Dialectical Freedom as Found in Soren Kierkegaard's Religious Works

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DIALECTICAL FREEDOM AS FOUND
IN SØREN KIERKEGAARD'S
RELIGIOUS WORKS

by

Frank J. Granzelger, S.J.

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
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Master of Arts

June
1959
I pray first for the forgiveness of my sins; that everything may be forgiven me. Next I pray that I may be free from despair at the hour of death. And then too I pray for something I dearly want, namely that I may know a little beforehand when death is coming.

Søren Kierkegaard
LIFE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter | Page
---|---
**INTRODUCTION** | |
A. Freedom - a modern theme | 1
   1. The double threat against freedom | 1
   2. Freedom and existentialism | 2
   3. Freedom and theology | 2
   4. Kierkegaard - the root of the freedom theme | 3
B. The riddle of life - S.K.'s concern with freedom | 3
C. Secondary sources | 5
D. S.K.'s philosophy outlined | 9
   1. The aesthetical sphere | 9
   2. The ethical sphere | 6
   3. The religious sphere | 7
E. Method of the thesis | 7
   1. The importance of *Sickness unto Death* | 7
   2. The use of S.K.'s religious works | 7
   3. The problem of pseudonyms | 8
F. A sketch of S.K.'s life | 9

I. MAN AND HIS SELF | 14
A. S.K. and *Sickness unto Death* | 14
B. Contents of *Sickness unto Death* | 16
C. Despair is a sickness in the self | 17
   1. Definition of the self | 17
   2. The original relation | 18
   3. Becoming, the second relation | 20
   4. Infinitization | 21
   5. Actualization | 22
   6. A final aspect | 23
   7. Freedom is not free choice | 25
D. Freedom and despair | 27
   1. Man is responsible for freedom | 28
   2. Possibility of despair | 28
   3. Despair is not inherent in man | 29
   4. Despair and eternity | 30
E. Summary | 31

II. THE FORMS OF DESPAIR | 33
### III. INFINITIZATION: THE FIRST MOMENT IN DIALECTICAL FREEDOM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Purpose of this chapter</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. The phenomenological self</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Reflective expressions</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. An expression of love</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. An expression of pain</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. An expression of hope</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. The danger of reflection</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Despair is sin</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### IV. ACTUALIZATION: THE SECOND MOMENT IN DIALECTICAL FREEDOM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Necessity, possibility, and act</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Value of actualization</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Difficulty of understanding actualization</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Faith and good works</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. S.K. vs. Luther</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Actualization is belief</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Faith defined</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Faith identified with good works</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Faith, an act of the will</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Intensity of Choice</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Baptism of the will</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. S.K.'s stress on intensity</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Dialectical freedom</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. An apparent disagreement</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. S.K.'s method of knowing man</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Freedom in the <em>Works of Love</em></td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### V. FREEDOM AND GOVERNANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. The problem</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Freedom is a major theme for the intellectuals of this post-modern age. No doubt the main cause of this springs from contemporary attacks against freedom. The chains and fetters of Communism threaten to bind man's external freedom. What is worse, the invisible hand of materialism threatens to squeeze the very life from man's internal freedom. This double threat—and in many instances, what was once a threat is now an actuality—has not crept into our lives unnoticed. The men who today are thinking our thoughts for tomorrow, are doing so in terms of freedom. When we first read what they have to say, it is somewhat bewildering, for they have evolved freedom from a liberum arbitrium to a dynamic process of becoming. Becoming what? Becoming actually the full human person which lies within the potential of each individual.

The twentieth century has thus learned to view freedom as an evolution of the human personality. This is particularly true of

1This is not to say that freedom as becoming is a new concept for philosophers. Berdyaev points out that St. Augustine taught that there are two freedoms, libertas minor and libertas maior. "The lesser freedom was the beginning, freedom to choose the good, which supposes the possibility of sin; the greater freedom was the ending, freedom in God, in the bosom of good." cf. Nicholas Berdyaev, Dostojevsky, tr. Donald Attwater (New York, 1934), p. 68. We mean to stress here the present day emphasis on this concept and its development in modern thought.
the European mind as is evidenced by the philosophical literature produced on the Continent during the past seventy years. Moreover, the French-German school of existentialism is the hard core of this freedom-theme. One need only list the names of Gabriel Marcel, Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, and Carl Jaspers to see the truth of this statement. However much these authors may differ in other respects, they are at one in their agreement that freedom is the evolution of a human personality. This theme is, if we may use the phrase, of the essence of existentialism. And as existentialism is a child of two world wars, so freedom, or the lack thereof, is a proper feature of the twentieth century. Freedom was so common a possession that men took it for granted until their hold on it became less secure. Nationalism and industrialism, for all their worth, presented the occasion for this disintegration of man's soul. Existentialism, especially in its freedom theme, became both an expression of and reaction against this disintegration.

This problem of freedom did not arise from abstract speculation, nor did it end there. Practical implications drew it out of the realm of philosophy into that of theology. Consequently, these

2It may be asked why this freedom-theme is more proper to the European mind than to the American. A plausible explanation was advanced by Guido de Ruggiero in his short work on existentialism. There he explained that the destruction of two world wars had bowed Europe to the verge of disintegration of soul. In the loss of their respect for the human person, Europeans lost their freedom. By escaping these scars of war, America also escaped what Ruggiero refers to as the pessimism of existentialism. Consequently, freedom and other existentialistic themes are conspicuously absent from America. Cf. Guido de Ruggiero, Existentialism (New York, 1948).
same thoughts on freedom are contained in the works of such a spiritual writer as Romano Guardini. He writes: "God's power is love. God's will is love. By directing His love toward man, God enables man to become what he essentially was meant to be—a free person. The more actually a man is led by God's love, the more fully he realizes his true self; the more immediately a man's acts spring from love, the more completely they become his own."\(^3\) This again is an interpretation of freedom in terms of becoming one's self.

No one can doubt that the problem of freedom is contemporaneous. At the same time, however, it must not be said that the seeds of this problem were first planted in the soil of the twentieth century. The roots of this emphasis on and development of freedom as becoming reach back to the first half of the eighteen hundreds. These ideas on freedom were then formulated for the first time by the philosopher who is today referred to as the father of existentialism, Søren Aabye Kierkegaard.

The Riddle of Life

"Life has interested me most in virtue of reason and freedom, and to elucidate and solve the riddle of life has always been my desire."\(^4\) Søren Kierkegaard penned this entry into his journal

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\(^{4}\) Søren Kierkegaard, The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard, ed. and
when he was twenty-two years old. For the next twenty years, until his early death in 1855, this "melancholy Dane" devoted himself to the intellectual and moral task of probing into this problem of life, the riddle of freedom.

This self-appointed task led Kierkegaard simultaneously through the triple career of theologian, psychologist and philosopher. His deep, sensitive nature enabled him fully to assimilate each of these elements, and his unusual intellectual acumen managed to produce a brilliant reflection of all three as one. Practically everything he wrote is at once theological, metaphysical, and psychological. His concern was not so much to explain life as we understand it, but rather to explain life as we live it. To leave in writing a mirror of Christian life! This was the achievement that S.K. ambitioned, the vocation to which he felt called; and when he died at the age of forty-two, he had approached amazingly near to this ideal.

Kierkegaard believed that freedom plays a major role in the life of a true Christian. The purpose of this thesis will be to determine the exact nature of dialectical freedom and the place it occupies in S.K.'s religious thought. The reason for calling this freedom "dialectical" will become apparent in the following chapters.

Before concluding this introduction, we must first (1) indi-
cate the extent to which freedom has been treated in Kierkegaardian literature; (2) briefly outline S.K.'s philosophy, the better to isolate our problem of freedom; (3) present the method to be employed in this thesis; (4) give a sketch of Kierkegaard's life.

Secondary Sources

Although a great deal of Kierkegaardian scholarship has appeared in the past twenty years, little of it has been devoted to the precise topic of freedom. By far, most of this literature treats the general scheme of S.K.'s philosophy, and since S.K. wrote sparingly of freedom in his major philosophical works, Philosophical Fragments and Concluding Unscientific Postscript, most treatments reflect a bare minimum on this topic. In fact, even those authors who do mention freedom explicitly, such as Wyschogrod, Croxall, and Collins, do so mainly on the strength of certain passages in the Fragments. These passages reveal that Kierkegaardian freedom is dialectical, but they do not indicate the nature of this dialectic. Regis Jolivet has published a short but excellent article on this topic in which he treats the two questions of the possibility of finite freedom and the exercise of this freedom. He clearly distinguishes between physical freedom and dialectical freedom, but he explains the latter mainly through negation and so fails to reveal adequately its positive

The limits of this thesis do not extend beyond the problem of freedom in Kierkegaard, but since this is but a part of a larger scheme, it may help first to outline the structure of his philosophy.

