he imagined human existence at the nexus of the transcendent-eternal and the historical-temporal.

A minor linguistic complication worth noting: as mentioned above, *at forklare*, the Danish verb from which *Forklarelse* is derived, has a range of meanings; and while it can mean "to transfigure," in common usage it simply means "to explain" or "to clarify" in a non-specialized sense. This non-specialized sense holds true for the vast majority of the many hundreds of instances of *forklare* in Kierkegaard's writings, and identifying when Kierkegaard intends a more specialized notion of transfiguration can be something of a challenge. The degree to which various English translations have taken into account the range of meanings in *forklare* and *Forklarelse* varies. Walter Lowrie often prefers "glorification" over "transfiguration," but is not consistent in this, making it difficult to identify specialized uses of *forklare* and *Forklarelse*.[4] The Hongs seem more aware of Kierkegaard's occasionally specialized use of the word, often making note of the wordplay in bracketed comments; additionally, they are consistent in using some form of "transfigure" whenever they detect this specialized usage. I have done my best to restrict this investigation to cases when *forklare* and *Forklarelse* are intended in the specialized sense of "transfiguration," identifying these cases based on context.

7.2 A Brief Survey of the Notion of Transfiguration in Contemporary Discourse

The idea of transfiguration enjoyed a distinctive role in the discussions of aesthetics in Kierkegaard's Copenhagen, having been imported from Germany into Denmark's philosophical and literary circles. F. W. J. Schelling (1775–1854), in one of his several philosophical permutations, had described art as the primary "organ of transcendental philosophy," arguing that only aesthetics can illuminate the mutual conformity of

[4]For an example of this inconsistency, consider Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, trans. Walter Lowrie, vol. 2 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959), 171, cf. *SKS* 3, 164; andSøren Kierkegaard, *Attack Upon "Christendom"*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton University Press, 1968 [1944]), 241; cf. *SKS*, 13, 348.

subjective representation and objective reality.[5] More specifically, Schelling argued that art is uniquely capable of uncovering the original identity of freedom and necessity, and thus of raising to the level of consciousness the pre-established harmony (*vorherbestimmte Harmonie*) between the ideal and the real.[6] G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831) ascribes a similar reconciling role to artistic production in his *Phänomenologie des Geistes* and in his lectures on aesthetics.[7] In the latter he speaks of art's ability to clarify the idea of essential human beauty by removing imperfections—stray hairs, wrinkles, spots, and so forth—in order to express ideal reality in actuality.[8] For Hegel, the beautiful is the sensuous manifestation of the Idea, and when art harmonizes content with expression, it achieves a reconciliation between the abstract and concrete, between heaven and earth. Hegel calls this process of artistic production a transfiguration (*Verklärung*). Kierkegaard's own exposure to this aesthetic philosophy came in part through the influence of J. L. Heiberg (1791–1860), who popularized the idealist elevation of art.[9] Amongst Kierke-

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[5]F. W. J. Schelling, *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling, vol. 3, Sämmtliche Werke (Stuttgart and Augsburg: Cotta, 1856 [1800]), 350ff; cf. 627: "[D]ie Kunst das einzige wahre und ewige Organon zugleich und Dokument der Philosophie sei. . ."

[6]ibid., 349–50. Something of this sense of artistic transfiguration as a reconciliation of (or at least, mutuality between) the higher and the lower can be traced back to the proto-Romantic *Sturm und Drang* movement. Consider Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's (1749–1832) comments regarding Raphael's painting, *The Transfiguration*: "Wie will man nun das Obere und Untere trennen? Beides ist eins: unten das Leidende, Bedürftige, oben das Wirksame, Hülfreiche, beides aufeinander sich beziehend, ineinander ein wirkend." See Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italiensche Reise*, ed. Heinrich Düntzer (Berlin: L. Gaillard, 1885 [1813–17]), 277.

[7]G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, vol. 3, Werke in 20 Bänden (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969–86 [1807]), 516; G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, vol. 13–15, Werke in 20 Bänden (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969–86 [1835]), 206.

[8]ibid., 206.

[9]Isak Winkel Holm, "Monstrous Aesthetics: Literature and Philosophy in Søren Kierkegaard," *Nineteenth-Century Prose* 32 (2005): 52–74, 56. I am indebted to Holm's writings for directing my attention to the understanding of aesthetics in the works by Schelling and Hegel mentioned in the preceding notes. Holm additionally points out that Kierkegaard would have been familiar with Jean Paul's (1763–1825) belief that the artist's task is to reconcile and unite "incomplete life with ethereal meaning." See Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1990 [1804]), 67: "Überall macht er das Leben frei und den Tod schön; auf seiner Kugel sehen wir, wie auf dem Meer, die tragenden Segel früher als das schwere Schiff. Auf diese Weise versöhnet, ja vermählt er—wie die Liebe und die Jugend—das unbehülfliche Leben

gaard's immediate acquaintances in the circle of Heiberg's influence, H. L. Martensen (1808–84) reflects a deep appropriation of the German notion of aesthetic *Verklärung*: for instance, the Danish equivalent *forklare* figures prominently in his lengthy review of Heiberg's play, "Fata Morgana," in which Martensen praises Heiberg's speculative poetry for its pedagogic ability, through the "transfiguration of life's darkness," to lead reality into concrete expressions of ideality.[10]

The notion of transfiguration was not exclusive to artistic discourse. In Hegel's writings, *Verklärung* extends beyond aesthetics (albeit in a manner that parallels the aesthetic sense outlined above) to describe philosophy's reconciliation of actuality with the ideal. Transfiguration denotes philosophy's illumination of the fact that reason is fulfilling itself in and through the apparent oppositions and vicissitudes of history.[11] In contrast to Schelling's and Hegel's view that artistic or philosophical transfiguration primarily reveals a pre-established harmony between the Idea and history, J. G. Fichte had earlier emphasized the subject's ability to achieve a transfiguration of her own vision

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mit dem ätherischen Sinn, so wie am Ufer eines stillen Wassers der äußere und der abgespiegelte Baum aus einer Wurzel nach zwei Himmeln zu wachsen scheinen."

[10]H. L. Martensen, "Fata Morgana, Eventyr-Comedie af J. L. Heiberg," *Maanedsskrift for Litteratur* 19 (1838): 361–97, 367 (my translation); cf. 362: "Men netop fordi Poesien ligesom Philosophien er den til Idee *forklarede* Virkelighed, netop fordi den altid staaer en Potens høiere end den virkelige Bevidsthed, har den stedse, den virkelige Bevidsthed til sin Basis og Forudsætning og skrider uafbrudt frem med denne" (emphasis added). For more details on Martensen's vision of art's role in relation to existence, see H. L. Martensen, *Grundrids til Moralphilosophiens System* (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1841), 95–9. Thompson has noted that Kierkegaard was familiar with and commented directly upon this work. See Curtis L. Thompson, "Hans Lassen Martensen: A Speculative Theologian Determining the Agenda of the Day," in *Kierkegaard and His Danish Contemporaries, Tome II: Theology*, ed. Jon Stewart, vol. 7, Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 229–66, 238.

[11]For example, see G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (Berlin: Duncker / Humblot, 1848), 134, 498. As one might expect, for Hegel the role of philosophy transcends but still includes the role of art. See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, 13:141–2. Cf. Holm, "Poesiens Himmelbrev," 46: "Admittedly, Hegel relativizes his statements about art's relation to truth by pointing out that it is neither art nor religion, but philosophy, which delivers the ultimate reconciliation of life's dissonances. But it is crucial that he nevertheless grants art a limited transfigurative force" (my translation). Additionally, see Martensen, "Fata Morgana," 362: "Poetry, like philosophy, is the transfiguring (*forklarede*) of actuality into ideality" (my translation).

through faith (and through the ethical striving called forth by faith).[12] He uses the verbal form *verklären* on several occasions to describe this subjective clarification of vision, such that the illusory veil of temporal difference and opposition becomes transparent, revealing the divine, eternal life in the realm of spirit.[13] For Fichte, the perpetual cycle of birth and death is nothing more than life's self-transfiguration, displaying eternity's unceasing attempt to represent itself to itself, to make the sensuous transparently revelatory of the spiritual. Subjectively transfigured vision, according to Fichte, can see beyond history's meaningless, cyclical repetition, and initiates a movement of progressive development—an infinite task geared toward achieving ever-greater approximations of ideality in reality.[14]

The notion of transfiguration also appeared in contemporary theological discourse. Martensen once again provides a notable example: in addition to his employment of *Forklarelse* in aesthetic contexts, he uses the term with some frequency in his theological writings. In keeping with the general usage described above, the term usually indicates some sort of unification of the ideal and the real in actuality. Martensen describes conscience as the human's immediate certainty of the Good; and in its "transfigured" form, conscience becomes a deep unity of the divine and the human, the merging—in a particular moment of moral knowledge—of the Idea and a human individual.[15]

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[12]Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen* (Berlin: Vossischen Buchhandlung, 1800), 332–4.

[13]ibid., 335: "Tod und Geburt ist bloß das Ringen des Lebens mit sich selbst, um sich stets *verklärter* und ihm selbst ähnlicher darzustellen" (emphasis added).

[14]ibid., 333–4: "Dieses ewige Leben und Regen in allen Adern der sinnlichen, und geistigen Natur erblickt mein Auge, durch das, was Andern todte Masse scheint, hindurch; und siehet dieses Leben stets steigen und wachsen, und zum geistigern Ausdrucke seiner selbst sich verklären. Das Universum ist mir nicht mehr jener in sich selbst zurücklaufende Zirkel, jenes unaufhörlich sich wiederholende Spiel, jenes Ungeheuer, das sich selbst verschlingt, um sich wieder zu gebären, wie es schon war: es ist vor meinem Blicke vergeistiget, und trägt das eigne Gepräge des Geistes; stetes Fortschreiten zum Vollkommnern in einer geraden Linie, die in die Unendlichkeit geht" (emphasis added). Cf. Goethe's Faust in which Faust's death is understood as a kind of transfiguration, rooted not so much in a Christian duality of body and soul, but rather in the philosophical notion of spirit transcending body—the polarity of body and spirit initiates an upward striving. See Harry Redner, *In the Beginning Was the Deed: Reflections on the Passage of Faust* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1982), 210–11.

[15]Martensen, *Grundrids til Moralphilosophiens System*, 33 (§29, Note 1).

Additionally, many years later in his autobiography, Martensen would describe how his encounter with Hegel precipitated a fundamental theological intimation in which he came to see Christ, in a Trinitarian context, as the center-point of all reality, the one in whom everything else finds its *Forklarelse*.[16]

Despite certain nuances, all of the versions of transfiguration described above share certain salient features. First, all of them refer to some sort of reconciliation: depending on the writer and the context, this reconciliation is imagined to occur between the ideal and the real, the infinite and the finite, the Idea and the individual, the eternal and the temporal, or even between the divine and the human.[17] Second, each form of transfiguration outlined above fosters a degree of optimism about the possibility of such reconciliations—in thought or in act, through art, philosophy, ethics, or religion. There are differences, to be sure, and these differences are worth reiterating. Hegel and Schelling see philosophical and artistic transfiguration mostly as a matter of raising to the level of consciousness the eternally pre-established harmony between apparently disparate realms, with the result that historical actuality comes to be seen as an unfolding or realization of this pre-established harmony. For Fichte, harmony resides ultimately in the unity of transcendent spirit. The subject's transfigured vision enables her to see the essential spiritual unity beyond the veil of life and death, and cultivating this vision ushers in the possibility that the free subject can actively transform history's endless cycle of meaningless repetition into a process of infinite, progressive development. Thus, for Fichte, the exercise of faith becomes a matter of *recognizing* that the self's existence is the vital center of eternity's attempts to express (i.e., transfiguratively concretize) itself

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[16]H. L. Martensen, *Af Mit Levnet* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1882), 67: "Men under Studiet af Hegel opsteg for mig Anelsen om en Anskuelse, der paa Treenighedens Baggrund opfatter Christus som Midtpunctet i Tilværelsen, opfatter Universet som et System af concentriske Kredse, der all pege hen til den inderste Kreds, hvor Christus er, og kun I ham finde deres Forklarelse og Forstaaelse" (emphasis added).

[17]It should be kept in mind that these pairs—ideal/real, infinite/finite, eternal/temporal, divine/human—are not simply synonymous, though they are often framed and used in parallel ways.

in the temporal world, and then *embarking* upon this perpetual task with freedom and creativity. Finally, Martensen, critically appropriating Hegel, takes transfiguration in a Christological direction, locating Christ at the nexus of a transfigurative reconciliation between the divine and the human—and somehow Christ's status as the Incarnate God involves not only his own transfigured existence, but also the eventual transfiguration of all reality.[18] This cursory description of the various uses of transfiguration by thinkers with whom Kierkegaard was familiar provides some interpretive traction: it allows us to see more clearly those who were both the targets of his critiques and sources of inspiration, and it clarifies what is at stake for Kierkegaard in his own employment of the term.

7.3 Transfiguration in Kierkegaard and His Pseudonyms

In Kierkegaard's dissertation, *The Concept of Irony*, he describes the "double kind of dialectic" he finds in Plato (and in Plato's Socrates): The first sort of dialectic is in "perpetual movement" and never wearies of setting the "issue afloat if it runs aground," eschewing resolve in favor of this perpetual suspension. The second sort of dialectic wants to proceed from "the most abstract ideas" and translate these ideas into "concrete qualifications"—in short, to "construct actuality with the idea."[19] In this early work we catch a glimpse of something that runs throughout the entirety of Kierkegaard's authorship, and which finds expression in an astonishing array of approaches and configurations. Kierkegaard is exploring how best to imagine the relationships between

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[18]For Martensen's vision of Christ's central role in the eventual transfiguration of all world history (through the family, the state, art, science, and so forth)—one with which Kierkegaard was certainly familiar—see Martensen, *Grundrids til Moralphilosophiens System*, 52ff.

[19]*SKS* 1, 172–3 / *CI*, 121. Cf. Mark C. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood: Hegel and Kierkegaard*, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy 14 (New York: Fordham University Press, [1980] 2000), 94–5. Regarding Kierkegaard's Socrates as a response to Hegel's appropriation of Socratic recollection and the role of the midwife, Taylor writes: "Kierkegaard's interpretation of Socrates consists of a radicalization of Hegel's insights. Kierkegaard ironically assumes Hegel's perspective in order to negate it. He admits that Hegel correctly identifies the essence of the Socratic position as irony, and agrees with the Hegelian definition of irony as 'infinite absolute negativity.' Hegel's error lay in his failure to carry through his insight with sufficient rigor. Instead of allowing Socrates to remain 'infinitely negative,' Hegel urges him toward a positive resolution of the dilemmas he discovers."

empirical reality and human freedom, between actuality and ideality—and with increasing urgency as his authorship progresses, he frames this investigation in terms of how the eternal factors into or transforms temporal human existence. It is within this matrix of deeply anthropological concerns and questions that Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms employ the notion of transfiguration.

We turn our focus now to a collection of texts that utilize the notion of transfiguration in anthropologically significant or suggestive ways. I proceed in a manner both thematic and chronological: the anthropological significance of Kierkegaard's use of *forklare* and *Forklarelse* comes through most clearly in the running interplay between the various pseudonymous and non-pseudonymous writings throughout his career. This approach reveals an ongoing sharpening of Kierkegaard's critique against the optimistic, reconciliation-focused notions of transfiguration espoused by his contemporaries, and reveals the continuity-in-development of his own anthropology.

7.3.1 Artistic Transfiguration: Pre-Established Harmony or Radical Dissonance?

As early as 1836, Kierkegaard was using transfiguration to describe the relation of poetry to actuality. In a journal entry, he writes: "What I call the mythological-poetic in history is the nimbus which hovers over every genuine striving in history, not an abstraction but a transfiguration, not the prosaic actuality, and every genuine historical trend will also give rise to such an ideomythology."[20] This statement mirrors (approximately) the then-current emphasis on poetry's—and more generally, art's—transfigurative role, as espoused by the likes of Heiberg and Martensen. Without further context it is unclear how Kierkegaard saw poetic production in relation to ethical striving and history at the time of this journal entry; but we do know that by the publication of *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard had developed a strong critique of a particular version of aesthetic transfiguration popular at the time. In *Either/Or*, Part I, the Aesthete uses *Forklarelse* and *forklare*

[20] *SKS* 27, 153 / *JP* 2, 1629.

on several occasions to describe his understanding of aesthetic reflection and enjoyment. For example, mirroring a basically Hegelian aesthetic, he states that painting's role is to depict "celestially transfigured (*forklarede*) beauty," which is its "absolute theme."[21] Here, transfiguration describes an essentializing, or more accurately, an idealizing drive, an attempt to present a vision of beauty that has been purified of the incomplete and contingent. The Aesthete also uses *forklare* to describe Don Giovanni's essential relation with the women he seduces. In a passage worth quoting at length, the Aesthete highlights the kind of transfiguration he has in mind:

> [Don Giovanni] desires total femininity in every woman, and therein lies the sensuous, idealizing force with which he simultaneously enhances and overcomes his prey. The reflection of this immense passion enhances and develops the desired one, who blushes in heightened beauty because of its reflection. Just as the fire of the enthusiast envelops with a seductive luster even those uninvolved persons who have some relation to him, so in a far deeper sense he transfigures (*forklarer*) every girl, since his relation to her is an essential relation. This is why all the finite differences vanish for him in comparison with the main point: to be a woman. The old ones he rejuvenates into the beautiful middle age of womanhood; the child he almost matures in an instant; everything that is woman is his prey . . . But this must not be understood as if his sensuousness were blindness; instinctively he knows very well how to make distinctions, and, above all, he idealizes.[22]

In this description, a key feature of aesthetic transfiguration is its movement toward idealization; Don Giovanni relates to women in their essential "woman-ness," seeing in each of them (and thus transforming them into) the womanly ideal. His vision of this ideal eradicates finite details, allowing a purely essential relation.

Significantly, the Aesthete sees Don Giovanni's seductions not as the work of reflection, but simply as the irresistible effect of his own transfigured existence. He does not slyly develop plans or make subtle calculations—rather, his desires are themselves powerfully effective by virtue of the fact that he is "the sensuous in its elemental originality,

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[21] *SKS* 2, 71 / *EO1*, 65.

[22] *SKS* 2, 104 / *EO1*, 100.

of which he is, as it were, the incarnation."[23] This notion of a life force immediately incarnated in an individual bears certain resonances with the versions of transfiguration prevalent amongst Kierkegaard's contemporaries. Against a somewhat Fichtean backdrop of the pure, exuberant life of the spiritual realm, Don Giovanni not only approximates, but in fact embodies, immediately and without remainder, a purely spiritual sensuousness.[24] Echoing a Goethean sensibility regarding art and music, the Aesthete declares that Don Giovanni's transfigured status as an incarnation of sensuous desire is unexplainable, for words could only abstract—and thus detract—from the reality of his existence: rather, music alone can express Don Giovanni's existence.[25]

We see here the Aesthete's standard for aesthetic transfiguration: in order to achieve an aesthetic transfiguration of some object or person (such as when Don Giovanni transfigures the women he seduces), one must first become transfigured—must, in fact, embody in actuality a total reconciliation between the ideal and the real without remainder. This expectation is extraordinarily high, an unfettered Romantic optimism about human existence: the human being's transfigured vision not only constitutes a transfigured

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[23]Evans captures well the allure of Don Giovanni, especially for the person who laments the loss of immediacy to reflection: "For the truly reflective person Don Juan represents something like a lost homeland, a Garden of Eden that one never resided in but still longs to return to." C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard: An Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 76.

[24]Here, despite the Fichtean undertones, the Aesthete's Don Giovanni, as the full incarnation of an idea, goes beyond Fichte's expectations of the temporal realm, at least as these expectations are expressed in *Die Bestimmung die Mensch*. The extent of Don Giovanni's actualization of an idea is more like Hegel's (and Martensen's) notion of Spirit as essence that is not merely in and for itself, but also simultaneously actualized as consciousness and self-aware. However, Don Giovanni is not a transfiguration achieved through reflective self-consciousness, but an immediately embodied force that resists further explanation. See Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes, in Jubiläumsausgabe in 20 Bänden*, vol. 2, ed. by Hermann Glockner, Suttgart: Freidrich Frommann Verlag 1928–41, 335f.

[25]*SKS* 2, 105–6 / *EO1*, 102. Cf. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre; Maximen und Reflexionen*, ed. Gonthier-Louis Fink, Gerhart Baumann, and Johannes John, vol. 17, Sämmtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1991), 809: "The dignity of art appears, most eminently perhaps, in music, for it has no material for which an account must be given. It is all form and content, and raises and refines everything it expresses" (my translation). Cf. Evans, *Kierkegaard*, 76–7.

personal existence, but can effect substantial transfigurations in the world as well.[26] Furthermore, the Aesthete insists (again, in a manner reminiscent of Goethe) that this kind of transfiguration, by its very nature, resists description or explanation.[27] A true transfiguration will be immediate and self-evident, neither requiring nor allowing further explanation or mediation.

Either/Or implicitly provides several reasons to doubt the possibility of this kind of transfiguration, not least of which is the disparity between Don Giovanni and Johannes the Seducer: whereas the former is characterized by an irrepressible spontaneity and immediacy, the Seducer brings along the poetic and poeticizing urge, with the result that his seductions must be bracketed by scheming beforehand and reflection after the fact. In reading the diary, we become painfully aware of the difficulty of attaining the transfigured and transfiguring existence of Don Giovanni. The Seducer's efforts at seduction are marred, not only by the intricate orchestrations required to generate a suitably poetic encounter, but also by the need for subsequent reflection to raise these encounters to a fully transfigured level. The Aesthete, claiming to be the editor of "The Seducer's Diary," charges that Johannes' connection with the ethereal world of ideality is too strong, powerful to the point of sickness—his ironic distance from actuality has devolved into a vicious detachment.[28]

This bears comparison with the Aesthete's autobiographical prelude to his review of "The First Love." He describes a chance encounter—or rather, a prolonged glance from across a crowded theater—with "my beloved, the mistress of my heart, my ideal."[29] The features of this encounter are striking. It is basically a context-less, free-floating encounter,

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[26]See André Clair, "'Le Paradigme est l'irréularité, l'omniprésence de dieu est l'invisibilité' sur un texte de Kierkegaard," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 85 (1980): 193–216, 203.

[27]See Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre; Maximen und Reflexionen*, 792: "Art is the true mediator. Talking about art is to attempt to mediate the mediator" (my translation).

[28]*SKS* 2, 296 / *EO1*, 306. Cf. Evans, *Kierkegaard*, 80–2.

[29]*SKS* 2, 235 / *EO1*, 242.

and no real interaction is possible since they are too far apart to hear (much less touch) one another—but this is precisely what makes the moment so suitable for the Aesthete:

> Bowing to her or conversing with her was out of the question. In short, there was nothing that could embarrass me. My infatuation had free play. We met each other halfway; like transfigured [*forklarede*] beings, we stretched out hands to each other; we floated like phantoms, like jinn in the world of fantasy . . . at this distance I felt the beauty of loving her and of daring to hope that I was loved.[30]

The Aesthete's supposed moment of transfiguration falls far below the standard he himself has previously set. He requires objective distance (and an attendant self-conscious desire to protect himself from embarrassment), a certain abstraction from the moment and from his concrete relation with the beloved, and additional refining through subsequent reflection—a far cry from Don Giovanni's thoroughly actualized exuberance.

Beyond this disparity between the supreme example of Don Giovanni and the Aesthete himself (not to mention the Seducer), the Aesthete devotes dozens of pages to explaining and reflecting upon Don Giovanni's qualities, the supremacy of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, and the unique ability of music to express Don Giovanni's transfigured existence—all of which supposedly resist explanation. This, along with the Aesthete's blindness to the deficiencies of his own moments of transfiguration and the horrifying failure of poetic transfiguration depicted in "The Seducer's Diary" are enough to make readers suspect that an anthropology rooted in aesthetic transfiguration is a delusional hope. The overall rhetorical effect of *Either/Or*, Part I, is to undermine its own vision of transfiguration. Poetry, visual art, and music can only ever yield a partial—and thus a false—transfiguration, one which requires additional explanation and reflection.

Perhaps the most devastating indictment of this deficient transfiguration (and its effects on its practitioners) is the diapsalm of the baronial castle: from a stronghold situated somewhere between heaven and earth, the aesthetic personality swoops down

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[30] *SKS* 2, 235 / *EO1*, 242.

into the world to snatch his prey; back in the castle, he baptizes his prey in the waters of idealization, erasing the temporal and contingent features, and weaves it into a tapestry, a dead image of actuality.[31] The aesthete, an old man living "as one already dead," sits pensively and whispers explanations of these pictures to himself.[32] Here we see in brief outline a critique of aesthetic transfiguration that mirrors a Kierkegaardian critique of aesthetic existence in general: ultimately, the aesthete and the aesthete's project remain artificially abstracted from actuality, hovering ethereally between heaven and earth and incapable of returning to actuality. There are two elements in this critique. The first element has to do with the limitations of artistic production. Whatever transfigurative role art may play, *Either/Or*, Part I, implies that a work of art remains nothing more than an explanation (*Forklaring*), not the true transfiguration (*Forklarelse*) of materiality or temporality. The raw materials require the craft of the artist, and the end result requires additional explanation—in fact, art is susceptible to a never-ending series of further explanations and interpretations. Not even music, or the "thoroughly musical" Don Giovanni, can escape the Aesthete's irresistible urge to explain and clarify. Though the text of *Either/Or*, Part I, never raises the question in so many words, an observant reader may very well find herself wondering whether the aesthetic life bears within itself an ineradicable dissonance between form and meaning.[33] The ceaseless whispered explanations of the aesthete in his baronial castle bear witness to this dissonance.

However, perhaps the Aesthete's description of Don Giovanni and his editorial comments in his introduction to "The Seducer's Diary" point beyond this problem of artistic production, pressing onward to the person responsible for the art. This brings us

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[31] *SKS* 2, 51 / *EO1*, 42.

[32] For an analysis of the critical significance of this diapsalm, see Holm, "Poesiens Himmelbrev," 47–9.

[33] Kierkegaard voices a similar concern about language in several places. For example, see *SKS* 15, 55 / *JC*, 168: "Immediacy is reality, language is ideality; consciousness is contradiction. The moment I make a statement about reality, contradiction is present, for what I say is ideality."

to the second element of the implicit critique of aesthetic transfiguration in *Either/Or*, Part I. Is the message primarily about the inherent limitations of artistic production, namely, that works of art will always fail to transfigure actuality? Or are we meant to see in these failures a deeper problem—the problem of an insufficiently transfigured self? Perhaps the Aesthete's and (granting for the moment that they are not one and the same) the Seducer's failures to generate genuinely transfigured moments in actuality, through art or through seduction, are less the result of some deficiency in materiality per se, and more the result of their personal distance from Don Giovanni's fully transfigured existence. Perhaps, like the baronial castle, they are hovering ephemerally between heaven and earth rather than living as true reconciliations of heaven and earth.

7.3.2 Wrestling with Actuality: The Transfiguration of the Self

Support for this diagnosis can be found in *From the Papers of One Still Living*, Kierkegaard's book-length review of H. C. Andersen's (1805–75) *Only a Fiddler*. Here, Kierkegaard argues that the author's personality is bound essentially to his or her authorial production, and he continually links poetic and literary shortcomings with the personal failure of the author to adapt himself or herself "to the conditions of life," a failure rooted in the fashionable tendency to "forget the actual."[34] According to Kierkegaard, an author must attain a life-view through earnest engagement with actuality.[35] When an author fails in this calling, his work will inevitably suffer: the deficient author's novel "either seeks to insinuate some theory (dogmatic, doctrinaire short novels) at the expense of

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[34]SKS 1, 19 / EPW, 63–4. Cf. Joseph Westfall, "A Very Poetic Person in a Poem," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook 2006* (2006): 38–53, 41. Additionally, Sylvia Walsh links Kierkegaard's polemics against Andersen and his novel with Kierkegaard's resistance to the "Hegelian delirium" following Martensen's 1837 lectures on Hegel. See Sylvia Walsh, *Living Poetically: Kierkegaard's Existential Aesthetics* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 28.