Life, according to S.K., is divided into three stages: the aesthetical, ethical, and religious. Between any two stages yawns a chasm that cannot be bridged by reason, but only by a personal leap. Briefly, the aesthetical life is an existence devoted to the delights of beauty and pleasure. The aesthete is inbred, suspicious, and reserved. He lacks freedom of choice and is determined by his appetite for hedonism and materialism. Unless this individual eventually leaps to the ethical sphere, his life becomes one of melancholy and despair, for the moment of pleasure is transitory and cannot be grasped with finality. The ethical life, on the other hand, breaks the bonds of determinism. The ethical man absolutely chooses himself and in this choice finds freedom. It is his characteristic to be open and communicative to

6 The chief sources for an understanding of the aesthetical sphere are the comments of Judge William, the ethicist in Either/Or, II; the comments of Frater Taciturnus in the third part of Stages on Life's Way; and the Postscript. The ethical stage is best explained in Either/Or, II, and in "Various Observations about Marriage" in the Stages. Fear and Trembling is the best presentation of Kierkegaard's religious stage.
his fellow man. Since he is free, the choice of good or evil enters his life. The ethical man chooses good by expressing the universal action of men. In this, Kierkegaard has merely adopted the categorical imperative of Kant into his own thought. This ethical sphere, however, is basically unstable, for if he chooses evil, man drags himself back to the aesthetical stage, and should he choose good, he is eventually faced with a choice that is not universal but subjectively personal, and to make this choice he must leap to the sphere of religion.

Method of Thesis

The above outline of S.K.'s philosophy forms the background for our study of Kierkegaardian freedom. The sources for this study will be mainly S.K.'s own works, but not all of them. The most important as well as the most difficult element in this problem is the proper assessment of freedom within the dialectical process of Kierkegaard's psychology of man. Consequently, the fundamental ideas about freedom will be taken from Kierkegaard's psychological work, Sickness Unto Death. Nowhere else does Kierkegaard penetrate so deeply into the psychology of freedom in

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7As has been mentioned above, there is very little secondary source material to be found on this topic of dialectical freedom. Kierkegaardian scholarship is yet young, and has thus far confined itself to S.K.'s more prominent works. Any treatment given to Sickness unto Death and his religious works is scarce. Consequently, references to secondary sources in this thesis will be minimal.
terms of the constituents of being as he does in this masterpiece of personal psychology. This book explains more clearly what S.K. understood by human freedom than his strictly philosophical works, Fragments and the Postscript.

After presenting this structure of freedom, we will then be in a position to see how his religious works confirmed and amplified what S.K. had previously written in Sickness unto Death. This confirmation and amplification will be drawn from his religious writings rather than from his aesthetical in order to avoid the problem of pseudonyms in his authorship. Kierkegaard felt that his vocation as an author had been given him by God. He felt a Divine calling to lead his contemporaries back to true Christianity by means of the written word. However he also knew the whims and moods of men well enough to realize that he must first approach his reading public in a modified manner. When dealing with an aesthete, "one does not begin thus: I am a Christian; you are not a Christian. Nor does one begin thus: It is Christianity I am proclaiming; and you are living in purely aesthetic categories. No, one begins thus: Let us talk about aesthetics." In order to adapt himself to this approach, Kierkegaard was forced to write in a manner contrary to his personal convictions. The thoughts of Johannes the Seducer or even those of Judge William, the ethical author, are not necessarily the thoughts of Kierkegaard. To solve

this difficulty, S.K. published his aesthetical works pseudonymously.

Because of the uncertainty involved in attaching S.K.'s own thought from that of his pseudonymous authors, we will restrict our treatment to the publications which Kierkegaard allowed to come out under his own name. For the most part, this includes all the works published after Easter, 1848. Sickness unto Death is the first of these, while the others comprise the majority of his religious works. There will be a few references to one or other of the aesthetical works, but only with regard to notions which are also verifiable in the religious works, and therefore personal to Kierkegaard. Some use will also be made of his major philosophical treatise, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, also pseudonymous, but at the time of its publication, S.K. made it quite clear to the public that he was personally responsible for its authorship.

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9 Sickness unto Death is itself a pseudonymous work. However, as Dr. Lowrie points out, Kierkegaard did not intend it to be so in the same sense as his aesthetical writings. "This pseudonym was adopted merely to relieve his own fine feeling of propriety. It must be understood also that this form of pseudonymity was totally different from that which hitherto he had used. In the case of the other pseudonymous works S.K. was scrupulous to make the text agree with the character he ascribed to the pseudonym. Hence he was justified in affirming that not a word uttered by his pseudonyms could properly be referred to him as an expression of his personal view. There is nothing of the sort here, for these later works were the sincerest expression of his own belief, and he had expected to publish them under his own name. The pseudonym was an afterthought." Søren Kierkegaard, The Sickness unto Death, tr. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, 1944), pp. xvii-xviii.

His Life

There are few philosophers whose personal history is so integral to their thought as is the dramatic existence of Søren Kierkegaard.

Søren Aabye (1813 - 1855) was the last of seven children born to Michael Kierkegaard, the man destined to be the greatest single influence in the life of this future philosopher/theologian. As a youth, Søren was a constant companion to his father. The two would often pace to and fro in the confines of their living room while the father vividly described the streets of Paris or London, or even Copenhagen. The quick imagination of young Søren rapidly developed to match that of his father's. Moreover, his intellectual powers of concentration and debate responded to the stimulation of his father's quick jibes and penetrating thought. These imaginative excursions left their impress on S.K.'s personality. Later on, he was to place great stress upon the imagination as a key to understanding the psychology of man. What is more, this solitude with his father intensified a natural introversion. Søren became highly sensitive, and throughout his life always reacted violently to the least stimulus.

Above all, Søren's early education was religious, puritanically religious. He learned to know his Creator not as a God of love but as a God of wrath. All this early formation took place under the careful guidance of his father. Then this continuity of life suddenly collapsed in his twenty-first year when his father re-
vealed to him the reason for his intense religious training. The training had been an attempt on his father's part to repair his own sinful break from God. One day, years earlier, Michael Kierkegaard, mentally sickened by the squalor and contemptability of his life, had raised his fist against heaven and blasphemed his God. Strangely enough, his material security in life increased almost immediately. Later, while his first wife was still living, Michael had lived in sin with the woman who was to be the mother of his seven children. He felt that God, angered by this twofold offense, had decided to heap punishment upon his family. It was an attempt to save his youngest and favorite son from this curse that accounted for this puritanical upbringing.

This knowledge of his father's guilt cracked the integrity of Søren's personality. He turned from his father and from the puritanism of his father's teaching. Several years passed before this gap was breached by Søren's sympathetic understanding of his father's sins in the light of his own. Meanwhile, he had survived the critical point of his own existence, a strange love-affair with a young girl, Regine Olsen. In 1840, Kierkegaard, then twenty-eight, became engaged to the eighteen year old Regine. They were deeply in love, but the over-wrought, highly sensitive Kierkegaard became convinced that in marriage his own wickedness would destroy the goodness of his wife. During the final two months of this engagement, Kierkegaard experienced the conflict of existence as he tried to get Regine to break off from him. Eventually, he was
forced to make the break himself. Looking back, he considered this the turning point in his life, and the bulk of his writings are devoted to an explanation of the final two months of his engagement. Regine, he claimed, made him a poet, and certainly a poetic strain is predominant throughout his entire authorship.

After this unusual experience with Regine, Kierkegaard turned author. During this period of his life, one event in particular deserves mention here. That is his polemical conflict with a Copenhagen newspaper, the "Corsair". Without going into detail, suffice it to say that S.K. found himself held up for public scorn and ridicule week after week during this journalistic dispute. All this left a deep impression upon Kierkegaard. The jeers and laughter which he endured, even from children playing in the streets, penetrated into the depths of his sensibility. From his engagement with Regine he had learned what it means to be compelled to reject what you love. From his conflict with the "Corsair," he learned what it means to be rejected by love, to be lonely, to be an outcast. No doubt this latter event was foremost in his memory when he later wrote: "The highest thing is: while being absolutely heterogeneous with the world by serving God alone, to remain in the world and in the midst of reality, before the eyes of all--for then persecution is unavoidable."11 For Kierkegaard, this was

Christian piety: to renounce everything in order to serve God alone—and then to have to suffer for it, to do good and have to suffer for it.

These are the major elements in Kierkegaard's life which every reader must keep in mind as he turns the pages written by this personalist. The clarity of his life illuminates the difficulty, and at times obscurity, of his composition. The pathos of his personal life became the heart of his authorship. Much of this will be lost because of the analytic nature of the chapters which follow, but the true flavor of Kierkegaard's personalism will always be available for the reader in his works as he wrote them.
On Wednesday, April 19, 1848, Kierkegaard wrote: "My whole being is changed. My reserve and self-isolation is broken—I must speak. Lord give thy grace." This cry emerged from the depths of his harassed soul as it struggled for self-emancipation.

Eight years had passed since he had broken his engagement to Regine and he was still engulfed in the struggle highlighted by that separation. The fight to free himself from aesthetical inwardness was a fight against elements deeply embedded in his nature.

That S.K. was aware of Regine's role as antagonist in this drama is evident from what he further wrote on that same Wednesday in 1848: "Alas, she could not break the silence of my melancholy. That I loved her—nothing is more certain—and thus my melancholy received enough to feed upon, oh, it received a terrible addition. It is essentially owing to her, to my melancholy and to my money that I became an author. Now, with God's help, I shall be myself, I believe that Christ will help me to be victorious over my

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1The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard, p. 235.
melancholy.2 Although this appears to be a climax in Kierkegaard's wrestling with freedom, it was not. On the contrary, it was only an intensification of the struggle. Four days later, on Easter Monday, he again put his pen to paper, but this time to write: "No, no, my self-isolation cannot be broken, at least not now. The thought of breaking it occupies me so much, and at all times, that it only becomes more and more firmly embedded."3

This was S.K.'s mental state at the time he was working on Sickness unto Death, a psychological study of despair and freedom. It is surprising that his intense self-introspection of this period could produce such an impersonal, scientific treatise. Kierkegaard himself recognized this characteristic of his work, and considered it a drawback. He would have preferred it to be rhetorical, stirring, and moving, as is suggested by the lyrical title.4 On the contrary, this treatment of involved dialectics is much more rigid than personal.

To some extent, this aloofness of style can be accounted for by the fact that Kierkegaard was giving expression to a truth which he felt transcended his own being. He had not yet attained the freedom of spirit of which he was writing; in his own eyes, he was not yet a true Christian. Consequently, when this work was

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2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., pp. 235-236.
published one year later, he added to his journal:

Sickness unto Death appears now but under a pseudonym, with me as editor. It is described as 'for edification'—that is more than my category, the poetical category, 'devotional'.

Like the river Guadalquivir... which at one point plunges underground, so there is a stretch (the devotional) which bears my name. There is something lower (the aesthetic), which is pseudonymous, and something higher, which also is pseudonymous because my personality does not correspond to it.

The pseudonym is called Johannes Anti-Climacus in contrast to Johannes Climacus who said he was not a Christian. Anti-Climacus is the opposite extreme, being a Christian in an extraordinary degree—whereas I manage only to be quite a simple Christian.5

The Sickness unto Death

Sickness unto Death is divided into two parts. The first part is entitled, "The Sickness unto Death Is Despair"; the second, "Despair Is Sin". This thesis concerns itself more properly with the first part, since it is here that Kierkegaard evolves dialectical freedom in a psychological context. Moreover, the second part is properly theological, and involves concepts which transcend the limits of this thesis.

The first part, "The Sickness unto Death Is Despair," is itself split into three sections: (I) "That Despair Is This Sickness"; (II) "The Universality of This Sickness"; (III) "The Forms of This Sickness, i.e. of Despair".

In this first chapter of the thesis, we will merely attempt to understand what Kierkegaard wrote in section I, "That Despair

5Ibid., p. 319.
Is This Sickness". At first blush, it may appear odd to initiate a discussion of dialectical freedom by talking about despair, but if we put on the mind of Kierkegaard, this becomes a logical point of departure. "Freedom" is in no way an isolated term, but immediately connotes a person or self who possesses freedom. In fact, as we shall see later in this chapter, the self is freedom. Consequently, in order to appreciate dialectical freedom, we must first understand the psychological make-up of the self, and that is the purpose of this chapter.

Despair is a sickness in the self, and in order to explain in section I the triple form which this sickness may assume, Kierkegaard is therefore obliged to base his explanation on his psychology of the self. So a study of this section ought to reward us with a knowledge of man and his self.

Despair Is a Sickness in the Self

What is man? Man is spirit, and the spirit is the self. Should we ask why this spirit is the self, Kierkegaard would answer: Because the self is a relation which relates itself to its own self, and that is a task proper to spirit. "The self is a relation which relates itself to its own self." In order to understand this statement in its totality, let us first seek the meaning of its parts. There are two relations involved in this defini-

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6Sickness unto Death, p. 17.
tion of the self. There is an original relation which, by relating itself to its own self, produces a second relation. First of all, what is the nature of the original relation?

A relation involves duality, and is had only when two factors stand in relation to each other. Do we find such a relation when we observe man? Man is not a simple unit; in himself he is a synthesis. He is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity. The ultimate constitution of man is relational, for man is a synthesis.

\[\text{Ibid.}\]

Kierkegaard enumerates the elements of this synthesis, but does not bother to solidify his enumeration with argument. In this we may see an instance of his contempt for the formal philosophy of his day. He neither considered himself to be a philosopher nor wished others to think of him as such. In truth, insofar as he used theological suppositions as a basis on which he developed his thought, his theology was much more than a negative norm. To that extent, he was correct to assert that his works embrace much more than a philosophical category.

However, what S.K. says here about the factors in man's synthesis may still be braced with philosophical argument. As man is ordered to the knowing of God as his final cause, he contains within himself a possible possession of the infinite. At the same time, his creaturehood is a constant reminder of his finite nature. Since both these factors play an essential part in man's being, they are by nature related to each other in him. Thus, man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite.

A further study of man's nature reveals both temporal and eternal aspects. As a material being, man is essentially composite, and therefore his nature is of itself corruptible. This endows man with a temporal aspect since corruption can only take place through motion, and time is merely the measure of motion. On the other hand, man finds himself participating the eternal in that his simple and independent spirit can in no way be corrupted. Therefore, man in his spirit is immortal. This is why Kierkegaard is able to say that man is a synthesis of the temporal and eternal.

A similar, but more involved, demonstration could be presented for man as a synthesis of freedom and necessity.
A synthesis is a relation between two factors. This synthesis in man is the original relation we are seeking to understand. Man has nothing to say about this relation, for it derives from the fact that he is composed of body and soul, and he has nothing to say about the fact that he is body and soul. Because man has a soul, he is, for example, infinite and eternal. Because he has a body, he is finite and temporal. In this relation, the relation is the third term as a negative unity, and the two relate themselves to the relation, and in the relation to the relation. That is, man, under the aspect of this original synthesis, is neither body nor soul, but is a third term as a negative unity. Body and soul relate themselves to man, and they accomplish this relation in man himself. The same may be said for any one synthesis of the three mentioned above. For instance, freedom and necessity relate themselves to man in man, and man is a synthesis between these two factors. Such a synthesis is a negative unity, for although there exists a third term, there is no positive addition of being. In creation, man is already body and soul, and although he is neither the one nor the other, he can not exist without the contemporaneous existence of each. Therefore, this synthetic, negative unity does not give man a further aspect of being. Regarded as such, man is not yet a self. A self is a relation which relates itself to itself, and so far we have considered only the original relation.

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9 Sickness unto Death, p. 17.
10 Ibid.
Man is eternal, but he is created in time; man is infinite, but in creation he finds himself to be finite; man can become a free man, but by an initial necessity he is man. Man looks at his original synthesis and discovers that he possesses finite, temporal and necessary aspects. Because he is finite, he is an imperfect being. Yet, God has placed him in time, and therefore his finite, imperfect being is capable of change. Through change, man can override his necessary elements, and by a gradual process come to himself in freedom.

Time is the period of becoming, and so it follows that in creation God does not constitute a self, but a being which is to become itself. God does not do the becoming for man, at least not directly. He merely synthesizes man into existence with the possibility of becoming a self. Man is a being ordered and capable of becoming his self. But what does this becoming entail? How does man go about becoming himself? This is the process by which the original synthesis relates itself to its own self, and this relation is then the positive third term; this is the self.11

The original synthesis is a composite of body and soul, and it is the spiritual nature of the soul which gives man the power to relate himself to his own self. This spiritual power is itself a dialectic of intellect and will, both of which play a part in the activity by which man relates himself to his self. Since

11Ibid., pp. 17-18.
man in his spirit resembles the infinite, he possesses a power whereby he can infinitely understand himself, or see himself in the fulness of his being as God desires him to be. This power is the imagination as it works through intellect, feeling, and will. The imagination is the faculty instar omnium which transparently reveals to a man the synthesis of his being. He sees himself as a unity of time and eternity, infinity and finitude, freedom and necessity. Kierkegaard calls this reflective activity of the imagination the process of infinitizing man's self, for it is the recognition of himself according to his infinite possibilities. Note that this is not merely recognition of possibilities, but rather recognition of self according to possibility. Imagination enables man to see himself as a finite being just as much as infinite. He objectively sees and appreciates himself as God made him. Until a man possesses this objective knowledge of his original synthesis, he cannot hope to relate correctly this synthesis to his own self. Obtaining this knowledge is the first step in the dialectical process whereby a relation relates itself to its own self, and this step is called infinitization.

12 Ibid., pp. 45-46. The importance of the imagination's relation to these three powers will be treated in the following chapter when we consider the despair of infinitude.

13 Ibid., p. 46.

14 "Infinitization" is an important notion for S.K. Its negative implications will be noted in the following chapter under the despairs of infinitude and finitude; its positive values will take up the whole of chapter III.
The second step by which a relation relates itself to its own self is the actual relating, or the relation, as a third term, in actualization. If the first step was called "infinitization," and was the third term in the dialectic of infinitude and finitude, we may call this second step "actualization," and it is the third term in the dialectic of possibility and necessity.¹⁵ This relation is the positive third term when the relation relates itself to itself, and this positive third term is the self.¹⁶ The self is freedom.¹⁷ By becoming himself, man becomes free. Let us examine more carefully, for a moment, this dialectic between possibility and necessity.

Although man understands his being through infinitization, he is not pure spirit, and consequently his existence is not one of pure imaginative reflection. As man, he is physically active, and it is through action that he strives to realize the infinite possibilities reflected in his imagination. Commonly understood, this is the drive in man to attain his ideals, and for Kierkegaard, this would refer particularly to spiritual ideals. Here we have the counterpart to infinitizing. By an infinite return to himself, man actualizes his possibility in necessity.¹⁸ To a limited degree,

¹⁵Ibid., p. 43.
¹⁶Ibid., p. 18.
¹⁷Ibid., p. 43.
¹⁸Ibid., p. 21.
he becomes his ideal. Thus through the double dialectic of infi-
finitude/finitude and possibility/necessity, man becomes himself.
This is freedom. The self is freedom.