[35]For a helpful account of Kierkegaard's notion of the importance of life-development and life-view for an author, seeibid., 32–9.

poetry or it makes a finite and incidental contact with the author's flesh and blood."[36] Kierkegaard's critique in *From the Papers of One Still Living* parallels our analysis of the implied critique of aesthetic transfiguration in *Either/Or*, Part I. A poetically valid novel (or any work of art) should not require an additional layer of artificially inserted theory or explanation; the need for further explanation marks the artwork's failure to attain a true transfiguration. But more importantly, an artwork should not function as an explanatory extension of the artist—this sort of failure indicates the artist's own deficient embodiment of an idea in actuality, his or her personal failure to engage earnestly with actuality—in short, the artist's failure to attain a transfigured existence. With this sort of failure, the artistic production itself recedes into oblivion; it is "no longer a work of art to be interpreted in its own right so much as an artifact" of the author.[37]

The point here is not that the novelist should stand at an abstract distance from his or her work. Rather, Kierkegaard tells us that *only a truly transfigured personality* can generate a valid work of art. Kierkegaard makes this point with explicit reference to the notion of transfiguration:

> I by no means think that the novel in a certain prosaic sense should abstract from the personality or that one could from another standpoint justly exact as much from the novel as from rigorous speculation. Instead, the poet himself must first and foremost win a competent personality, and it is only this *dead and transfigured* personality that ought to and is able to produce art, not the many-angled, worldly, palpable personality.[38]

We shall return eventually to Kierkegaard's association of transfiguration with death; but for now it is sufficient to note that Kierkegaard espouses the idea that coming to exist in a transfigured manner requires the hard work of wrestling earnestly with

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[36] *SKS* 1, 36–7 /*EPW*, 81.

[37] Westfall, "A Very Poetic Person in a Poem," 43.

[38] *SKS* 1, 37 / *EPW*, 82 (emphasis added, translation slightly modified).

actuality.[39] Although transfiguration involves a kind of immediacy (as in the example of Don Giovanni), Kierkegaard doubts that this ever occurs without some sort of preliminary striving. This stands in contrast to the Aesthete's belief that the activities of reflection and explanation can have nothing to do with a truly immediate, fully transfigured individuality such as Don Giovanni;[40] for example, the Aesthete's analysis of the merits of opera relies precisely upon this opposition between immediacy and reflection.[41]

Thus, in Kierkegaardian discussions of transfigurative artworks, the personal transfiguration of the author or poet is prioritized as prerequisite to any truly transfigured artistic production. Aside from the legitimate question of whether and how art can constitute a transfiguration of actuality, and in spite of the many pages spent analyzing the possibilities, limits, and relative merits of art in its various forms, the focus, implicitly or explicitly, continually returns to the actual person behind the art. The Aesthete of *Either/Or* can be read as arguing for an elevated, perhaps impossibly high, standard for aesthetic transfiguration in a work of art—but this standard is continually reflected back upon and applied to the Aesthete himself (or upon Johannes the Seducer, or Andersen). Significantly, each is found wanting.

The emphasis on the attainment of personal transfiguration through earnest striving in and with actuality leads naturally to the question of transfiguration through ethical striving.[42] Judge William's affirmations of marriage in Part II of *Either/Or* and the

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[39]Cf. Clair, "'Le Paradigme est l'irréularité, l'omniprésence de dieu est l'invisibilité'," 201.

[40]Doubtless, this calls to mind the complex question of a "second immediacy" in Kierkegaard's writings. Though this is certainly a related topic, it runs slightly far afield from the present argument. For a helpful treatment of the second immediacy, see Arne Grøn, "Mediated Immediacy? The Problem of a Second Immediacy," in *Immediacy and Reflection in Kierkegaard's Thought*, ed. Paul Cruysberghs, Johan Taels, and Karl Verstrynge (Leuven University Press, 2003), 87–96. Cf. Paul Cruysberghs, "Must Reflection Be Stopped? Can It Be Stopped?" In *Immediacy and Reflection in Kierkegaard's Thought*, ed. Paul Cruysberghs, Johan Taels, and Karl Verstrynge (Leuven University Press, 2003), 11–24, especially page 17.

[41]See *SKS* 1, 120–1 / *EO1*, 117–8.

[42]For more on the distinctions between the fleeting transfigurations of the Aesthete and Judge William's hope for a more lasting expression of the ideal through ethical resolution, see Clair, "'Le Paradigme est

essay "Some Reflections on Marriage in Answer to Objections" in *Stages on Life's Way* provide accessible entry-points for this discussion, especially since they both use various forms or derivatives of *forklare*. For example, in Either/Or, Part II, Judge William uses transfiguration to describe the change wrought in things such as love and talent when they are taken up into the ethical realm from the aesthetic: talent becomes truly beautiful when "it is transfigured [*forklaret*] into a calling";[43] romantic love, rather than being negated or annihilated in marriage, can be "united with and exist in marriage . . . marriage is its true transfiguration."[44]

That the Judge intends marriage's transfigurative capability to be understood in the fullest sense possible is especially clear in "Some Reflections on Marriage." In this work (as in *Either/Or*), the Judge rejects the Aesthete's unlivable elevation of non-reflectivity, arguing that without some form of reflection, falling in love is doomed never to be realized in concrete actuality—at least, not in any meaningful or cohesive sense.[45] Both

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l'irréularité, l'omniprésence de dieu est l'invisibilité'," 210f.

[43]SKS 3, 278 / EO2, 293. This phrase echoes Martensen's notion that the imitation of Christ only achieves fulfillment when the individual decides upon a particular vocation or calling—it is through vocation that a religious ideal becomes concretized in world history. See Martensen, *Grundrids til Moralphilosophiens System*, 55.

[44]SKS 3, 39 / EO2, 31. Judge William can be seen as appropriating but also attempting to correct a certain understanding of the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, arguing that this mediating activity whereby prior stages are not annihilated in subsequent developments does not belong to logic or speculative thought, but to freedom and resolution—the abstract connectivity of logic alone cannot account for the transition from ideality to actuality that occurs in the resolution to enter into marriage. See SKS 3, 166–73 / EO2, 170–7. Cf. M. Jamie Ferreira, "Immediacy and Reflection in *Works of Love*," in *Immediacy and Reflection in Kierkegaard's Thought*, ed. Paul Cruysberghs, Johan Taels, and Karl Verstrynge (Leuven University Press, 2003), 107–19, 114–6; John F. Whitmire, "Reconstructing the Religious: Deconstruction, Transfiguration, and Witnessing in *The Point of View* and *On My Work as an Author*," in *The Point of View*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, vol. 22, International Kierkegaard Commentary (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2010), 325–58, 344n57. See also the analysis of Constantin's remarks about the respective spheres of logic and freedom contra Hegelianism in Janne Kylliäinen, "*Phaedo* and *Parmenides*: Eternity, Time, and the Moment, or From the Abstract Philosophical to the Concrete Christian," in *Kierkegaard and the Greek World, Tome I: Socrates and Plato*, ed. Jon Stewart and Katalin Nun, vol. 2, Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 45–71, 56.

[45]This emphasis on cohesion over fragmentariness is especially clear in *Either/Or*, Part II. Significantly, the Judge recognizes that the Aesthete, even though his life "disintegrates into nothing but interesting details," manages to achieve momentary transfigurations. Judge William believes "something great would

the Aesthete's ruminations and "The Seducer's Diary" bear out this diagnosis, as noted above. However, Judge William is careful to situate reflection in a way that takes seriously the Aesthete's intuition that immediacy resists a certain kind of reflection: "For the lover, the most certain of all things is that he is in love, and no meddlesome thoughts, no stockbrokers run back and forth between falling in love and a so-called ideal—this is a forbidden road."[46] Thus, Judge William argues that although reflection cannot encroach upon immediacy by explaining "falling in love" in relation to *ideality*, it can turn toward "the relation between falling in love and *actuality*."[47] This kind of reflection, he argues, issues in a concretizing *resolution* in actuality (marriage), rather than an ephemeral *explanation* in accord with ideality. However, in a rather Fichtean move, Judge William claims that resolution is both ideal, in that one has the resolution prior to acting; and concrete, in that it serves as "action's acquired working capital" and translates "perfectly ideal reflection" into concrete actions.[48] This ability to act freely and decisively is not simply the *summa summarum* of circumstances or the *enfin* of a causal chain of events—it is, in fact, the subject's spiritual freedom expressed concretely in the translation of ideality into actuality through free, ethical resolutions.[49]

Judge William identifies resolution with marriage itself, in which he sees the perfect union of the divine and the earthly:

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come of [the Aesthete]" if he could manage to distribute his best moments coherently across his life, "for you yourself are transfigured [*forklaret*] in such moments." In the same passage, the Judge recognizes in the Aesthete the occasional "total incarnation of mood," echoing the Aesthete's praise of Don Giovanni. See *SKS* 3, 20 / *EO2*, 11. See also Clair, "'Le Paradigme est l'irréularité, l'omniprésence de dieu est l'invisibilité'," 210.

[46] *SKS* 6, 150 / *SLW*, 160.

[47] *SKS* 6, 149 / *SLW*, 160 (emphasis added).

[48] *SKS* 6, 150 / *SLW*, 160. For more on the idea of resolution as the "translator" that translates pure ideality into concrete activity, see *SKS* 6, 111 / *SLW* 117.

[49] *SKS* 6, 150 / *SLW*, 160. Cf. *SKS* 3, 170 / *EO2*, 174. For a more detailed treatment of the pseudonyms' appeals to "free acts of spirit" against what Kierkegaard sees as Hegelianism's failure to account for transition in the realm of actuality (especially in relation to Greek dichotomous thought and Hegel's trichotomous logic), see Kylliäinen, "*Phaedo* and *Parmenides*," 56ff.

> Thus marriage is the beautiful focal point of life and existence, a center that reflects just as deeply as that which it manifests is high: a disclosure that in its concealment manifests the heavenly . . . It is divine, for falling in love is the wonder; it is earthly, for falling in love is nature's most profound myth. Love is the unfathomable ground that is hidden in darkness, but the resolution is the triumphant victor who, like Orpheus, fetches the infatuation of falling in love to the light of day, for the resolution is the true form of love, the true explanation and transfiguration; therefore marriage is sacred and blessed by God.[50]

At the border of the aesthetic and the ethical, the one poised to enter the ethical experiences a kind of despair—he or she is certain that all will be lost, certain that choosing the ethical will involve a complete annihilation of the aesthetic: "But it is not so, and that is why in the very next moment the despair proves to be not a break but a metamorphosis. Everything comes back again, but transfigured [*forklaret*]."[51] Is this the kind of prerequisite personal transfiguration Kierkegaard called for in *From the Papers of One Still Living*? Is this what it means to have won a "competent personality," itself transfigured and thus capable of achieving ongoing transfigurations in historical existence?

7.3.3. From Explanation to Transfiguration

It cannot have been accidental that Judge William's reference to Orpheus' ill-fated quest to rescue Eurydice from the underworld is extraordinarily self-undermining. Indirectly, Kierkegaard seems to be telling his readers that those who attempt, through the ethical struggle that culminates in the free resolution of marriage, to fetch ideality from the realm of reflection and abstraction and bring it into actuality are no more a "triumphant victor" than was Orpheus, whose attempt to fetch Eurydice from the underworld resulted in losing her permanently. Something else about the quoted passage from "Some Reflection on Marriage" calls for suspicion regarding ethical resolution's

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[50] *SKS* 6, 111 / *SLW*, 117. This extravagant praise of marriage as the focal point echoes Martensen's discussion of Christ in *Grundrids til Moralphilosophiens System*, 53–5.

[51] *SKS* 3, 258 / *EO2*, 271.

ability to qualify a person as transfigured and transfiguring. As noted earlier, Kierkegaard's fascination with derivatives of *forklare* had much to do with the word's ambiguity—the fact that it could mean either explanation or transfiguration. In the translation of the above passage, the translators have chosen the phrase "explanation and transfiguration" to stand in for the single Danish word *Forklaring*.[52] Perhaps the immediate context justifies this amplification—but Kierkegaard often uses *Forklaring* to denote "explanation" in juxtaposition with *Forklarelse*—thereby emphasizing an important contrast between explanation and transfiguration. We have already seen the preference for transfiguration over explanation—in the young Kierkegaard's critique of *Only a Fiddler* as mere authorial self-explanation due to Andersen's failure to achieve a transfigured existence, and in the implication in *Either/Or*, Part I, that every attempt at transfiguration seems to devolve into mere explanation. Judge William, however, is curiously unconcerned with this distinction, using *Forklaring* and *Forklarelse* in an apparently synonymous manner.[53] Perhaps this is due to the Judge's commitment to the idea that a transfiguration is indeed a kind of explanation (in conjunction with his attendant defense of reflection's role in achieving a second immediacy): through resolute ethical conduct, the human expresses and reveals the ideal in actuality.

Significantly, in "One Who Prays Aright Struggles in Prayer and Is Victorious—In That God Is Victorious,"[54] a theological discourse published under his own name one year after the publication of *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard reinforces in a modified way a strong

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[52]*SKS* 6, 111 / *SLW*, 117. For comparison, the English translation reads, "for the resolution is the true form of love, the true *explanation and transfiguration*"; the original text has, "thi Beslutningen er Forelskelsens sande Form, den sande *Forklaring*" (emphasis added). The Hongs justify this amplified translation based on the Danish word's ambiguity.

[53]Indeed, in the margin of a draft of *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard seems to have considered having Judge William use the words in an exactly synonymous manner: "Here everyone becomes his own troubador and can await the explanation, the transfiguration an eternity will give." See *EO2* supplement, page 378.

[54]*SKS* 5, 361–81 / *EUD*, 377–401.

distinction between explanation (*Forklaring*) and transfiguration (*Forklarelse*).[55] Here we get a glimpse of a markedly different kind of striving than the triumphant, reflective resolutions prescribed by Judge William. Kierkegaard tells as that "one who struggles aright in prayer is victorious by losing," prefiguring the inversion that pertains between temporality and eternity.[56] This one who prays aright does not haggle in the marketplace of life with worldly wisdom, or find success through probabilistic calculations—such activities are "the mirage whereby the sensate person drags out time and *keeps the eternal away*, whereby he cheats God . . . of honor, [and] himself of *liberating annihilation*."[57] Rather, prayer is a struggle for silence—a quieting of calculations, assertions, and self-explanation in favor of yielding one's inner being to God.[58]

Kierkegaard describes this mode of active submission to God in terms of prayer, using three contrasting kinds of prayer to drive home his point.[59] The first sort of prayer seeks to explain oneself to God. Assuming God's love and kindness, the one involved in prayer of this kind makes clear to God exactly what he needs, "truly explaining [*forklare*] to him what is beneficial for the one who is praying . . . truly impressing it upon his

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[55]The wordplay in this passage has been noted frequently. See, for example, George Pattison, *Kierkegaard's Upbuilding Discourses: Philosophy, Literature, and Theology* (London: Routledge, 2002), 53–6; Niels Nymann Eriksen, *Kierkegaard's Category of Repetition: A Reconstruction*, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn and Jon Stewart, vol. 5, Kierkegaard Studies Monograph Series (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 56–7; Steven Shakespeare, "A Word of Explanation: Transfiguring Language in Kierkegaard's *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*," in *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, vol. 5, International Kierkegaard Commentary (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003), 91–106, 102–4;Christopher Ben Simpson, *The Truth Is the Way: Kierkegaard's* Theologia Viatorum (London: SCM Press, 2010), 114; Simon Podmore, *Kierkegaard and the Self before God: Anatomy of the Abyss* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), 180.