The essential note of this entire process is that man frees himself. God makes man free insofar as He enables him to become free by endowing him with a nature possessing imaginative pos-
sibility, and the will to choose the actualization of this pos-
sibility. God constitutes the original synthesis or relation of infinity and finitude, but it is the man himself who relates this relation to its self by finitely actualizing the infinite possibility which he imagines. He understands his infinite possible self, and relates his God-given synthesis to that possibility through his own activity. This dialectical element between possi-
bility and necessity is called "actualization". It is freedom. It is that in the relation which relates itself to its own self.

There is a final aspect to the true self which we have not yet considered, and we must do so now, for it is perhaps the most important element in Kierkegaard's understanding of freedom. A relation which relates itself to its own self must either have constituted itself or have been constituted by another. That is, either the original synthesis is responsible for its own unity, or else it is dependent for this unity on the power of another.

19"Actualization" will be treated negatively in chapter II under the despairs of possibility and necessity; its positive values embrace chapter IV.
20Sickness unto Death, p. 18.
Kierkegaard goes on to state that if the original synthesis is constituted by another, then its relation to itself as a third term is in turn a relation relating itself to that which constituted the whole relation. Let us not be sidetracked or confused by this abstract formulation in our effort to discover S.K.'s meaning here.

As we have already seen, man's original synthesis is a union of body and soul. For many obvious reasons, we know that man does not create this synthesis in himself by his own power. He is brought into existence by another, and that "other" is responsible for man's composite nature. The synthesis is constituted by God, and this fact effects important consequences as man lives his way into freedom.

Freedom is achieved through the dialectics of infinitization and actualization. Once man has understood the truth of what he is (infinitization), he can proceed to visualize his true possibilities, and then actualize this possibility by bringing it into necessity (actualization). A man does this by imaginatively projecting his self into an ideal state, and then striving in a concrete manner to actualize this ideal. If man had constituted his original synthesis by his own power, there would be no more than this to the becoming of freedom. But God's power is the constitutive power, and with this is added another dimension to freedom.

Freedom is the third, positive term between the terms body

\[21\text{Ibid.}\]
and soul, and the idealized self. Freedom is actualized possibility. In itself, it is related to the terms which compose it. But Kierkegaard states further that since the original relation is derived from God, freedom, or the self, is therefore itself a relation which relates itself to God. "The self cannot of itself attain and remain in equilibrium and rest by itself, but only by relating itself to that Power which constituted the whole relation. The free man stands in conscious relationship to God, seeing himself as a being derived from God and commanded to approach God in freedom. It is only by doing so that man can become free.

This, then, is the formula which adequately describes the condition of the free self: by relating itself to its own self, and by willing to be itself, the self is grounded transparently in the Power which posited it.23

Before moving on to the relation between freedom and despair, it may be profitable to give a final clarification to these basic notions of Kierkegaard's dialectical freedom. This freedom of which we have been speaking is totally different from the ordinary meaning of the term "freedom". Obviously, we have not been concerned here with freedom of choice, the ability to determine our own course of action. Dialectical freedom is much more deeply rooted in man's essential make-up. In his Journals, Kierkegaard

22Ibid.
23Ibid., p. 19.
deplores the fact that so many people are blinded by their own amorous obsession with freedom of choice:

The inconceivable marvel of the omnipotence of love is that God can really grant so much to man, that almost like a lover he can say of himself: 'will you have me or not,' and so wait one second for the answer.

But alas, man is not so purely spirit. It seems to him that since the choice is left to him he can take time and first of all think the matter over seriously. What a miserable anti-climax. 'Seriousness' simply means to choose God at once and 'first'. In that way man is left juggling with a phantom: freedom of choice—with the question whether he does or does not possess it, etc. And it even becomes scientific. He does not notice that he has thus suffered the loss of his freedom. For a time perhaps he delights in the thought of freedom until it changes again, and he loses his freedom of choice. He confuses everything by his faulty tactics. By directing his mind towards 'freedom of choice' instead of choosing he loses both freedom and freedom of choice. Nor can he ever recover it by the use of thought alone. If he is to recover his freedom it can only be through an intensified 'fear and trembling' brought forth by the thought of having lost it. 24

For our present purpose, let us draw two major thoughts from the above passage. The first is that Kierkegaard clearly distinguishes here between freedom and freedom of choice. "By directing his mind toward 'freedom of choice' instead of choosing he loses both freedom and freedom of choice." The second important notion is that freedom can only be attained through choice, and in particular, it must ultimately be the choice of God.

Dialectical freedom may therefore be described in the following manner. Man is created as a very imperfect being, but because of the gift of time, he is able gradually to perfect himself.

However, man's perfection does not consist in any haphazard development of his faculties. Man's final end is his possession of God in the Beatific Vision. Therefore, he must use his faculties in such a way as to attain this goal. Whatever action leads him to God is good; whatever withdraws him from his purpose is evil. By examining himself, man first comes to a knowledge of what he truly is, and then gains an understanding of what he is able to be: a man of good life, standing before God in faith, hope, and love. This is his ideal self, the self he must achieve. His perfection is the good life; the good life grows out of good deeds; good deeds, in turn, are grounded in choice, not in the possibility of choice but in actual choosing. Moreover, first and last, man must choose God. This is his perfection, and as man slowly and arduously becomes more perfect, he sheds his imperfection and limitation. He frees himself from whatever hinders his progress toward God. He wins freedom as he wins his self. By becoming his self, he becomes freedom. This is man's freedom; Kierkegaard's dialectical freedom.

Freedom and Despair

So far we have discussed how man gains freedom by becoming himself. He achieves this perfection through a dialectic of right relation. Right relation! This is the precise moment of crisis. Each relation of this labyrinthine dialectic must be construed according to right relation. Only then will the result be freedom. Should any disrelationship seep into this dialectic, then
man falls into despair, for despair is the disrelationship in a relation which relates itself to itself. 25

God so created man that he assumes responsibility for his own freedom. This gift of God to man is the loftiness of being spirit. It is a gift that only God can give. From finite power comes only dependence, and omnipotence alone can make something independent. Only God can create something out of nothing which can endure of itself, because only God can take Himself back infinitely from His gift. 26 The glory of man is his independence and his ability of using this power to achieve freedom before God.

Man, however, is finite. So, in the molding of his dialectical freedom, there is the possibility of disrelation. Man is liable to despair. S.K. points out that this is a unique situation. The very possibility of despair is an infinite advantage to man, for it is indicative of his spiritual nature. Were he not spirit, he could not despair. Therefore, the possibility of this sickness, despair, is man's advantage over the beast. 27 Ordinarily, if the possibility of a thing is an advantage, its actuality is even more so. For instance, such is the case with freedom. Not so with despair. The actuality of despair is man's greatest misfortune. "Infinite as is the advantage of the possibility, just so great is the

25 Sickness unto Death, p. 21.
27 Sickness unto Death, p. 20.
measure of the fall."\(^{28}\) To avoid this fall into the actuality of despair, a man must every moment annihilate the possibility of despair.\(^{29}\) The actuality of freedom is attained only when at each instant the possibility of despair is negated.

Not despair itself,\(^{30}\) but only the possibility of despair is inherent in the nature of man. In order for there to be despair inherent in man, a necessary disrelationship would have to exist in the original synthesis as it is derived from God. But man would not then be responsible for his freedom, since he is not responsible for the constitution of his own nature. If such were the case, despair "would be something that befell a man, something he suffered passively, like an illness into which a man falls, or like death which is the lot of all."\(^{31}\) S.K. states that this is not the case. Man, because of the nature of his derived synthesis, is a self-perfecting agent. If he falls into despair, therefore, he himself has made an eventuality what was merely possible in him.

Despair is an illness, but unlike other illnesses, it is not contracted at a moment with the continuance of the disease as a simple consequence of the fact that it had once been contracted.

\(^{28}\)Ibid.

\(^{29}\)Ibid., p. 21.

\(^{30}\)Ibid. (Lowrie's translation reads: "No, this thing of despairing is inherent in man...," but according to context, I believe that S.K. must have meant to say rather: "No, this thing of despairing is not inherent in man...")

\(^{31}\)Ibid.
Kierkegaard explains that every instant a man is in despair, he is contracting despair. His reason is that despair is not an effect of the disrelationship; rather, it is the disrelation itself. But the disrelation results from the manner in which the relation relates itself to its own self. Since a man can no more avoid the relation to his self than he can avoid himself (which is the same thing), it follows that he is continually choosing his disrelationship, and therefore continually contracting despair.

Despair is the sickness unto death, and, as S.K. describes this sickness, death is in this instance an eternal death. Death is not the last, but it is continually the last; the last state continues into eternity. Whether man is in despair by not willing to be himself or by willing to be himself (i.e. other than his true self), he cannot tear his self away from the Power which constituted it. The self must stand eternally before God, and the final despair of the self is the despair at not being able to consume it self. The torment and death consist precisely in not being able to die. "To have a self, to be a self, is the greatest concession made to man, but at the same time it is eternity's demand upon him.

32 Ibid., p. 23.
33 Ibid., pp. 24-31.
34 Ibid., p. 29.
36 Ibid., p. 31.
Summary

In this chapter we have attempted to open up to our understanding the deeper notions of Kierkegaard's dialectical freedom. Since S.K. identifies freedom with the self, we began by seeking a knowledge of Kierkegaardian psychology. What is man and what is his self? We found this answer in S.K.'s treatment of the nature of despair, for despair is a disproportion in the self. To explain the forms of despair, Kierkegaard developed a psychology. He wrote that man is a relation which relates itself to itself, and this relation which is a third term as a positive unity is the self. This is freedom. Man achieves this freedom through a double dialectic of infinitization and actualization. S.K.'s formula for the free self is this: by relating itself to its own self, and by willing to be itself, the self is grounded transparently in the Power which posited it. We saw that this is not the power of free choice, but freedom is man insofar as he becomes perfect, thus freeing himself from the limitations of imperfection.

The final section of this chapter revealed the relation between freedom and despair. If freedom is the correctly constituted self, despair is the disrelationship in a relation which relates itself to itself. Man is responsible for his own freedom, and therefore is the source of his own despair. Despair is man's greatest misfortune, and although it is not inherent in his nature, if he should die in despair, his despair will be eternal.

Since a correct understanding of despair is obviously impor-
tant for an appreciation of dialectical freedom, let us turn our
attention now to the different forms of despair, this sickness
unto death. Then we will be in a better position to analyze the
dialectics of infinitization and actualization.
CHAPTER II

THE FORMS OF DESPAIR

The study of philosophy and personal experience both show that we often do not adequately value a truth until we come face to face with its contrary. We best appreciate life in the confrontation of death; goodness assumes a higher value when we experience evil. To a great extent, the same is true of dialectical freedom. A deeper knowledge of despair, the contrary of freedom, ought to enrich our evaluation of the actualized self. The purpose of this chapter is to probe despair with a study of its various forms, and thereby in a negative way we will approach Kierkegaard's dialectical freedom.

As freedom is a dialectical achievement in a man's life, so despair is a dialectical failure in life. Both are movements in life. Both are existentialistic movements. In order to place the movement of despair (or of freedom) in an existential context, let us first examine man's life prior to this movement.

The Prelude to Despair

Life, according to S.K., is divided into three stages: the aesthetical, ethical, and religious. A man cannot cross the gap from the aesthetical to the ethical without leaping into the dia-
lectics of freedom. Since despair is the contrary of freedom, this "prelude to despair" will simply be a description of the aesthete before the ethical life first manifests itself to him.

Until the aesthete becomes conscious that an ethical life is possible for him, he has enjoyed a hedonistic pleasure-life. He has been unconscious of the factors of duty and responsibility in life, and consequently he has never determined his own actions from within himself. On the contrary, his only motivating force in life has been the beautiful and pleasurable which lie outside him, waiting to be drawn within. This man, says Kierkegaard, has missed the point of life. He is self-deceived, believing that he has conquered what he has not even faced. "In his fools conceit it is hidden from him how distressing his life is." The tragedy lies precisely in the aesthete's unawareness that he is slowly severing himself from eternal salvation, and because he is unaware of his situation, he cannot sorrow over it. His condition may be likened to a man stricken with a deadly cancerous growth who refuses to acknowledge that he is sick unto death. Only the fact of death itself forces him to admit his cancerous corruption, and then he must not only acknowledge that he was sick, but that now he is dead. What did he gain by avoiding the inconvenience of doctoring? Speaking of this, Kierkegaard writes, "That 'he has ceased to sorrow,' we shall not deny. But what advantage is this

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to him when his chance of salvation lies in his beginning in earnest to sorrow over himself!"\(^2\) Strictly speaking, such a man has not lost his freedom, because he never really possessed freedom. Like all men, he holds in his power the possibility of becoming free, but this he discards by remaining an aesthete.

However, it is impossible to traverse life totally unconscious of the higher values. At some time or other, the ethical sphere manifests itself to the aesthete. Man's essential nature as spirit makes this manifestation a necessity. As spirit, he is able to understand himself as a creature destined for a higher good than aesthetical pleasure. "There comes a moment in a man's life when his immediacy is, as it were, ripened and the spirit demands a higher form in which it will apprehend itself as spirit."\(^3\) We might say that this is man's nature calling upon him to express himself as subject and no longer as object. That is, he is not a mere, passive object as the irrational creatures around him. As subject, he must be the source of his own self-determination, rather than a recipient, passively determined by pleasurable objects around him. His essential dignity demands recognition; his person assumes the right of self-determination and will no longer meekly accept subordination to a life of hedonism.

\(^2\)Ibid.

This psychological state initiates the first crisis in man's existence. What does he experience when the spirit in him fights thus for supremacy? His first reaction is an attempt to unite his eternity of spirit of which he is now conscious, with the aesthetical life to which he has become so attached. Thus, he begins to long for an eternal grasp of the immediate satisfaction, but the immediacy of material pleasure is transitory and non-reiterative, whereas only the perdurance of spirit can be grasped eternally.

This is the experience of the man steeped in aesthetics. Again and again he is frustrated by the emptiness of his sense pleasures. His grasp at them only clutches an ephemeral vapor that will not prolong its stay. He is unable to reproduce a lost moment, and what was once a boyish pleasure-life becomes a staccato series of sense satisfactions threaded together by periods of frustration. The spirit in man is calling for a self-emancipation, and if this movement is periodically checked and forced back, a melancholic atmosphere settles over the aesthete. Metaphorically, melancholy is the spiritual nervous system in man that reports the first symptoms of a disorder, disproportion, or sickness in his being. It does not reveal the nature of the sickness, but merely indicates that something is wrong. As pain requires a doctor's examination to discover its cause, so melancholy demands self-introspection by

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
the afflicted subject. Actually, melancholy is caused by the frustration in a spirit which had been created to become itself in freedom. When this natural drive is continually thwarted by the obstacles of aesthetic passion, melancholy is the outcome. Whether at this point a man is acutely conscious of it or not, this is the first cloudy but definite knowledge he has of his real self. Melancholy truly tells a man that his destiny extends beyond the aesthetic category. If the man refuses to acknowledge his melancholy and strives to regain his unperturbed aesthetic state, then melancholy itself becomes despair. It is the despair of casting aside the possibility of freedom, of refusing to become himself. On the other hand, if the man is willing to admit to himself his melancholic state, his sickness unto death, he has taken the first step on the path toward freedom, for he has begun the dialectic of infinitization. At this point, man stands, as it were, before God on the threshold of becoming. He is called to freedom, and is liable to despair. We will consider now the possible forms of despair.

"The forms of despair," writes Kierkegaard, "must be discoverable abstractly by reflecting upon the factors which compose...

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On this point, James Collins writes: "The only sort of reflection which he [Kierkegaard] deemed capable of removing this state of unfreedom is moral and religious reflection, for it is only through this agency that a man can relate himself freely to a transcendental principle of existence." James Collins, The Mind of Kierkegaard (Chicago, 1953), p. 59.
Since the self becomes itself through the double dialectic of infinitude/finitude and possibility/necessity, there will be two pairs of possible despairs.

Despair Viewed under the Aspects of Finitude/Infinitude

A man becomes himself by choosing himself. Only his own personal choice can make him free. This choice is personal in a twofold manner insofar as man is both the agent and object of this choice. But a man cannot choose himself unless he previously knows what his self is. In order to come to this knowledge, he must go through the dialectic of finitude/infinitude. He must understand his original synthesis in correct proportion as it is derived from God. To lack awareness of finitude is to fall into the despair of infinitude. On the other hand, should a man misunderstand his infinitude, he falls prey to the despair of finitude. Let us examine the former despair first.

Kierkegaard tells us that the despair of infinitude is due to the lack of finitude. Any human existence that idealizes itself as sheer infinity is by that very fact in despair, for the factual element of finitude in man turns the imagination of his pure infinity into an absurdity. For man to imagine himself as the

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6Sickness unto Death, p. 43.
7Ibid., p. 45.
infinite is the limit; it is fantastical. 8

The sheer infinity of man is fantastical, and S.K. says a
fantasy is most closely related to imagination. In its turn,
imagination is related to feeling, knowledge, or will. 9 Therefore,
a man may have a fantastical feeling, or knowledge, or will. The
temper of a person's feeling, knowledge, or will in the last resort
depends upon the quality of his imagination. The original synthe-
sis is reflected in the mirror of imagination, and this reflection
is the self, or the possible self. Imagination is the reflection
of the process of infinitization. Therefore, Kierkegaard writes,
"The self is reflection, and imagination is reflection, it is the
counterfeit presentment of the self, which is the possibility of
the self." 10 The "Counterfeit presentment" is not the actualized
self, but merely the possible self as mirrored in imagination.
Since imagination works through feeling, knowledge, and will, the
despair of infinitude may take the fantastical form of any one of
these three.

A fantastic feeling volatilizes the self. It becomes an
abstract sentimentality "which is so inhuman that it does not apply
to any person, but inhumanly participates feelingly, so to speak,
in the fate of one or another abstraction, e.g. that of mankind in

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8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., p. 46.
This form of despair was not unknown during S.K.'s own lifetime. On the continent and in England, it was expressed in literature by men who identified themselves with nature. Such was Wordsworth. His counterparts in America were known as the transcendentalists who lost themselves in a world soul. Such was the poet Emerson. Through generalized sentimentality, man etherealized himself, and by so doing, he lost himself in fantastic feeling.

Fantastic knowledge is another form of the despair of infinitude. Kierkegaard claims that an intellectual progression in any field ought to be paralleled by an increasing self-knowledge. The more the self knows, the more it should know itself. If this parallel is broken, the person has squandered his knowledge. His intellectual powers run away from him, and fantasticaly take himself out of himself. The intellectual runs the risk of becoming enamoured of his unparalleled spiritual powers, and of no longer seeing himself as a sinner who must stand humbly before the eyes of God. He runs the risk of despair.