[56]*SKS* 5, 364 / *EUD*, 380.

[57]*SKS* 5, 366 / *EUD*, 382 (emphasis added).

[58]*SKS* 5, 367 / *EUD*, 383.

[59]For insights about this discourse's treatment of prayer as a never-finished process of transfiguration (and thus never quite fulfilled in this life), see Claudia Welz, "The Presence of the Transcendent—Transcending the Present?" In *Subjectivity and Transcendence*, ed. Arne Grøn, Iben Damgaard, and Søren Overgaard (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 149–76, 155f.

mind . . . truly gaining his consent to the wish."[60] The motive behind this self-explanation is to secure an external world and a God that correspond to one's own sensibilities. The second kind of prayer seeks an explanation from God—but in such a way that God must justify himself to the one who prays.[61] Sooner or later the first kind of prayer breaks down in the face of loss or tragedy, and now the supplicant

> sits there quietly with his loss, but still he is not idle, for he is ruminating, and still he is not passive, for he is pondering an explanation [*Forklaring*] . . . He is not intent upon explaining [*forklare*] his wish to God, making himself clear to God in his prayer—far from it: he has given up his wish, he is bearing his loss, he is reconciling himself to the pain, and yet he is a long way from the explanation [*Forklaringen*]; his struggle in prayer is for God to explain [*forklare*] himself to him.[62]

Neither of these forms of prayer is legitimate. Here, Kierkegaard returns to the familiar theme of transfigurative picture-making, which in *Either/Or* was deemed fraudulent, just one more explanation in an endless sequence of explanations. Making a connection between drawing pictures and seeking explanation, Kierkegaard seeks to illumine the failure of prayers that are focused on giving or receiving explanations: "Is he not one who draws, he who struggles in prayer with God for an explanation? Will not the explanation draw a boundary line between him and God so that face-to-face with God he begins to resemble himself?"[63] Kierkegaard concern here seems to map onto the critique of speculative attempts to grasp the absolutely different put forward by Johannes Climacus in *Philosophical Fragments*. The mind can select from amongst the empirically available and imaginatively fantastical, but any attempt to grasp the different "is basically an arbitrariness, and at the very bottom of devoutness there madly lurks the capricious

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[60] *SKS* 5, 371 / *EUD*, 388.

[61] *SKS* 5, 376 / *EUD*, 394.

[62] *SKS* 5, 376 / *EUD*, 394.

[63] *SKS* 5, 380 / *EUD*, 399. Cf. Shakespeare, "A Word of Explanation," 105.

arbitrariness that knows it itself has produced the god."[64] Explanation always presumes a framework that is subordinate to the knower, who bends the objects of knowledge to his or her own image. Devoutness from within this mentality can only generate an idol, a god in the image of the devotee.

Picture-making that manifests as active self-presentation or attempts to coax the mysteries of existence from God is exactly what the third kind of prayer—"praying aright"—is meant to combat. Praying aright means struggling toward being "reduced to nothing at all." Only when the one praying has lost the battle for explanation and becomes silent and still—only then is transfiguration possible. Kierkegaard writes: "But if [the one praying] is something or wants to be something, this something is sufficient to hinder the resemblance. Only when he himself becomes nothing, only then can God illuminate him so that he resembles God . . . God can imprint himself in him only when he himself has become nothing."[65] The victory of the one who prays aright is, for Kierkegaard, that "instead of receiving an explanation [*Forklaring*] from God he was transfigured [*forklaret*] by God, and his transfiguration [*Forklarelse*] is this: to reflect the image of God."[66]

In this discourse, Kierkegaard describes an anthropology that decisively reconfigures the kinds of artistic picture-production and ethical striving encountered in the pseudonymous works. The aesthetic notion of generating transfigured works of art has been replaced by the requirement that each person must become a picture, through submitting oneself to being explained by and transfigured in God. The Judge's focus on resolution and choosing oneself has been replaced with a vision of a struggle that culminates in helplessness and stillness—the condition for receiving and reflecting the image of God. Thus, although Kierkegaard turns away from the notion that humans can create or become

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[64] *SKS* 4, 250 / *PF*, 45.

[65] *SKS* 5, 380 / *EUD*, 399.

[66] *SKS* 5, 380 / *EUD*, 400.

transfigured images through personal effort, even here a positive undercurrent remains. God can accomplish this work of transfiguration in us—if we become still and silent. Kierkegaard appeals to the metaphor of a lake: when the surface is disturbed by waves and ripples, no reflection can appear in it; but when it becomes calm, a perfect mirror image of the heavens appears on its surface.[67] In a similar manner, transfiguration as described in this discourse is a possibility for those in a properly prayerful relation to God.[68]

7.3.4 Transfiguration Revoked

Sylvia Walsh has argued that Kierkegaard, in his early works, criticizes the notion of transfiguration as an illicit poetic abstraction from actuality—explicitly in *The Concept of Irony*, and implicitly in *Either/Or*.[69] This is certainly true, but Kierkegaard's use of *forklare* and its derivatives in the specialized sense of "transfiguration" extends well beyond the category of abstraction, and encompasses a range of existential approaches. It might even be tempting to see Kierkegaard as describing three modes of transfiguration that correspond to three approaches to the anthropological task of becoming a self—the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious—with the religious incorporating and reconfiguring the elements of aesthetic and ethical transfiguration into a new mode of transfigured existence characterized by prayer, faith in God, and reliance upon grace. Regardless, it

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[67]SKS 5, 380 / EUD, 399f. Cf. Eriksen, *Kierkegaard's Category of Repetition*, 57. See also Hjördis Becker, "Mirroring God: Reflections of Meister Eckhart's Thought in Kierkegaard's Authorship," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook* (2012): 3–24.

[68]Cf. Podmore, *Kierkegaard and the Self before God*, 179.

[69]Walsh, *Living Poetically*, 54, 58, 169. Walsh goes on to juxtapose *Forklarelse* and *Transsubstantiation*, arguing that in Kierkegaard's early works, he intends *Transsubstantiation* ("an inward change that takes place in the substance of an actuality that outwardly remains the same") to function as the alternative to the illegitimately abstractive impulse of aesthetic transfiguration. See *SKS* 1, 331 / *CI*, 297. Cf. Sylvia Walsh, "The Subjective Thinker as Artist," *History of European Ideas* 12 (1990): 19–29, 21. Though the substance of this understanding of Kierkegaard's project may be right, it does not seem that Kierkegaard, either early or late in his career, rigidly used *Forklarelse* in such a negative fashion—indeed, as has already been noted, Kierkegaard in *From the Papers of One Still Living* had already used *Forklarelse* to describe someone who had won a competent personality in actuality, and later Judge William uses the term to denote a transformation that has everything to do with concrete actuality.

seems clear that for Kierkegaard, transfiguration named much more than poetic flights of fancy; it names, in fact, the goal of his anthropology: transparently becoming a self before God. To a certain extent, we can see *Sickness unto Death* as an extended psychological-theological account of human existence that evokes the anthropology of transfiguration described years earlier in "The One Who Prays Aright": to become transfigured is to rest "transparently in the power that established it."[70]

However, it must be remembered that transfiguration as used by Kierkegaard's contemporaries referred to attaining reconciliation in an especially optimistic sense. This is particularly evident in Martensen's writings, both in his understanding of the function of art—as revealed, for instance, in his review of Heiberg's "Fata Morgana"—and in his own ethical and religious writings. For Martensen, all of these modes of transfiguration fit with one another, organized like concentric circles around the unique person and work of Christ, from whom all other transfigurations flow. For instance, Martensen's *Grundrids til Moralphilosophiens System* (1841) outlines a framework in which Christ's incarnation reveals an original unity of the divine and human natures.[71] This original unity is vital for Martensen's system, funding the possibility of obeying God's ethical demands, of achieving artistic expressions of ideal beauty and freedom in the empirical world, and of attaining scientific knowledge of the ideal's actualization in the world; here, the particularly Christian notions of the Kingdom of God and the spiritual-actual community of the church in relation to Christ lead the way toward fulfillment.[72]

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[70]*SKS* 11, 9 / *SUD*, 14. Significantly, one of the nuances that *Forklarelse* can carry is the notion of being rendered transparent. As described in chapter six, the consciousness-constituting split into a subjective-objective self is, for Kierkegaard, already a defective form of personhood—in the moment that a dreaming spirit ceases to rest transparently in God and becomes aware of itself as an object, sin has already occurred. Anti-Climacus comes as close as possible to saying that self-consciousness is a sin and a deficient form of spiritual selfhood. Hence, the elevation of self-annihilation, self-forgetfulness, etc. in the the late communion discourse, as we shall see later in this section.

[71]Martensen, *Grundrids til Moralphilosophiens System*, 51.

[72]ibid., 55–7, 95–6, 99. Cf. §§ 104–7 of the same work, in which Martensen describes in further detail how the reconciliation that Christ establishes grounds the unfolding of the divine life in the church, the

Kierkegaard takes exception to this optimistic view. This is not the place for a comparative study of Kierkegaard and Martensen, but we can clarify Kierkegaard's conception of transfiguration in connection with Christ by noting that Kierkegaard consistently problematizes the very things that Martensen asserts regarding transfigurations in actuality—all of which Martensen supports on the basis of a particular construal of Christ and what Christ means for the world. We can see, for instance, that it would be a mistake to regard Kierkegaard's reiteration of the difference between explanation and transfiguration in the relatively early "The One Who Prays Aright" as an ultimately hopeful re-centering of Christian existence within prayerful dependence upon God, from which stance one could unproblematically engage in transfiguratively renewed ethical striving and artistic production.[73] Rather, proper striving with the world leads the person inward, to a very particular kind of encounter with God. One can hardly imagine a deeper contrast between Kierkegaard's and Martensen's Christologically informed anthropologies. Whereas Martensen sees Christ's incarnation as a statement about the original unity of the divine and the human, a unity capable of trickling down into the transfiguration of active human history in its multifaceted cultural and social manifestations, Kierkegaard's vision of transfiguration in "One Who Prays Aright" is focused on becoming a passive and quiet reflection of the

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state, the family, the arts, and science.

[73]One could perhaps read de Silentio's persistently problematic account of the knight of faith's apparent ability to receive back the temporal and the finite by virtue of the absurd (and with joy, no less) as being in line with this tension between inward appropriation and the visible outworking of this inward reality in the state, society, family, and so forth. But as noted in chapter six, many interpreters overlook or sidestep the problems inherent in this account, holding on to the knight of faith who receives back temporality as a reason to believe that Kierkegaard was fundamentally optimistic about the possibility of transfiguration through faith and grace. I contend that such a reading allows a rather incoherent hopefulness in the early and pseudonymous *Fear and Trembling* to overdetermine a reading of Kierkegaard's authorship as whole, in a way that marginalizes or mitigates certain later writings. For an example of an interpretation of *Fear and Trembling* that recognizes its inherently problematic notion of faith and the knight of faith as it relates to the potential bifurcation of inward faith and outward activity (or between the spiritual and the social), see George Steiner, "The Wound of Negativity: Two Kierkegaard Texts," in *Kierkegaard: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 103–13, 110–1: Kierkegaard's "emphasis on secrecy, on an ultimate inwardness" as characteristic of the relation to God remains in uneasy tension with the "power and the glory of the apostolic, its imperative hold on human acquiescence and imitation." Cf. *SKS* 4, 143–7 / *FT*, 49–53.

unchanging God; it is intensely inward and individual, and the only activity involved in it is a preliminary extrication of oneself from the "external world and every claim on life."[74]

By the late 1840s, Kierkegaard seems to have developed a distinctive notion of transfiguration that maps onto the philosophical and theological impulses that not only characterize his late writings, but inform his anthropology from beginning to end. This final vision of transfiguration is perhaps best summarized by appealing to the communion discourse "The Woman Who Was a Sinner" (1849),[75] in conjunction with references to key instances of transfiguration in Part I of *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits* (1847) and a brief but significant use of transfiguration in *Practice in Christianity* (1850). Despite several similarities between "The Woman Who Was a Sinner" and the much earlier discourse "The One Who Prays Aright," there are key differences that illuminate the direction Kierkegaard's polemically developed understanding of transfiguration has continually been pressing. The similarities are many: "The Woman Who Was a Sinner" continues with the theme that the drive toward explanation (here in the form of explaining oneself and making assertions) must be overcome. Furthermore, Kierkegaard reiterates the requirement of achieving silence and a cessation from the cares and distractions of the world.[76] Both discourses use the idea of becoming an image or picture, and both focus on a prayerful posture in the presence of God. However, in the later communion discourse, the details are sharpened: here it is to Christ (not the unchanging God of "One

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[74]*SKS*, 5, 380 / *EUD*, 399. Cf. the more optimistic assessment in Shakespeare, "A Word of Explanation," 104. Shakespeare claims that Kierkegaard posits a kind of spirituality that "holds to the eternal as the secret that impels and surrounds our words and our living, and does not sacrifice temporality and communication."

[75]*SKS*, 11, 273–80 / *WA*, 137–44.

[76]In fact, Kierkegaard ratchets up the harshness of the requirement of silence and self-abnegation considerably in the later discourse. He describes the woman moving through stages of self-hatred, the choice of powerless passivity, self-forgetfulness, and finally silence. See *SKS* 11, 273–80 / *WA*, 137–44. As shown in chapter six, the move toward utter self-forgetfulness—the cessation of being an object to oneself—is deeply significant for Kierkegaard's anthropology, given the fact that the divine personhood that serves as our prototype is characterized by a "subject–reduplicated-subjectivity" relation, rather than the subject-object relation at the heart of human self-consciousness.