The will also can become fantastic. When it does so, the person wills the impossible for himself; he wills fantastic infinity. By restricting his will to the impossible, he cuts himself

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11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., p. 47.
13 Ibid.
off from the possible, which is himself. That is, he cuts himself off from himself. By making it impossible to become himself, this man makes it necessary to fall into despair. He stands in the present moment just as close to the impossible as he is to the possible; that is, infinitely distant from either.

As feeling, knowledge, or will becomes fantastic, so too does the self, and always with moral responsibility. For the self as spirit is responsible for the correct proportions within his being. The fantastic self flies further and further away from itself. Its relationship to God becomes a fantastic absurdity. S.K. puts these words into the mouth of such a man: "That a sparrow can live is comprehensible; it does not know anything about existing before God. But to know that one exists before God—and then not to go crazy or be brought to naught!" On the other hand, it is possible for a man so to lose himself, and not really notice the difference. He may live a "normal" life in society, and never let on that he is self-less. Any other loss, an arm, a wife, five dollars, is sure to be noticed, but not the loss of self.

Tragedy and paradox!

The second form of despair is that of finitude, and is due to
the lack of infinitude. Narrow-mindedness and meanness of spirit are the two characteristics of this despair, not in the sense in which they are usually understood, but in an ethical sense. This man has narrowed his mind, and thereby beheaded his spirit. He looks at his universe with colored glasses which filter out the realities of the spirit, and allow him to see merely the worldly, social life about him. This universe is crumpled into a crowd, and he now fits into his universe by fitting into the crowd. His actions are determined by the conventions of society, and he is content to measure out his life in coffee spoons. In this way, he loses himself, for he finds it too dangerous and venturesome to become himself. How much more easy to become an imitation of others, to become a number, a cipher in the crowd.

Naturally, this form of despair is never noticed by the world, for it is a fitting into the world. There is no contrast between self and society, and where there is nothing to be noticed, it is precisely nothing that will be noticed. Therefore, the world will never understand this to be despair, for it recognizes despair in anxiety, and where there is nothing, there can be no anxiety.

17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., p. 50.
19 Ibid., p. 51.
20 No doubt this form of despair will be prevalent in any age, and certainly it may be predicated very properly of modern man. "The post-modern age" has become a period in which men devote
This despair is a loss of self in society, and to that extent it is a failure to become the self. It requires a venturesome spirit to overcome the attraction of this despair when in the midst of a society whose major concerns are temporal and finite. To become a self is a venture, and yet the social mind says that shrewdness is not to venture, because one may lose. The self-minded man reasons differently, saying: "By not venturing, it is so dreadfully easy to lose that which it would be difficult to lose in even the most venturesome venture, and in any case never so easily, so completely as if it were nothing...one's self."21

The venture is a crisis in the struggle between freedom and despair when despair is that of finitude.

themselves to the conventions of society. They are snared in fashions. They are shackled by public opinion. Even their morality is formed by social conventions. A verification of all this may be found in the writings of many American psychologists. Not that they are bemoaning this "despair" into which modern man has slipped. On the contrary, for the most part they encourage this enculturation of man and consequent loss of self. For example, Dr. A.H. Maslow, professor of psychology at Brandeis University, writes in his book Motivation and Personality, that the term "Perfect Man" has taken on a new meaning in modern society. In the thirteenth century it denoted the spiritual man, in the sixteenth century it referred to the intellectual man, but today its only meaning is the psychologically healthy man. What is more, a man is psychologically healthy if he experiences no conflicts between himself and his social milieu. According to Kierkegaard, this is the loss of self in society. It is the despair of finitude. Man has sold his birthright for a mess of pottage; he has substituted social prestige for his Divine calling. This same attitude is also present in modern literature. T.S. Eliot, whom many refer to as the greatest literary commentator on our age, has expressed this social despair in his poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock."

21Sickness unto Death, p. 52.
Despair Viewed under the Aspects of Possibility/Necessity

We have just considered how the self is liable to despair in the process of infinitization. However, even if a man should correctly understand himself in the mirror of imagination, there still remains the possibility of despair in the process of actualization, as the relation relates itself to its own self. If a disrelationship occurs here, man falls into either the despair of possibility or that of necessity.

The despair of possibility is due to the lack of necessity. After infinitization, the self is just as necessary as it is possible, but possibility may outrun necessity. A man may never actualize his possible self by bringing it into necessity; he may be content to view his many possibilities as they are in themselves. For example, a man may see that he is quite capable of performing a certain task, but he never chooses to do it, and in fact he never does it. He simply says, "Yes, I could do that ... if..." The "if" represents hypothetical necessity, for he can only do the task by bringing possibility into necessity, and therefore making it actual.

Through the passage of time, man becomes more and more possible and less and less necessary. His margin of time narrows,

\[\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 54.}\]

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
and possibility becomes more intense each instant. However, actualization requires time, and so its possibility, or the possibility of the self, decreases with the narrowing of time.

S.K. is emphatic on the relations existing among possibility, necessity, and actuality. The philosophers, he states, explain necessity as a unity of possibility and actuality. According to Kierkegaard, this is not the case. The "really real" is actuality, and this is a synthesis of possibility and necessity. Perhaps the most subtle problem we meet in our analysis of dialectical freedom is this attempt to discover the precise nature of Kierkegaard's necessity. What is the precise nature of that which necessity adds to possibility? What is necessity in actuality? In order to avoid a distortion of Kierkegaard's thought, it may be necessary to quote at length here a passage wherein he treats this matter.

Nor is it merely due to lack of strength when the soul goes astray in possibility—at least this is not to be understood as people commonly understand it. What really is lacking is the power to obey, to submit to the necessary in oneself, to what may be called one's limit. Therefore the misfortune does not consist in the fact that such a self did not amount to anything in the world; no, the misfortune is that the man did not become aware of himself, aware that the self he is, is a perfectly definite something, and so is the necessary. On the contrary, he lost himself, owing to the fact that this self was seen fantastically reflected in the possible. Even

24Ibid., p. 55.

25This same problem will recur in chapter IV when we treat of actualization. It will show up there in dealing with S.K.'s Lutheranism. Did S.K. adhere to Luther's "Faith without good works"? Can man become himself through Faith alone, or are good works a prerequisite for freedom?
the lack of infinitude. Narrow-mindedness and meanness of spirit
are the two characteristics of this despair, not in the sense in
which they are usually understood, but in an ethical sense. This
man has narrowed his mind, and thereby demeaned his spirit. He
looks at his universe with colored glasses which filter out the
realities of the spirit, and allow him to see merely the worldly,
social life about him. This universe is crumpled into a crowd,
and he now fits into his universe by fitting into the crowd. His
actions are determined by the conventions of society, and he is
content to measure out his life in coffee spoons. In this way,
he loses himself, for he finds it too dangerous and venturesome
to become himself. How much more easy to become an imitation of
others, to become a number, a cipher in the crowd.

Naturally, this form of despair is never noticed by the world,
for it is a fitting into the world. There is no contrast between
self and society, and where there is nothing to be noticed, it is
precisely nothing that will be noticed. Therefore, the world will
never understand this to be despair, for it recognizes despair in
anxiety, and where there is nothing, there can be no anxiety.

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17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., p. 50.
19 Ibid., p. 51.
20 No doubt this form of despair will be prevalent in any age,
and certainly it may be predicated very properly of modern man.
"The post-modern age" has become a period in which men devote
This despair is a loss of self in society, and to that extent it is a failure to become the self. It requires a venturesome spirit to overcome the attraction of this despair when in the midst of a society whose major concerns are temporal and finite. To become a self is a venture, and yet the social mind says that shrewdness is not to venture, because one may lose. The self-minded man reasons differently, saying: "By not venturing, it is so dreadfully easy to lose that which it would be difficult to lose in even the most venturesome venture, and in any case never so easily, so completely as if it were nothing...one's self."21

The venture is a crisis in the struggle between freedom and despair when despair is that of finitude.

21 Sickness unto Death, p. 52.
This form of despair was not unknown during S.K.'s own lifetime. On the continent and in England, it was expressed in literature by men who identified themselves with nature. Such was Wordsworth. His counterparts in America were known as the transcendentalists who lost themselves in a world soul. Such was the poet Emerson. Through generalized sentimentality, man etherialized himself, and by so doing, he lost himself in fantastic feeling.

Fantastic knowledge is another form of the despair of infinitude. Kierkegaard claims that an intellectual progression in any field ought to be paralleled by an increasing self-knowledge. The more the self knows, the more it should know itself. If this parallel is broken, the person has squandered his knowledge. His intellectual powers run away from him, and fantastically take himself out of himself. The intellectual runs the risk of becoming enamoured of his unparalleled spiritual powers, and of no longer seeing himself as a sinner who must stand humbly before the eyes of God. He runs the risk of despair.

The will also can become fantastic. When it does so, the person wills the impossible for himself; he wills fantastic infinity. By restricting his will to the impossible, he cuts himself

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11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., p. 47.
13 Ibid.
Despair Viewed under the Aspects of Possibility/Necessity

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Ibid., p. 54.

Ibid.
in looking at one's self in a mirror it is requisite to know oneself; for, if not, one does not behold one's self but merely a man. But the mirror of possibility is not an ordinary mirror, it must be used with the utmost precaution. For of this mirror it is true in the highest sense that it is a false mirror. That the self looks so and so in the possibility of itself is only half truth; for in the possibility of itself the self is still far from itself, or only half itself. So the question is how the necessity of the self determines it more precisely. A case analogous to possibility is when a child is invited to participate in some pleasure or another: the child is at once willing, but now it is a question whether the parents will permit it—and as with the parents, so it is with necessity.

There are at least two possible interpretations of necessity which we could draw from this passage. The first interpretation would say that necessity involves a real physical act on the part of man, whether that act be spiritual, as an act of the will, or material, as the bodily performance of some action. This is based on S.K.'s statement that the lack of necessity is not due to a lack of strength, but to a lack of the power to obey, to submit to the necessary in oneself. Strength is inferred in the possibility of becoming a self, for without it the self would be impossible. Therefore, strength refers to possibility rather than to necessity. Necessity is introduced into the self through the power to obey, the power to submit. This implies man's will, but not merely as a power to choose between alternatives, for this would simply be a strength, which refers to possibility. Will may be understood in another sense though; namely, as a dynamic act, the act of willing.

26 Ibid., pp. 55-56. (emphasis added)
It is in this sense that the first interpretation would understand the phrase "the power to will; the power to submit". "Power" here is not a possibility, but a physical act on the part of man; an act of the will. If this interpretation is correct, then a better English rendition of S.K.'s own words would be: "the power of obeying; the power of submitting". This would better bring out the interpretation that "power" is not to be taken as a source of activity, but as the activity itself.

The second interpretation would claim that necessity is merely a certain awareness in man of what he really is in himself. This awareness may involve something more than a simple understanding; it may ultimately be identified with a belief or faith. But the root of this position is that this awareness is sufficient for Kierkegaard's necessity; no other act of man, or human act, is called for. This argumentation attaches itself to the words: "The misfortune is that the man did not become aware of himself, aware that the self he is, is a perfectly definite something, and so is the necessary." Lack of necessity is thereby apparently identified with lack of awareness.

It is interesting to note that either interpretation can appeal to S.K.'s own analogy as a confirmation of its position. The analogy concerns the connection between a child's desires and his parents' permission. On the one hand, parental permission can add no more to the child than a deeper awareness of the pleasure. This adds weight to the second interpretation. On the other hand,
parental permission is the necessary element which must be present before the child actualizes the possibility. The first interpretation would stress S.K.'s concern here with the element of necessity instead of with an added awareness which permission conveys to the child.

Several factors extrinsic to the passage quoted favor the first interpretation, i.e. that necessity educes a physical act on the part of man. First, Kierkegaard's religious works display the recurrent theme that thought without consequent action is worthless. Secondly, if the synthesis between possibility and necessity is not more than an awareness, then this second dialectic is reduced to the first, infinitization. A relation would be a self by being aware of itself. Freedom would be merely self-knowledge. Thirdly, Kierkegaard in other contexts makes it quite clear that freedom lies in the area of will rather than in the area of intellect. For example, he writes: "The more consciousness, the more will, and the more will the more self. A man who has no will at all is no self; the more will he has, the more consciousness of self he has also."27

Now we will turn our attention to the despair of necessity. The despair of necessity is due to the lack of possibility.28

27Ibid., pp. 43-44. Admittedly, the term "consciousness" definitely connotes much the same meaning as "awareness," and therefore this quotation could perhaps be used to mediate between the two interpretations rather than favor either. (emphasis added)

28Ibid., p. 57.
Kierkegaard compares this despair to dumbness, where there is no possibility of speech. In necessity, there is no possibility of the self.

All things are eternally possible for God. This is the decisive fact which leads S.K. to say that the loss of possibility is despair. Since everything is eternally possible for God, it is also possible at each instant. Objectively speaking, there can be no loss of possibility, for God's power is eternal. The loss is only subjective, because a man loses faith in the fact that all things are possible in God. But a subjective loss is a loss of the subject; it is a loss of self.

This despair is the final rejection of faith, and therefore comes only when a man is brought to the utmost extremity. In the extremity, the question of possibility resolves itself into a question of faith, for a man is incapable of coping with extremities by himself. The question is: Will he believe? Kierkegaard pictures a man who imagines to himself in terror some horror which is absolutely not to be endured. Then precisely this horror befalls him. As a mere man, he visions certain destruction, and despair fights to destroy the proportion of his being. Despair casts off possibility and clings to the necessity of destruction. Humanly speaking, despair is the most certain thing of all for him. Then begins the fight of faith, "which fights madly (if one would

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29Ibid., p. 58.
so express it) for possibility." The man cannot live without possibility, for to lose this is to fall into despair, and despair is the sickness unto death. Therefore, in human extremity, life is only possible through faith. Kierkegaard writes: "Sometimes the inventiveness of a human imagination suffices to procure possibility, but in the last resort, that is, when the point is to believe, the only help is this, that for God all things are possible." To believe in the possible is what is meant by faith. We have said that the ultimate question is whether or not the man will believe. S.K. himself interprets this as meaning whether or not the man has the will to procure for himself possibility. Again we see the importance of the will over the intellect. Faith is an act of the will. Yet, even this act of the will which is faith accomplishes only possibility. This is not the self; it is not freedom. Freedom is actualization, which is the synthesis between possibility and necessity. That is to say, faith, as important as it is, is only one element in freedom. Of all the forms of despair that we have viewed thus far, despair of necessity corresponds most closely to what is commonly understood by "despair". After a man recognizes the value of lead-

30 Ibid., p. 59
31 Ibid., pp. 59-60.
32 Ibid., p. 60.
33 Ibid.
ing a good life (and has therefore committed himself by leaping from the aesthetical to the ethical sphere), he eventually discovers through repeated falls that he is not capable of consistent goodness. His status as a sinner before God is forcibly impressed upon his mind. Then comes the temptation to despair, for he knows that he is unable to achieve his commitment. He tends to acknowledge a necessary disproportion in his being. At this point, he must either will to believe, or willfully contract the sickness unto death. Faith alone will procure possibility in the power of God; by faith alone will man preserve himself in freedom.

This completes our treatment of the various forms of despair. Now we will briefly consider the qualitative aspect of despair; that is, despair viewed under consciousness.

Despair Viewed under the Aspect of Consciousness

As the forms of despair are determined by the nature of man's dialectical synthesis, the quality of despair is determined by the degree of consciousness. Every increase in the degree of consciousness effects a proportionate increase in the intensity of despair.⁳⁴ According to this scale, S.K. shows why the devil's despair is the most intense despair, for the devil is sheer spirit and therefore absolute consciousness.

⁳⁴Ibid., p. 65.
Kierkegaard speaks first of the despair which is unconscious that it is despair, or the despairing unconsciousness of having a self and an eternal self. Since consciousness is the determinant of intensity, it follows that an unconscious despair should be the least intense of all. Actually, Kierkegaard writes of this despair as a sort of innocence, but he goes on to show that the responsibility is just as personal in this case as in any other. God endowed man with spirit, and with this gift he is responsible for being conscious of himself.

Despair can only be unconscious if a man refuses to use the spiritual gifts God has given him. Yet his very refusal implies the use of these gifts; rather, it implies a misuse, for man is using his will to divert his intellect from a self-introspection. By these means he manages to remain unconscious of his despair. The truth of this is seen in the manner a man reacts to an unveiling of his sickness. He wills to keep this despair shrouded in darkness and considers it an insult if someone should point out to him his sickness. To disillusion another of his despair is commonly considered to be a grievous, personal affront.

When a man refuses to act according to his spiritual nature,
he allows his sensuous nature and the psycho-sensuous to dominate him completely.\textsuperscript{38} He begins to live in the sensuous categories of agreeable/disagreeable.\textsuperscript{39} In short, he has chosen the career of an aesthete in preference to his real self. S.K. likens the situation of such a man to that of a person who has received the gift of a beautiful house, and then refuses to use the well-furnished, upper rooms. He lives his life in the cellar. This is analogous to the person who decides to live merely as a body and never as a soul.

Although unconsciousness of despair artakes of intensity to a lesser degree than consciousness, nevertheless it is a more dangerous state in which to live. A man cannot cure this sickness unto death unless he first become conscious of it. Just as despair is in itself a negativity, unconsciousness of it is a new negativity.\textsuperscript{40} A person must pierce through both these negativities in order to relate himself to his own self correctly. To become conscious of despair and then to will to remain in this sickness is a great intensification, but the greater danger still lies in unconsciousness. In the latter instance, the necessity of fighting for freedom will never be recognized.

After unconscious despair, Kierkegaard then writes of "the

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., p. 67.
\textsuperscript{39}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., p. 69.
despair which is conscious of being despair, as also it is
conscious of being a self wherein there is after all something
Eternal, and then is either in despair at not willing to be itself,
or in despair at willing to be itself."\(^{41}\)

There are two requisites which must be fulfilled before
a person will be conscious of being in despair: (1) the true con-
ception of what despair is; (2) a clarity of self-knowledge.\(^{42}\)
Both of these admit of variant degrees, thus multiplying the pos-
sible degrees of consciousness. E.K. says that more commonly than
not, a man's position is that of a half obscurity about his des-
pair.\(^{43}\) Although this obscurity is greatly accounted for by the
fact that man has perfect knowledge of neither himself nor of the
nature of despair, it is nevertheless true that a good deal of
this obscurity is caused by man himself. A man can purposely will
this darkness of intellect in himself in order to provide a self-
justification for his way of life. Since it is the total man who
experiences obscurity, both intellect and will play their part.
"In fact there is in all obscurity a dialectical interplay of
knowledge and will, and in interpreting a man one may err, either
by emphasizing knowledge merely, or merely the will."\(^{44}\)

\(^{41}\)Ibid., p. 74.
\(^{42}\)Ibid., pp. 74-75.
\(^{43}\)Ibid., p. 75.
\(^{44}\)Ibid., p. 76.
As a person becomes conscious of his despair, this consciousness first manifests itself in despair at not willing to be oneself. Kierkegaard calls this the despair of weakness,\(^45\) for as a man recognizes the eternal within himself, he begins to cringe before the consequent responsibility. He is unwilling to have to be himself. He does not want to be himself. This consciousness may continue to increase, and then a man not only faces the eternal in himself, but he becomes aware of his weakness in confronting eternity. This weakness is repelling, and now more than ever, the man does not want to be himself.