Who Prays Aright") that the woman prays. Kierkegaard's Christ, as we saw repeatedly in chapters four through six, regularly entails the revelation of human sinfulness.[77] Thus, the woman's prayer is not simply characterized by the general sense that God is not to be drawn into our explanatory framework, but by the concrete confession of sinfulness—the confession of the self as sinner and of God as the Holy One. This encounter culminates not with an unproblematic *imitatio Christi* fulfilled by taking up a vocation as suggested by Martensen, but rather in the repeated failure to be like Christ and an ever-deepening awareness of the chasm between the temporally-bound, sinful self and God as the Holy One.[78] As Kierkegaard notes in Part II of *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*:

> The *fundamental* relation between God and a human being is that a human being is a sinner and God is the Holy One. Directly before God a human being is not a sinner in this or in that, but is essentially a sinner, is not guilty of this or that, but is essentially and unconditionally guilty.[79]

The added nuances in "The Woman Who Was a Sinner"—the specification of God as Christ and the attendant emphasis on the sin-conditioned nature of the self's relation

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[77]See *SKS* 11, 258 / *WA*, 123: In this communion discourse, "The High Priest," Kierkegaard writes: "If the difference is infinite between God, who is in heaven, and you, who are on earth, the difference between the Holy One and the sinner is infinitely greater." Cf. *SKS* 10, 220 / *CD*, 212.

[78]As noted in preceding chapters, for Kierkegaard, Christ is the prototype or exemplar [*Forbilledet*] who calls forth Christian striving, but all such striving is met with failure. See *SKS* 12, 272 / *WA*, 159: "And since Christianity is not like a teaching that is the same whoever the proclaimer is but is related to the proclaimer, to how truthfully the proclaimer's life expresses the teaching, so it also became manifest that when Christ proclaims Christianity as the [exemplar], *no human being can hold out with him entirely*; they fall away, even the apostles"(emphasis added). In much the same way that the Absolute Paradox of *Philosophical Fragments* marks the limits of speculative thought, the divine-human perfection of Christ—indeed, his existence as the complete embodiment of a teaching (in a manner that calls to mind the Aesthete's depiction of Don Giovanni)—marks the limits of ethical striving. In either case, this encounter brings the person to the brink of faith, or better, to the choice between faith and taking offense.

[79]*SKS*, 8, 380 / *UDVS*, 285. Cf. Arne Grøn, *The Concept of Anxiety in Søren Kierkegaard*, trans. Jeanette B. L. Knox (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1994), 146–7. Grøn argues that Kierkegaard's understanding of essential guilt/sinfulness should be thought of as a rhetorical statement of the limitless indebtedness of the creature to God, and the attendant fact that "any direct accounting between man and God is impossible." But conflating the metaphysical Creator-creature distinction with the theological issue of sin and sinfulness is deeply problematic. Christian theologians should be especially resistant to equating "creature" and "sinner" at an essential level. At another level, Grøn's reading is problematic because Kierkegaard is not merely using the language of sin as a rhetorical statement about the incommensurability of temporal creatures and the eternal God. Rather, he is drawing them into a framework of direct opposition, a situation that can only end in the annihilation of temporality.

to God—find expression in the *manner* in which the praying one becomes a reflective image of the one to whom she prays. In "The One Who Prays Aright," Kierkegaard seems to allow for transfiguration in a sense that resembles the term's usage amongst his contemporaries—the person becomes a transfigured picture of a transcendent reality (in this case, an image of the unchanging God). In short, the transfigured person comes to resemble God.[80] But the later discourse picks up on and emphasizes something that was only implicit in the earlier discourse: the one in prayer does not so much come to *resemble* God: instead she becomes a mirror image of the gracious forgiveness of Christ—an *inverse* reflection. In this way, she becomes explained by Christ, but not truly transfigured in the fullest sense. She is explained by him as a sinner and as the recipient of grace, and thus forgiven. In this way a kind of "correspondence" between human activity and Christ's activity emerges, but in a manner very different from the co-knowledge and co-activity posited by Martensen. Kierkegaard writes:

> This is how that woman is an eternal picture; by her great love she made herself, if I dare to speak this way, indispensable to the Savior. That there is forgiveness of sins, something he acquired for us, she makes into truth, she who loved much. Therefore you may turn it however you wish and still say basically the same thing. You can consider her blessed because her many sins are forgiven, and you can consider her blessed because she loved much—basically you are saying the same thing—if you note well that the one she loved much was specifically Christ, and if you also do not forget that Christ is grace and the giver of grace.[81]

This way of conforming oneself to Christ's character and activity makes the woman into a different kind of picture than either the explanatory approximation of the tapestry in the baronial castle or even the transfigured image of a still lake reflecting the sky. As Kierkegaard observes in this discourse's prefatory prayer, the woman's love was loved forth by Christ's love, and takes its shape as confession of sin directly from the fact that Christ's love is expressed as the forgiveness of sin.

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[80]See Podmore, *Kierkegaard and the Self before God*, 179.

[81]*SKS* 11, 279 / *WA*, 143.

Though forms of *forklare* appear throughout this discourse, the Hong's decision to translate each instance with "explain" rather than "transfigure" seems correct: as long as one exists in this world of sin, true transfiguration remains elusive.[82] At best, the human self can come into an inverse, mirror-image relationship with the divine—so long as he or she learns to overcome the cares and distractions of the world. Just what this overcoming entails becomes increasingly clear as Kierkegaard's authorship develops: in a striking passage in Part I of *Upbuilding Discourses*, with language that calls to mind the requirement of becoming "dead and transfigured" in *From the Papers of One Still Living*, Kierkegaard writes: "One who is dead is indeed a transfigured [*forklarede*] person. The living person can still make mistakes, can still be changed, can still be carried away in a moment and by a moment."[83]

7.3.5 To Become Dead and Transfigured, or, "Death Comes Between"

Death describes the true realm of transfigured reconciliation, the only victory over the double-mindedness and vicissitudes of temporality: "The transfigured one exists only as transfigured; he cannot be changed into something better—he is indeed the transfigured one; he cannot be changed—he is indeed one who is dead—he remains true to himself, the one and the same, the transfigured one!"[84] A similar passage in *Practice in Christianity* confirms this reading, and situates Kierkegaard's understanding of the existing Christian in relation to Christ. Describing how the Christian life must be structured around the

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[82] Westfall suggests that the passive "being explained" is basically synonymous with transfiguration—that being transfigured has to do with ceasing to offer explanations and submitting oneself instead to being explained by an authority. However, given the currency the term had in aesthetic and philosophical discourses Kierkegaard was familiar with, it seems clear that for Kierkegaard *Forklarelse* in the sense of "transfiguration" signified something more specific than "being explained"—something utterly unattainable within temporality. See Joseph Westfall, *The Kierkegaardian Author: Authorship and Performance in Kierkegaard's Literary and Dramatic Criticism* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 129, 141.

[83] *SKS* 8, 164 / *UDVS*, 54.

[84] *SKS* 8, 165 / *UDVS*, 55. Significantly, the idea that the transfigured one changelessly "remains true to himself" resonates with Kierkegaard's comments about God's infinitely subjective subjectivity, the unconditioned (and thus changeless) self. See my discussion in chapter six.

struggle toward loftiness (a struggle that, as noted in chapter five, Kierkegaard elsewhere describes as a perpetual cycle of struggle, failure, and turning ever more deeply to Christ's grace[85]), Kierkegaard writes:

> [I]f this higher something is to be truly able to draw and at every moment, it must not itself be subject to variation or change but must have triumphantly gone through every change, transfigured [*forklaret*] like the transfigured [*forklarede*] life of one who is dead. And just as now among all who live there is but one name that is named, the Lord Jesus Christ, so also there is but one who is dead, he who yet lives, the Lord Jesus Christ, who from *on high* will draw all to himself.[86]

It is impossible to miss the way this passage mirrors the journal entries I discussed in chapters five and six related to Kierkegaard's struggle to understand how God-in-Christ remained the unconditioned Eternal One, despite his existence within the conditions of temporality. In attempting to imagine divine Governance's involvement with the temporal world—which can be thought of as a broader version of the problem of Christ's existence as the unconditioned in time—Kierkegaard was particularly concerned to avoid dissolving God into the world of spatiotemporal relations, or "turn[ing] the unconditioned into the conditioned": "Governance is indeed everywhere present and thus in one sense is the closest of all. But in another sense he is infinitely far away. That is—he refuses to intervene forcibly, he omnipotently constrains his own omnipotence because it has pleased him to want to see what will become of this whole existence." [87] In the same entry, Kierkegaard asserts that "in a certain sense it can be said that there is no providence at all"—just as a scientific experimenter restricts himself to "sheer awareness and attention" God "refrains completely from intervening." Elsewhere, briefly alluding to the philosophical concerns

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[85]For instance, *SKS* 16, 199 / *JFY*, 147: "Help us all, each one of us, you who both will and can, you who are both the prototype and the Redeemer, so that when the striving one droops under the prototype, crushed, almost despairing, the Redeemer, raises him again; but at the same moment you are again the prototype so that he may be kept in the striving."

[86]*SKS* 12, 156 / *PC*, 152.

[87]*SKS* 26, 340–1, NB34:29 / *JP* 2, 1450.

that persistently complicated his commitment to divine governance in the sense of God's special providential care, Kierkegaard concedes that God is not "directly related to the world of appearance" since this is "at variance with God as spirit and in general with the entire outlook of Christianity"; rather, God is related "paradoxically to [the world of] appearance, only tangentially, just as one may be able only to touch something but nevertheless can gear into it decisively, yet without being in continuity with it."[88]

A troubling vision of Christ emerges here. Nowhere to be seen are the orthodox notions of hypostatic union, with the transfigured person of Christ uniting divinity and humanity in a single theanthropic life-in-time, thereby transfiguring the created order. Instead, Kierkegaard's logic is as follows: The eternal God is the prototype for humans. This prototype is spiritual personhood—"pure subjectivity" in the sense that God relates eternally to himself as "subject–reduplicated-subjectivity." Human subjectivity always has an admixture of objectivity, arising as it does out of the complex synthesis of body-soul/spirit; it is thus conditioned and changeable and has its life in temporality. And yet, the eternal God remains the prototype: in calling us toward the most intensive, un-selfconscious, self-forgetful, undistracted attention to God alone,[89] God is calling us to mirror God's own subjectivity. Unfortunately, this kind of purity of heart—rooted in the ideal set by the eternal personhood of God—puts humanity in an existentially impossible situation: for temporality remains the inescapable context of existence this side of the grave. Indeed, the finite spirit only emerges out of the temporally-bound body-soul synthesis. Thus, the context in which we *as human beings* have our life is utterly contrary to the life of the spirit. It is here that Christ enters in—not to transfigure temporality, but paradoxically to exist in temporality as the uniquely transfigured one in *opposition to temporality*. He goes through every change—yet remains unchanged, the changeless

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[88]*SKS* 26, 227, NB32:133 / *JP* 2, 1444; cf. *SKS* 26, 265, NB33:23 / *JP* 4, 4571.

[89]*SKS* 13, 227 / *MLW*, 178.

one. And by his presence—the presence of this paradoxical and utterly unfollowable actualization of the divine life in time—Christ re-issues the requirement: human beings have *God* as their prototype. Christ calls humans ever more urgently to become spirits before God by growing to hate the temporality in which they *naturally* have their lives and to grow into *spiritual* life—in short, to become dead and transfigured.

This calls to mind Kierkegaard's eventual configuration of *imitatio Christi* as a perpetual "dying to" (*at afdøe*) the world. Despite his implacable critique of temporality-as-such, nowhere does Kierkegaard allow the notion that we can peacefully resign from existence—no one is exempt from the task of becoming a self, a full-fledged spirit which, as I showed in chapters four and five, can *only* emerge from the body-soul synthesis through the existential and Christological dialectic of strenuousness and grace. We noted in chapter six that *imitatio Christi* increasingly takes the form of external suffering in Kierkegaard's writings, and even raises the specter of purposeful martyrdom. While Kierkegaard's view of martyrdom remains contested, the fact that he increasingly framed *imitatio Christi* in terms of "dying to" is not. In *For Self Examination*, Kierkegaard asserts that there is "not one Christian qualification into which Christianity does not first of all introduce as the middle term: death, dying to—in order to protect the essentially Christian from being taken in vain."[90] By this, Kierkegaard simply means that "death goes in between": between the natural life of a human being and the life of the spirit, there is no continuity.[91] Throughout the discourse, Kierkegaard describes the Christian's life in this world in terms of the Holy Spirit's gifting of proleptic mini-fulfillments of the transfiguration that only occurs fully and properly after death—after the final separation of spirit from the body-soul. Kierkegaard describes three gifts of the Spirit and three accompanying instances of "dying to."

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[90] *SKS* 13, 98 / *FSE*, 76.

[91] *SKS* 13, 98 / *FSE*, 76.

> The Spirit brings *faith*, *the faith*—that is, faith in the strictest sense of the word . . . only after death has come in between. . . . Faith is against understanding; faith is on the other side of death. And when you died or died to yourself, to the world, then you also died to all immediacy in yourself, also to your understanding.[92]
>
> And the Spirit next brings *hope*—hope in the strictest Christian sense, which is hope against hope. In every human being there is a spontaneous, immediate hope . . . but in death (that is, when you die to) every such hope dies and changes into hopelessness. Into this night of hopelessness—it is indeed death we are describing—comes the life-giving Spirit and brings hope, eternity's hope. It is against hope, because according to that purely natural hope there was no more hope; consequently this hope is against hope.[93]
>
> Finally the Spirit also brings *love* [*Kjerlighed*]. . . . Not until you have died to the selfishness in you and thereby to the world so that you do not love the world or anything in the world, do not selfishly love even one single person—not until you in love of God have learned to hate yourself, not until then can there be talk of the love that is Christian love.[94]

The gifts of the Spirit thus radically undermine the understanding, kill this-worldly hope, and train each person to hate the the world—including himself. The pattern of "dying to" is set, significantly, by Christ. After describing the Spirit's gift of Christian love (which entails hating the world), Kierkegaard meditates on the "death" experienced by the apostles when they "had the dreadful experience that love [Christ] is not loved, that it is hated, that it is mocked, that it is spat upon, that it is crucified in this world."[95] The apostles took up Christ's example of love, which has a twofold aspect: In a certain sense, they swore "eternal enmity" against the world—because "love of God is hatred toward the world."[96] But in another sense, they "joined with God . . . in loving this unloving world":

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[92] *SKS* 13, 102–3 / *FSE*, 81–2.

[93] *SKS* 13, 102–3 / *FSE*, 82.

[94] *SKS* 13, 105 / *FSE*, 83–4.

[95] *SKS* 13, 104 / *FSE*, 84.

[96] *SKS* 13, 105 / *FSE*, 85.

> The life-giving Spirit brought them love. Thus the apostles, in conformity with their prototype, resolved to love, to suffer, to endure all things, to be sacrificed in order to save this unloving world.[97]

The gifts of the Spirit as we travel along the Christ-Way of becoming a self before God are suffering and death—but in order to bring life. "It is a new life, literally a new life—because, mark this well, death goes in between, dying to, and a life on the other side of death—yes, that is a new life."[98] Two important interpretive issues arise here at the end of my analysis of transfiguration: First, in describing the Christian life as the process of "dying to," Kierkegaard appears to leave room for the notion of a non-literal death (and transfiguration) within the context of continued temporal existence—a series of proleptic "fulfillments" of spiritual selfhood within this life. But what exactly are the prolepses prefiguring? At issue here is the contested question of Kierkegaard's take on immortality/resurrection, as well as the question of how Kierkegaard envisions ideal or fulfilled spiritual selfhood before God. How we answer these questions will largely determine whether we really should identify Kierkegaard's anti-worldly, asocial descriptions of the spiritual life as his final world on the matter (as I have suggested especially pointedly in the present chapter and in chapters five and six), or whether the harshest aspects of Kierkegaard's late writings should be relativized—as either an abrogation[99] or perhaps as a penultimate rhetorical stance that could have given way to a more positive account of temporality, sociality, or ecclesiology.[100]

Second, and relatedly, if Kierkegaard's notion of Christian existence as a process of "dying to" turns our attention toward the nature of Christian hope, it immediately raises

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[97]*SKS* 13, 105 / *FSE*, 85.

[98]*SKS* 13, 98 / *FSE*, 76.

[99]Sylvia Walsh, *Living Christianly: Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Christian Existence* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 160.

[100]For an admirably nuanced and somewhat reserved instance of this kind of argument, see Lee C. Barrett, *Eros and Self-Emptying: The Intersections of Augustine and Kierkegaard* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 374–8.

further questions about the form and character of Christian ethics in this present life. In short, Kierkegaard's inverse logic of the commensurability between temporality and eternity finds its full expression in the denial that full, transfigured personhood—the goal of his Christological anthropology—can occur this side of death: death comes between, standing as the middle term that disbars the new life in Christ from being imagined in continuity with our natural lives.[101] But depending on how Kierkegaard imagines the "life after death," the truly transfigured self before God, there may be some traction for saying something positive about temporality, sociality, or ecclesiology that goes beyond Kierkegaard while remaining recognizably "Kierkegaardian." To put the question bluntly, can Kierkegaard's framing of human existence in relation to Christ—my reconstruction of his Christological anthropology—support a genuinely Christian hope regarding the new life offered by the Spirit? And further, could Kierkegaard, in keeping with the hopes of his most sympathetic interpreters, have said anything about Christian, ecclesial life in this world that goes beyond the extraordinarily anti-worldly framing of Christian faith, hope, and love in the late discourses?

Before moving into the concluding chapter to answer those questions, along several other of the most pressing questions raised by this reconstruction, let me briefly summarize my findings in this chapter, with special attention to the chapter's stated aim—the identification of an exemplary thread, revealing a continuity-in-development in Kierkegaard's anthropology.

7.4 Transfiguration, Existence, and Anthropology

I noted earlier in this chapter Kierkegaard's early musings while still a student on the "double kind of dialectic" in Plato's Socrates: the first type of dialectic remains in "perpetual movement," ceaselessly setting the "issue afloat if it runs aground" and

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[101] *SKS* 13, 98 / *FSE*, 76: "This life-giving in the Spirit is not a *direct* heightening of the natural life in a person in *immediate* continuation from and connection with it—what blasphemy! how horrible to take Christianity in vain this way!—it is a new life."

avoiding finalized resolutions in favor of this perpetual suspension, while the second type of dialectic attempts to "construct actuality with the idea."[102] Kierkegaard favors the first kind of dialectic, identifying it as the truly Socratic. As early as his dissertation, Kierkegaard had developed a basic sensibility that, in spite of developments and further specifications, continued to inform his thinking into the late theological discourses. Kierkegaard's Socrates not only informs his understanding of communication between humans, or the nature and limits of speculative thinking—the same Socratic impulse informs his intuitions about human existence as a perpetual, never-finalized struggle, continually pushing off from the shore. And this Socratic sensibility in turn informs Kierkegaard's evolving use of the notion of transfiguration—but it takes on an increasingly explicit Christian (and Christological) shape, as seen in *Practice in Christianity* and the later communion discourses.

Kierkegaard's use of transfiguration in relation to his anthropology should be read within his ongoing polemic against the vision of actuality as the realm of fulfilled moments of *Forklarelse*, the optimistic version of transfiguration Kierkegaard detected in his contemporaries. Against the Aesthete's elevation of Don Giovanni's transfigured life (which devolves into nothing more than the poetic idealization of and flight from actuality) and the Judge's attempts to achieve transfigured concretions of the ideal in actuality through ethical resolution, Kierkegaard posits a transfiguration that is only realizable after having gone through "every change"—i.e., death. For Kierkegaard, imaging the eternal in time can never be a matter of translating and extending Christ's divine-humanity into transfigurations of history, state, family, and church, as articulated by Martensen and those who influenced him. Rather, the human in temporality can only hope to become an inverse mirror-image of God's character as the loving forgiver of sins. Existence, as long as it continues, is the perpetual struggle toward silent confession

[102] *SKS* 1, 172–3 / *CI*, 121.

in the presence of the Holy One, whereby one becomes explained by Christ, the *only* dead and transfigured one who yet lives.

In tracing the thread of transfiguration, we also find support for the sharp conflict between the eternal and the temporal that lies at the heart of Kierkegaard's anthropology. With the changeableness so fundamental to human existence identified as an insurmountable barrier to the goal of fully transfigured selfhood—or better, a barrier surmountable only in death—the deeply negative assessment of temporal life noted in the last chapter seems to be confirmed.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

8.1 A Compact Summary

My reconstruction of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology is now complete. Striving for a comprehensive rather than exhaustive approach, I have attempted to show an identifiable continuity-in-development, a polyphonous expression that encompasses Kierkegaard's authorship. Attending to the voices of the earliest journal entries, the latest polemics against Christendom, and a variety of voices in between, revealed an anthropology that I believe is best described as Christological: in Kierkegaard's account, Christ (1) establishes the presupposition of human freedom, (2) engenders the existential dialectic that moves the complex human synthesis toward genuine selfhood before God, and (3) serves as the only true prototype for every individual on the path to selfhood. My argument proceeded as follows:

After establishing the general shape of Kierkegaard's anthropology (chapter two) and the vital polemical context out of which Kierkegaard's ideas emerged (chapter three), we saw that as early as 1844, with the publication of *Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard's anthropology was already being informed in fundamental ways by Christological dogma (chapter four). From the Atonement, Kierkegaard presupposes sin (and thus freedom) as the foundation of his anthropology, thereby cutting through the dilemma of freedom, reason, and the imputability of evil actions that so exercised his predecessors. And, in the process, he reconfigured history as an anthropological category, the dynamic interplay between emerging human spirits and eternity, characterized by sheer ethical responsibility before God (second ethics).

In chapter five I outlined how this already Christological anthropology gained greater specificity through Kierkegaard's introduction of the Christian dialectic of existence—the

mechanism by which Christ as prototype and Redeemer both initiates and perpetuates the kind of existential striving that must precede "becoming a self before God." And in chapter six, I further sharpened Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology by tracing the maturation of Kierkegaard's notion of Christ as prototype and outlining his fully-developed logic of inversion and opposition between temporality and eternity. I additionally situated all of these aspects of Kierkegaard's anthropology in relation to the theological notions of God as the Unconditioned (who therefore must unconditionally require of his creatures an utterly unconditional obedience, unmarred even by objective self-consciousness), the prototypicality of God's "subject–reduplicated-subjectivity" personhood (*Personlighed*), and God as infinite love.

Finally, in chapter seven, I illustrated the continuity-in-development of Kierkegaard's anthropology by tracing the notion of transfiguration (which names fully actualized selfhood) through the various stages of Kierkegaard's authorship. The core of that many-stranded thread proved to be Kierkegaard's emphasis on becoming "dead and transfigured." This phrase or notion appears in Kierkegaard's early *From the Papers of One Still Living* (1838), in *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits* (1847), and in a specifically Christological context in *Practice in Christianity* (1850), revealing the sharp boundary line of death (i.e., the cessation of every aspect of temporal, embodied existence) as a condition for the goal of transfigured selfhood before God.

Beyond reconstructing Kierkegaard's anthropology and contending for a many-voiced but polyphonous authorship, I have frequently called attention to several key concerns that have consistently bubbled to the surface. Concerns about an anti-worldly, asocial, and temporality-destroying undercurrent in Kierkegaard's thought are nothing new; nor are attempts to situate that negative undercurrent within a broader, more positive Kierkegaardian contribution. My dissertation presses the point in a specific way: by including Kierkegaard's most explicitly negative pronouncements in the late discourses and in the "attack" writings, preserving them as vital voices within the Kierkegaardian

polyphony, I rule out the interpretive approaches that seeks to bracket these most offensive aspects of the authorship. I submit that they cannot be dismissed either as abrogations of Kierkegaard's larger project, or chalked up to an end-of-life bitterness that overwhelmed Kierkegaard's better angels.[1]

8.2 A Possible Objection, a Rejoinder, and Some Ramifications

However, even for readers who accept my approach to the authorship up to this point, a final objection could arise. This objection, though generally allowing that the late writings are legitimately Kierkegaardian voices, could specifically deny that they represent a logical culmination or direct expression of Kierkegaard's project. This objection could further suggest that my reconstruction of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology, in taking the view that the late discourses constitute an especially vital expression of impulses and notions prefigured throughout the authorship, fundamentally misses the point. The objection I am thinking of, in its simplest form, is the idea that Kierkegaard's late discourses and the "attack on Christendom" should be understood as the work of "another deliberately-assumed persona," or, at the very least, that they function solely as *corrective rhetoric*; on this kind of reading, the extreme tone and content simply reflects that these discourses have been gauged appropriately to the extremity of the errors they address.[2] Kierkegaard himself provides impetus to this objection. He claimed

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[1]See Sylvia Walsh, *Living Christianly: Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Christian Existence* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 160. In contrast to Walsh, my approach more closely resembles that taken by Timothy Dalrymple, in his assessment specifically of the late "attack" literature, which he claims unfolds "in a continuous line of reflection, showing not a psychotic break or mental dissolution but a line of reasoning that develops with logic and consistency." See Timothy Dalrymple, "On the Bronze Bull of Phalaris and the Art and Imitation of Christ," in *The Moment and Late Writings*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, vol. 23, International Kierkegaard Commentary (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 165–98, 195.

[2]For examples of Kierkegaard interpreters who take this approach, see M. Jamie Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving: A Commentary on Kierkegaard's Works of Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), esp. 11, 20; John Heywood Thomas, *The Legacy of Kierkegaard* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011). Another highly nuanced version of this kind of argument appears in Jason A. Mahn, "Becoming a Christian in Christendom," in *Why Kierkegaard Matters: A Festschrift in Honor of Robert L. Perkins*, ed. Marc A. Jolley and Edmon L. Rowell (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2010), 166–78.

that he wished to play the role of "corrective" with "expert-onesidedness," and warned future generations against taking as normative what he intended only as corrective.[3] Of course, he wrote these words long before he concluded that the "established order" was "Christianly indefensible."[4] And, there is room to question the extent to which the claim of corrective status extends beyond his general critique of Denmark's Hegelian-infused Christendom; the label of corrective may not apply specifically to the thread of anthropological musings that permeate his writings—pseudonymous and direct, published and unpublished.

The temptation that attends this kind of objection is obvious—it invites us to "downplay any recommendation we find displeasing on the grounds that it is just another corrective."[5] Indeed, the concern to overcome this temptation is in part what first spurred me to take seriously the voice of Kierkegaard's less palatable late works. Furthermore, we run the danger of utterly bifurcating the form and content of Kierkegaard's message. However, neither the temptation nor the danger I have just described constitutes a fatal blow to this objection. And the possibility remains that, given more time or the right conditions, Kierkegaard could and would have said "the next thing."

I believe the best way to approach this objection is to accept it and then make it into a paragraph within my system. Indeed, accepting the objection actually strengthens my point in a distinctively Christological direction. Let us suppose that the late writing's undeniably anti-worldly, temporality-destroying moments should be relativized as the most extreme rhetorical movement in Kierkegaard's discursive dialectic. They perhaps mark the culmination of the path of infinite resignation, which, once traveled, reveals an unexpected destination: a renewed life in which faith receives back the temporal with joy,

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[3] *SKS* 22, 194, NB12:97 / *JP* 6, 6467.

[4] *SKS* 14, 213 / *MLW*, 69–70.

[5] Antony Aumann, "Self-Love and Neighbor-Love in Kierkegaard's Ethics," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook* (2013): 197–216, 211.

perhaps even transfiguring the self and temporality. Let us imagine a re-meeting under happier circumstances of Kierkegaard and Danish Christendom. The former, blessed with better health, has survived to see the latter's reckless frivolity finally buckle under the strenuousness of the unconditional requirement pressed so vociferously by Kierkegaard. The Danish Church is a nineteenth-century Ninevah to Kierkegaard's Jonah. And let us imagine that Kierkegaard is now ready and willing to say something about "new life in Christ," "Christian hope," and "joy"—and in such a way that "life" does not equal outright death to temporality; "hope" does not refer to a pseudo-gnostic escape from the prison of embodied temporality; and "joy" implies the ability to receive back that which had been utterly relinquished.

What would Kierkegaard say? What *could* he say? What resources has he stored up for this moment? Is Kierkegaard equipped to talk about Christian hope in the biblical terms of resurrection of the body in a new heavens and a new earth? It seems highly unlikely, given his vision of spiritual selfhood as radically opposed to and ultimately exclusive of flesh and blood. Consider this journal entry from 1854:

> Flesh and blood or the sensate—and spirit are opposites. Thus it is easy to see what it is to be spirit, that it is to will voluntarily that which flesh and blood shrink from most—for spirit and flesh and blood are just as opposite as, to use an adage, the ends of a sack. From what do flesh and blood shrink most of all? From dying. Consequently spirit is to will to die, to die to the world. Incidentally, it is easy to see that to die to the world is a whole exponential power higher than to die, for to die is only to suffer, but dying to the world is voluntarily to force oneself into the same suffering; furthermore, dying is a suffering of rather short duration, while dying to the world is for a whole lifetime.[6]

Kierkegaard not only sets up a radical disjunction of spirit from the body-soul, utterly bifurcating the human being; he also makes voluntarily suffering with a view toward death (rather than simply dying as the final quantification of natural life) the mark of properly *spiritual* existence, the birth of the spirit from the body-soul synthesis.

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[6] *SKS* 26, 156 / *JP* 4, 250.

Is Kierkegaard able to speak positively of the church—not as a mere "concession," but as the proleptic instantiation, however fragile, of the kingdom of God? I do not see *how* he could, given the explicit connection he draws between his anthropology and his view of the church, outlined in this 1851 journal entry:

> Christianity is related to *spirit*—and sociality is related essentially to the *soul-body* synthesis. Aristotle says correctly that "the crowd" is an animal qualification. Christianity teaches also that eternal life is simply not social. Society cannot be deduced from "spirit," and the Church exists precisely because we are not truly spirit or pure spirit. "The congregation" is an *accommodation*, a *concession* in view of how little we are able to endure being spirit.[7]

And, perhaps more damning:

> Right at this point the real meaning of religious sociality is to be found—that is, when the ideality of the God-relationship has become too strong for an individual (since he cannot, after all, demand direct revelation from God, and his reflection traps him), he must now have another person to discuss it with. From this we see that sociality is not the highest but is really a concession to human weakness. Here, also, is the significance of the idea that God relates himself to the whole race. The idea of the race, of sociality, is then a middle term between God and the single individual.[8]

Finally, we need not speculate about how Kierkegaard would positively describe a church: he spelled out his own notion of the ideal religious social group in an 1850 journal entry:

> True religiousness cannot generate a political party or a special interest group. For it [i.e., a truly religious social group] is a coalition (*Forening*) of people who neither individually nor together desire anything; but each individual being willing to sacrifice, they now unite solely for this purpose: each one animates

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[7] *SKS* 24, 312 NB23:216 / *JP* 4, 4341. Cf. Mark C. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood: Hegel and Kierkegaard*, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy 14 (New York: Fordham University Press, [1980] 2000), 180.

[8] *SKS* 21, NB7:58 / *JP* 2, 1377. Kierkegaard further clarified his final understanding of the ultimate disjunction between the spiritual God-relation and the social aspect of the human race as follows: "God is spirit and it would be bestial for him to be in kinship with a race. He can be in kinship only with the single individual" (*SKS* 23, 63, NB15:91 / *JP* 2, 1614. Louis Dupré affirms that for Kierkegaard, the "person's *spiritual* determination lies in his individuality, while his social character, based upon a plurality of individuals in one race, belongs to his *animal* quality." See Louis Dupré, "The Sickness unto Death: *Critique of the Modern Age*," in *The Sickness unto Death*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, vol. 19, International Kierkegaard Commentary (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), 85–106, 102.

> the other to ever greater sacrifices. As soon as someone desires something, he is *eo ipso* out of the coalition.[9]

Here, Kierkegaard's ideal church is exactly what we would expect if my reconstruction of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology is on the mark: it closely mirrors the themes of cessation from the cares and hopes of this world, the rejection of temporality, and the goal of "dying to" in order to become pure spirit.

These kinds of quotes lend support to my reconstruction of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology. They accord well with the notion that Christ, the God-man, presses the unconditional requirement—the temporality-annihilating demands of the eternal. Christ's paradoxical actuality, rather than raising up temporality, serves only to bring the requirement directly into human view, ensuring that humans cannot claim ignorance of the prototype, or misunderstand the impossibility of the requirement as license to settle for approximation. In Christ, the unconditioned divine personhood is immediately present as *the* prototype, infinitely problematizing temporality as such, and calling for spiritual selfhood in direct opposition to the body-soul.

But even these kinds of quotes do not *prove* that Kierkegaard could not have had anything substantially different to say about Christian hope, temporality as such, etc., given the imaginary conditions I described earlier. For me, the real reason that he would not have the resources to say "the next thing" is that the necessary resource is

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[9] *SKS* 23, 21, NB15:22 (my translation). In some ways, what I am pointing out here is a negative take on Leo Stan's positive assertion of the "indispensability of human otherness" in Kierkegaard's thought, or further, his notion that "human alterity" proves fundamental to Kierkegaard's elevation of the individual. Leo Stan, "A Reconsideration of Kierkegaard's Understanding of the Human Other: The Hidden Ethics of Soteriology," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 38 (2010): 349–70, 363ff. As Stan notes, by "positing sin and by applying it to the human condition as such, [Kierkegaard] introduces a negative element that makes the pursuit of salvation endless because it is ceaselessly imperfect" (see 362–3). This is indeed the only context in which "human alterity" continues to matter: as a concession to our existential inability to be "pure spirit" and in recognition of the dubious claim that sin applies to human existence as such, as an intrinsic feature of temporal embodiment in history. Stan finds this utter idealization of the goal and prototype of human personhood unobjectionable. But this locates rather precisely my concern about Kierkegaard's anthropology, i.e., its contribution to and participation in a malformation of properly Christian hope—which, as I outline below, contributes either to a depleted Christian ethic of compromise or a commitment to the formation of societies that facilitate the voluntary pursuit of external suffering and "dying to."

precisely Christological. Kierkegaard's Christ (and to an extent, Christological dogma) functions decisively throughout Kierkegaard's anthropology—but as I have suggested several times, Kierkegaard's Christology is incomplete. And this incomplete Christology maps directly onto the relatively thin or nearly absent discussions of the eschatological hope of the new heavens and new earth, bodily resurrection, and ecclesiology—doctrines and biblical notions that strike me as vital both to anthropology and to a robust account of Christian life in the world in this time before the end.[10] In other words, in order to say "something more" or "something else"—even if he had wanted to—Kierkegaard would have needed to have a different, more robust Christology. Before saying more about this different Christology and offering a few recommendations about the possibility of a re-appropriation of Kierkegaard's best anthropological insights, I would like to make a couple of comments about what I believe is at stake in my critique Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology.

I have argued that Kierkegaard's formulation of the Christian hope of becoming an atemporal-spirit resting transparently in God is radically discontinuous with and even opposed to our natural mode of temporal, embodied life. Even bare consciousness, if it involves anything other than consciousness of God's presence, fares rather badly in Kierkegaard's account. Leaving aside the rather obvious and unhelpful charges of pseudo-gnosticism, I am concerned about the way Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology posits a radical disjunction between Christian hope and history. For Kierkegaard, the

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[10]For a balanced treatment of Kierkegaard's understanding of the resurrection, see Lee C. Barrett, "The Resurrection: Kierkegaard's Use of the Resurrection as Symbol and as Reality," in *Kierkegaard and the Bible, Tome 2*, vol. 1, Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 169–88. Barrett does an excellent job of demonstrating that Kierkegaard's position was not simply symbolist—a few key passages at least hint at a rather more vigorous notion of the resurrection than the one I am accusing Kierkegaard of having (see *SKS* 19, 216, Not7:42 / *JP* 2, 1665). However, I do not think these kinds of isolated, evocative passages carry much water, especially given the weight of textual evidence setting spirit in direct opposition to embodiment. See also C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard: An Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 118–21; David J. Gouwens, *Kierkegaard as Religious Thinker* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 162; Julia Watkin, "Kierkegaard's View of Death," *History of European Ideas* 12, no. 1 (1990): 65–78.

goal of becoming a singular spiritual self before God in eternity seems to function as a pure ideal, perpetually hovering above history. This might have the positive effects of preventing the church from slipping into triumphalism, or disabusing individuals of their misguided aspirations of perfectionism. But it carries with it a multi-faceted danger.

Kierkegaard's ecclesiology is, to put it bluntly, a casualty of his anthropology. The church is at best a concession or an accommodation, a place where those who find themselves lacking spiritual strength or courage to continue on the path of becoming a solitary spirit/self before God find temporary respite—distracting themselves from the burden of living a life of *imitatio Christi* by talking about it. Kierkegaard acknowledges that this could serve the dialectical pole of leniency, but this is a remarkably hollow consolation prize for anyone seeking to find an ecclesiology in Kierkegaard's authorship. Relatedly, also noted above, Kierkegaard imagines the ideal religious coalition of individuals as a group committed to aiding each other in the task of "dying to," with membership in the group contingent on having eschewed every personal desire. The effect here is to turn the church into something equivalent to the detachable rockets that propel a spaceship beyond earth's atmosphere. The rockets serve an important purpose, but they are jettisoned shortly before the spaceship reaches orbit. Likewise, this ideal coalition of religious people must eventually fade entirely away for the Christian individual. Inasmuch as the church is itself a kind of sociality, individual Christians must eventually die even to the church in order to become selves in the fullest sense. This strikes me as manifestly problematic on a biblical and theological level.

This malformed ecclesiology leads to a malformed Christian social ethic. I can only see two rather similar options for a Christian ethic of social involvement rooted in Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology. Either it would mirror the ecclesiology described above, seeking to love people by helping them imitate Christ and "die to" the world. This would seem to entail fostering the kind of dubious social and political circumstances in which people are forced to make difficult choices between spiritlessness

or actual suffering and death (in order to bring joy and life in eternity).[11] Or, it might take a pseudo-Niebuhrian attitude of moral realism: recognizing the persistent gulf between the ideal and the actual, it would presume that the realm of historical actuality can never really be a realm of holiness, renewal, or redemption—nor even a realm where the kingdom of God finds proleptic instantiations (however fleeting or fragile).[12] A Christian social ethic on this account would thus immediately and fundamentally take the form of compromise.

Significantly, this second form of a Kierkegaardian social ethic would remain ever-plagued by an internal incoherence, leading into eventual collapse back into the first ethic: for even in relaxing the ideal requirement due to its sheer impossibility, the willingness to compromise remains marked by its orientation toward the "impossible possibility" (in this case, the dead and transfigured solitary spirit before God), with every ethical consideration guided by the goal of helping people love God by "dying to" temporality. One could possibly frame a Kierkegaardian Christian social ethic a bit more gently by putting greater emphasis on the "leniency" pole of his Christological dialectic—but even here, the overall trajectory is, quite frankly, toward ensuring that the world—including, significantly, the church—cannot reflect the kingdom of God, for on Kierkegaard's view any such reflection could only be a perverse masquerade that lulls people into spiritlessness. Much more ought to be said on this topic, but I trust that the point is clear: Kierkegaard's social ethic can only affirm Christ's prayer that God's will be done "on earth as it is

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[11]For a critique that hints at similar concerns in relation to Kierkegaard's final discourse, "The Changelessness of God," see Paul Martens and Tom Millay, "'The Changelessness of God' as Kierkegaard's Final Theodicy: God and the Gift of Suffering," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 13, no. 2 (2011): 170–89. Cf. Tamara Monet Marks, "Abolished Navigation Marks and Forgotten Ideals: Kierkegaard on the Relevance of Eternity for Human Existence," in *Kierkegaard and Human Nature*, ed. Roman Králik et al., vol. 6, Acta Kierkegaardiana (Toronto: Kierkegaard Circle, 2013), 123–36.

[12]For a well-argued overview of Kierkegaard's influence on key aspects of Reinhold Niebuhr's thought (though flawed in elements of its treatment of *Concept of Anxiety*), see Roger A. Badham, "Redeeming the Fall: Hick's Schleiermacher versus Niebuhr's Kierkegaard," *The Journal of Religion* 78, no. 4 (1998): 547–70. For some introductory comments about the relation between Niebuhr's Kierkegaardian anthropology and his social-political views, see Langdon Gilkey, *On Niebuhr: A Theological Study* (University of Chicago Press, 2001), 193–6.

in heaven" in an extremely roundabout manner. By denying the church its status as an outpost or proleptic instantiation of the kingdom, Kierkegaard severely undermines the possibility of a Christian social ethic. And whatever ability a Kierkegaardian approach might have to chasten the optimism that would over-eagerly identify history with the eschaton, I believe there are better ways of protecting against the twin temptations of triumphalism and perfectionism.

8.3 Some Modest Recommendations

I have suggested that Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology could have benefited from a more robust Christology. But what constitutes a "more robust" Christology? It is well beyond the scope of this conclusion chapter to spell out and support a full-fledged view of Christian hope, bodily resurrection, and ecclesiology in light of Christology. However, in order to carry home my critique of Kierkegaard's anthropology and make some preliminary remarks about a possible way forward, I am going to ask Kierkegaard, so to speak, to become more thoroughly "Kierkegardian" than he was. I do this by invoking two methods at the heart of Kierkegaard's anthropology that lend themselves rather well to making sweepingly efficient critiques and suggestions: (a) Kierkegaard's polemical prioritization of a "straightforward" reading of Scripture, and (b) his tendency to interject dogmatic presuppositions to situate his philosophical or psychological investigations and undercut the positions of his opponents. It seems rhetorically convenient to leverage Kierkegaardian methods against Kierkegaard.

First, consider Kierkegaard's frequent rebukes against those who fail to pay attention to what he found quite obvious: "New Testament Christianity" and the New Testament's "clearly expressed wishes."[13] And yet, for someone who has so much to say about reading

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[13] *SKS* 13, 57 / *FSE*, 29. For documentation about Kierkegaard's *selectively* simplistic approach to Scripture, see *SKS* 13, 62 / *FSE*, 35; *SKS* 23, 151, NB16:84 / *JP* 1, 210. For an extremely helpful introduction to Kierkegaard's approach to Scripture (which highlights Kierkegaard's awareness that we "always read in terms of interpretive horizons" despite his rhetoric about the obviousness of Scripture's requirements), see

scripture straightforwardly (as if interpretive challenges are fictions invented in order to evade Scripture's requirements), Kierkegaard himself engages in some interesting—and highly controversial—interpretive gymnastics. Let me be clear: Scripture does issue interpretive (not just existential) challenges, and calls forth multiple levels of reading. But the fact that Kierkegaard himself recognizes and practices such subtle interpretive methods gives the lie to his rhetoric: "It is quite simple. Take the New Testament for yourself . . . and then do what it says simply and plainly in the New Testament."[14]

What I find particularly telling are the specific kinds of instances in which Kierkegaard eschews his own advice, declining a straightforward reading of scripture and breezily dismissing what the text says "simply and plainly." I have already identified one example, in chapter four. I noted that Dietrich Bonhoeffer took quite literally the Genesis description of the primal state as perfect communion between God and humanity (not just God and individuals)—and he was able to do this precisely because he drew not only upon the Atonement but also upon eschatological hope to contextualize his reading of Genesis. Kierkegaard's Haufniensis, however, supposes that the primal state is a largely useless appendage to the creation-fall myth: in response to the conceptual difficulties that surround hereditary and individual sin, "a fantastic presupposition was introduced, the loss of which constituted the fall"—and while this mythical "godly prelude" rightly emphasizes the universality of sin, it does not imply that any such state has ever existed, or ever could exist.[15] Why would Haufniensis draw upon the Atonement, but not eschatological hope? I contend that this scriptural selectivity, along with his ability to explain away a "clear" biblical narrative of humanity's communion with God, reflects

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Joel Rasmussen, "Kierkegaard's Biblical Hermeneutics: Imitation, Imaginative Freedom, and Paradoxical Fixation," in *Kierkegaard and the Bible, Tome 2*, ed. Lee C. Barrett and Jon Stewart, vol. 1, Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 249–84, 272ff.

[14] *SKS* 22, 55, NB11:97 / *JP* 3, 3014.

[15] *SKS* 4, 338–9 / *CA*, 32–3.

ways in which Kierkegaard's own approach to scripture was over-determined by certain philosophical-anthropological presuppositions—namely, the primacy of pure subjectivity.

Consider also the following quote, in which Kierkegaard dismisses the doctrine of the Ascension (which is intimately related with the New Testament hope of bodily resurrection and the eschaton as communal). Mirroring his earlier approach to the primal state, Kierkegard suggests that the very idea arose from the apostles' need for a measure of dialectical leniency, due to their existential inability to bear all at once the burden of Christ the prototype:

> So it always is with need in a human being; out of the eater comes something to eat; where there is a need, it itself produces, as it were, that which it needs. And the imitators truly needed [Christ's] Ascension in order to endure the life they were leading.[16]

Here again we see that Kierkegaard, despite his avowal of the obviousness of "New Testament Christianity," is no less susceptible than his audience to the tendency to bring a range of conscious and subconscious presuppositions to a text, decisively shaping the reception of that text. I believe that at the root of Kierkegaard's tendency to undermine specifically those Scripture passages that describe Christian hope in temporal, social, and bodily terms lies Kierkegaard's incomplete Christology.

This brings me to the *second* way in which Kierkegaard fails to inhabit his own methodology as fully as he could. We witnessed Kierkegaard's tactic of mining Christian dogma for presuppositions to form the context and starting point for further investigations of difficult topics.[17] While Kierkegaard frequently writes as if his Christ has been gleaned from the most uncontroversial understanding of fundamental dogmas, he actually glosses over the fact that doctrines such as the Atonement are highly nuanced and raise plenty

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[16]*SKS* 13, 92 / *FSE*, 69. Thanks to Paul Martens and Tom Millay for bringing this quote to my attention; see Martens and Millay, "'The Changelessness of God' as Kierkegaard's Final Theodicy: God and the Gift of Suffering," 189.

[17]Recall the description in chapter four of Vigilius Haufniensis' method of deriving (but not explaining) human freedom from the Atonement, thus cutting through (or perhaps sidestepping) a philosophical dilemma at the heart of then-current anthropological debates.

of controversy. Let me suggest two ways in which Kierkegaard's Christology falls short in terms of dogmatic-theological considerations.

(1) In focusing almost exclusively on the substitutionary aspect of the Atonement, Kierkegaard declines a vast set of dogmatic resources for describing the Christian life as a participation in the body of Christ, a mutual abiding that not only sets Christ in our place so that he might cover our sinfulness, but also grafts us into a participatory relation with Christ—particularly through Christ's personal union of humanity and divinity within a singular historical existence.

(2) As described in chapters five and six, Kierkegaard's problematic notion of personhood (*Personlighed*), both human and divine, contributed significantly to his anti-temporal bent. By largely overlooking the notion of God's tri-personality in favor of an idealist-infused version of "pure subjectivity"—and then making *this* the prototype for human personhood—Kierkegaard ends up losing the ability to speak positively of the natural life of the body-soul, inasmuch as the body-soul synthesis necessarily and immediately involves subject-object personhood. While in *Concept of Anxiety* Kierkegaard's Haufniensis provided a relatively positive account of the spirit as an "expression" of the body-soul synthesis, his trajectory was always toward becoming "pure spirit," due to his theologically-dubious way of framing God's prototypicality for human personhood. In Kierkegaard's account, two vital Christological considerations are either absent or sidelined: (a) Christ as the Logos, the second person of the Triune God; and (b) Christ as the one who hypostatically-personally unifies the divine and human natures in his historical existence. Instead, Christ as prototype functions entirely as a sharpening of the general notion that divine *Personlighed* is the temporality-excluding prototype for the human self.

For the record, I am not illegitimately faulting Kierkegaard for not having the advantage of one hundred and sixty years of new research into historical Christology. Kierkegaard was certainly familiar with I. A. Dorner (incidentally a close acquaintance of H. L. Martensen), a German theologian whose watershed work on historical Christology

contains some vigorous movements toward the kind of Christology I wish to suggest.[18] Kierkegaard's suspicion of Dorner's Christological approach—significantly, in relation to the connections between personhood (*Personlighed*), Atonement, salvation, and the human existential situation of original sin—comes through clearly in an 1850 journal entry.[19] The details of the disagreement are secondary to the simple fact that Kierkegaard definitely had recourse to the kind of Christological and historical-dogmatic considerations that could have helped him avoid the descent into a profoundly anti-temporal, asocial anthropology.

What do these concerns mean? Does Kierkegaard's deficient Christology—deficient precisely in terms of his failure to follow through on his own efforts to prioritize Scripture and dogma—prove fatal for his Christological anthropology?

In a certain sense, the answer is yes. Vast swathes of Kierkegaard's comments about human existence, discipleship, *imitatio Christi*, and sociality seem utterly conditioned by the missteps described above. But in another sense, there is an important moment in Kierkegaard's anthropology—specifically in *Concept of Anxiety*—where incorporating a "better Christology" could bear fruit, and perhaps help situate Kierkegaard's late comments about suffering, *imitatio Christi*, and "dying to" in a far more helpful way.[20] While spelling out the details of this kind of re-appropriation exceeds the scope of this study, I would like to close by suggesting a starting point for future work in this area.

In chapter four I noted Vigilius Haufniensis' extraordinary development in *Concept of Anxiety* of *history* as an anthropological category, in which human personhood seemed to be intrinsically related to the social realm as well as the spiritual relation to the eternal. It appeared that Kierkegaard's Haufniensis had opened an avenue for understanding

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[18]See I. A. Dorner, *History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ,* 5 vols., trans. D. W. Simon (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1870–74 [1835–39]), especially I.ii, 190ff.

[19]*SKS* 23, 114, NB16:32.

[20]This possibility follows the spirit of the objection I described in 8.2, differing only in my contention that the resources for reading the late works as a dialectical moment rather than a conclusion must come from beyond Kierkegaard's written work, rather than from within.

history in terms of eternity-saturated temporality—the dynamic context of freedom and responsibility in which finite human beings ultimately become selves in relation—to one another, and before God. And yet, as many commentators have noted, this earlier triadic account fades, disappearing entirely by the time of *Sickness unto Death*'s exclusively dyadic account of human personhood in relation to God alone. This is no oversight on Kierkegaard's part, but the outworking of his deficient Christology—a deficiency already implicit in *Concept of Anxiety*'s Christological reading of the primal state. Haufniensis' inability to read the notion of the primal state as anything more than a confusing codicil to the dogmatic notion of sin's universality finds full expression in Kierkegaard's eventual abandonment of *Concept of Anxiety*'s highly nuanced account of original sin, which (albeit in a bare, minimal sense) preserved temporality and sociality from being intrinsically sinful. Consider this important journal entry (written, significantly, while Kierkegaard was composing *Sickness unto Death*) in which Kierkegaard abandons the early nuancing of the interval between sin and history (i.e., the notion of "the race" in temporal-social terms) under the pressure of the annihilating oppositional effect of eternity upon temporality:

> The race comes to an end in eternal life. This bears profound significance for a full doctrine of original sin. . . . Christianly speaking, humankind sighs under the category of the "race." By the synthesis [body-soul/spirit] he is constrained in and with the race, must assume all the concretions given by it as his own task, participate as an accomplice in the guilt of the race, and add his own guilt to the guilt of the race—but he yearns to be in God.[21]

Here, Kierkegaard makes explicit what I saw implied in his insistence that humans have the personhood of God as their prototype for selfhood. It can only be devastating for temporality and sociality when the prototype for finite spirits/selves is divine "pure subjectivity." For in the case of "pure subjectivity," consciousness does not subsist in the finitely conditioned "subject-object" self-consciousness that serves as the fundament of all human existence, but rather in the "subject–reduplicated-subjectivity" of divine

[21] *SKS* 23, 108, NB16:21 (my translation).

Personhood. While Kierkegaard recognizes a fundamental difference between creaturely and divine personality, he describes this difference in a way that explicitly leaves behind the temporal and the social. The sole difference is that humans do not attain spiritual selfhood in eternal self-attentiveness—i.e., the divine mode of selfhood which if attempted by humans could only be an idolatrous I=I—which is, in fact, the sinful subject-object selfhood that every existing human necessarily exhibits. Rather, humans become selves only in the transfigurement of death—in the eternal state of *self-forgetful* and purely spiritual (i.e., disembodied and non-temporal) God-attentiveness. Put another way, on Kierkegaard's account, the human self must eventually leave behind the intrinsically sinful "subject-object" mode of self-consciousness, and enter into an utterly exclusive "subject-Subject" relational selfhood called "worship."[22]

But what might happen if we were to go back to that promising moment in *Concept of Anxiety*—that richly textured anthropological account of history that emerged from Haufniensis' insight about internal coherence of the individual and the race—equipped with: (1) a more deeply biblical sense of Christian hope as described above, which rereads the Genesis account of the primal state and original sin—not only in light of the Atonement, but also in light of the profoundly communal eschatological hope we have in Christ, described in the New Testament as the marriage feast of the Lamb; and (2) a more theologically sound sense of the notion of "person" which remains open to the temporality-raising possibilities suggested in Christ's *personal* union of divinity and

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[22]Kierkegaard explicitly draws the connection between worship and human selfhood as an inverse reflection of the prototypical divine personhood in the discourse "How Glorious It Is to Be a Human Being": "The human being and God do not resemble each other directly but inversely; only when God has infinitely become the eternal and omnipresent object of worship and the human being always a worshiper, only then do they resemble each other" (*SKS* 8, 290 / *UDVS*, 193). Cf. George Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the Theology of the Nineteenth Century: The Paradox and the 'Point of Contact'* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 113: Commenting on Kierkegaard's observation that the individual human's imaging of God is no more a property of the human than the image of a human face is the property of a mirror in which it appears, Pattison notes "This is because the God-relationship is not an event in the visible world but in the spiritual dimension of inwardness." But this does not go quite as far as Kierkegaard, who describes genuine worship, and thus genuine selfhood, occurring not in some sort of inwardness-in-temporality, but only in the transfiguration of death, when God is the sole Other for the pure human spirit.

humanity in his a single, theanthropic life—a life which we are called to share as the body of Christ, the *sanctorum communio*?[23]

Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology has much to offer. But only by identifying its deficiencies—and precisely locating the *sources* of those deficiencies—can we properly appreciate any positive offerings. In addition to providing a (deeply critical) reconstruction of Kierkegaard's Christological anthropology, I hope I have also suggested a promising starting point for re-appropriating his best insights. My sense is that by conditioning the discussion in the light of both eschatological hope and the much more apophatic notion of personhood implied by Trinitarian and Christological theology, we would find new promise in Kierkegaard's anthropological insights. I especially see promise in his understanding of the spirit/self not as a discrete "something" but as an emergent relational quality that expresses the body-soul synthesis within a dynamic context of theo-anthropological relationality called *history*. Furthermore, I believe such a re-appropriation would not require jettisoning Kierkegaard's understanding of a Christian dialectic of existence in relation to Christ, nor would we have to put aside his emphases on self-examination, "dying to," or *imitatio Christi*. Rather, it would allow us to reconfigure those insights scripturally and dogmatically, in a way that could very well heighten their significance for Christian spirituality and ethics. I further believe that Kierkegaard's refusal to synthesize temporality and eternity remains utterly vital—indeed, it mirrors the Chalcedonian *definitio fidei* in refusing to combine divinity and humanity in a *tertium quid*. In any case, softening the infinite qualitative difference at the heart of his theological

[23]This raises an important nuance: I am not suggesting that an exclusive relation with God, characterized as self-forgetful worship, would be insufficient to constitute a human self of some sort. It certainly seems possible and the notion seems profoundly right and beautiful at some level. Rather, I am criticizing this Kierkegaardian position on the basis of Scripture's insistence that God wills to draw humans into this relationship of worship *by* incorporating many individuals into the communion of the body of Christ, a communion which extends beyond death and in fact finds perfection in the next life. In many ways, Kierkegaard's understanding of Christian hope seems to be a malformation of the Beatific Vision, taking it to be exclusive rather than inclusive of sociality and temporality. See Paul O'Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope: An Introduction to Eschatology* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 174ff.

project would do nothing to answer my criticisms. Rather, by re-situating the existential challenges posed by the infinite interval between eternity and temporality within the very person of Christ (along with a more scriptural and Christological understanding of the eschaton), I believe it will be possible to open up promising avenues for Kierkegaard to speak more Christianly about temporality, sociality, ecclesiology, ethics, and hope.

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