This dialectic continues with the increasing intensification of consciousness. Soon the desparer becomes conscious of the reason why he does not want to be himself. He discovers that he is repelled by his own weakness. He wants to be strong rather than weak, and in that desire, he wills to be other than he really is. He wills to be himself (as he has fashioned himself), but this self which he wishes to be is not his true self. In this way, despair has dialectically reversed itself. No longer is the man in despair at not willing to be himself. Now he has fallen into the despair of willing despairingly to be himself. This is the despair of defiance,\(^46\) and it has evolved from the despair of weakness.

Kierkegaard cautions us against considering these two

\(^{45}\)Ibid., p. 78.

\(^{46}\)Ibid., p. 107.
qualifications of despair, weakness and defiance, as total disparities. "No despair," he writes, "is entirely without defiance: in fact defiance is implied in the very expression, 'not to will to be.' On the other hand, even the extremest defiance of despair is after all never without some weakness. The difference is therefore only relative."47 Weakness and defiance are degrees of intensity, and these degrees parallel one's consciousness of being in despair.

Despair is Sin

Kierkegaard placed the second half of Sickness unto Death under the heading "Despair is Sin". Although we have already stated that this part of the book is properly theological, and therefore does not directly pertain to this thesis, it may help our understanding of despair to investigate briefly what S.K. has to say on this topic.

Kierkegaard summarizes the relationship between despair and sin in his definition of sin: "Sin is this: before God, or with the conception of God, to be in despair at not willing to be oneself, or in despair at willing to be oneself. Thus sin is potentiated weakness or potentiated defiance: sin is the potentiation of despair. The point upon which the emphasis rests is before God, or the fact that the conception of God is involved; the factor

47 Ibid., p. 78.
which dialectically, ethically, religiously, makes 'qualified' despair synonymous with sin is the conception of God. This passage is easily explained in the light of what we have already said of despair. Qualified despair is the despair of weakness or defiance. When this conscious despair sees itself as standing before God, weakness and defiance become potentiated; that is, they become sin.

Notice the emphasis that S.K. gives to the fact that sin is before God. This means that personal sin enters a man's life only after the ethical has manifested itself to him, and he is forced into a consciousness of his spiritual drunkenness. He sees himself transparently before God as a sinner. This vision of what sin is becomes possible through a revelation from God, and this revelation is Christ, or the Deity in time.

Without a lengthy discussion of this point, let us briefly explain what it involves. Kierkegaard, in his Concluding Unscientific Postscript, distinguishes between what he terms Religion A and Religion B, or natural religion and Christianity. The difference, of course, is Christ. Furthermore, as guilt-consciousness is related to Religion A, so sin-consciousness is related to

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48 Ibid., p. 123.
49 Ibid., p. 155.
50 Concluding Unscientific Postscript., p. 517.
51 "Guilt-consciousness" is the natural prick of conscience which accompanies a man's recognition that through his own
Religion B. or Christianity. Although a man is able to acquire guilt-consciousness by himself, his relation to Christ must be known in order to achieve sin-consciousness. This is the revelation from God as mentioned above. This clarifies Kierkegaard's insistence that sin is identified with despair only when despair is before God, or in the concept of God.

All this has been a discussion of personal sin, for as we have seen above, man is responsible for the proportion in the dialectical synthesis of his self. However, we should note here that personal sin, for Kierkegaard, is grounded in original sin. In the Postscript, he writes: "Let us now call the untruth of the individual Sin. Viewed eternally he cannot be sin, nor can he be eternally presupposed as having been in sin. By coming into existence therefore...he becomes a sinner. He is not born as a sinner in the sense that he is presupposed as being a sinner before he is born, but he is born in sin and as a sinner. This we might call Original Sin." Existence is the medium of sin, and the mere fact that a man comes into existence makes it possible for him to commit personal sin. According to Lutheranism, which was the state

fault, he has not become the man he is supposed to be. He has lost his freedom. But he can recognize this natural fact even before he realizes his failure is seen by the eyes of God.

52 Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 517.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid., p. 186.
religion in Denmark during his lifetime, S.K. taught that the human will is corrupted by original sin, and this corruption explains the possibility of any personal sin. He writes: "Christianly understood, sin lies in the will, not in the intellect; and this corruption of the will goes well beyond the consciousness of the individual. This is the perfectly consistent declaration, for otherwise the question how sin began must arise with respect to each individual."55

Certainly this teaching that human nature is corrupted by original sin, rather than wounded by it, is strict Lutheran doctrine. Whether or not Kierkegaard's Lutheranism went to the extreme position of "faith without good works" may be debated, and we will treat this along with actualization. The problem will focus there because faith, not virtue, is the opposite of sin. "Too often it has been overlooked that the opposite of sin is not virtue, not by any manner of means. This is in part a pagan view which is content with a merely human measure and properly does not know what sin is, that all sin is before God. No, the opposite of sin is faith, as is affirmed in Rom. 14:23, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin."56 Thus, in this context faith is identified with the proper proportion between infinitization and actualization. These two moments in dialectical freedom remain to be explored.

55 Sickness unto Death, p. 155.
56 Ibid., p. 132.
CHAPTER III

INFINITIZATION: THE FIRST MOMENT
IN DIALECTICAL FREEDOM

We have already seen that freedom is a dialectic between infinitization\(^1\) and actualization.\(^2\) Kierkegaard developed his abstract formulation of these two functions in *Sickness unto Death*, and the first chapter of this thesis is an attempt to explain that formulation. To a great extent, S.K. entered the category of formal philosophy when he wrote the *Sickness*. His treatment is logical; his terminology abstract; his method systematic. These are the very elements which he rejected as worthless in other philosophers, and consequently he was somewhat disappointed with the

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\(^1\)S.K. himself does not use this term "infinitization" to characterize this first moment in dialectical freedom, and so a word of explanation is in order for the choice of this terminology. Recall that the self is a relation which relates itself to its own self, and that the original relation is a synthesis between infinitude and finitude. The first moment in dialectical freedom is an imaginative consciousness of the infinite possibilities in a finite being. Thus, S.K. writes: "Accordingly, the development consists in moving away from oneself infinitely by the process of infinitizing oneself, and in returning to oneself infinitely by the process of finitizing." (*Sickness unto Death*, p. 44.) The context makes this statement not a little ambiguous, and it could be construed in such a way that "infinitization" would refer to the first moment in freedom, and "finitization" would correspond to what we have called "actualization". More probably however, S.K. meant that both of these elements are functions in the first moment of
tone of this book. He did not want his writings to reflect the philosophical method of speculation.

In his religious works, S.K. managed to avoid this formal note of abstract formulation by employing a phenomenological approach to his subject. He was treating the same real truths of existence in these later works that he had developed earlier in Sickness unto Death, but he was much more satisfied with this new approach.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine S.K.'s phenomenological approach to infinitization. This notion is at the root of freedom; it initiates the dialectical process of man's becoming free. Consequently, he threads this theme through his religious writings. It may be found principally in Training in Christianity For Self-Examination, Judge for Yourselves, The Present Age, and Works of Love.

In an effort to reflect a bit of the beauty in S.K.'s dialectical freedom. In that case, my use of the term "infinitization" to express the totality of this moment is an instance of synecdoche. Perhaps I might have preferably chosen the term "possibility" since the end product of this first moment is the imaginative consciousness of the self according to its possibilities. The more a man knows himself, the more he knows what he was made to be. Thus this end product is in truth one of the dialectical elements involved in the second moment, actualization. However, S.K. himself does not call the original synthesis "possibility", and in order to avoid the prima facie confusion which would arise by doing so, I have decided to use the term "infinitization".

2cf. above, pp. 20-21.

3The Journals, pp. 240-241.
thought, we will treat this chapter on infinitization in the following manner. First, we will present one of his general phenomenological approaches to freedom where he speaks of it in terms of sobriety. Then we will be able to devote the bulk of the chapter to some specific instances of what infinitization meant concretely for Kierkegaard. What were his ideals? How did he picture to himself the dignity of man? In short, what did freedom mean to Kierkegaard? These reflective expressions are simply S.K.'s description of himself as mirrored in such human truths as love, hope and pain.

The Phenomenological Self

God calls every individual to a certain state of perfection, and it is the task of that individual to attain this end. But no one can act unless he has his purpose clearly in mind, and so God endowed man with an imagination with which he might idealize himself, or as S.K. put it, with which he might infinitize himself.

In his book Judge for Yourselves, S.K. speaks of freedom in terms of Christian sobriety, and he says that "to become sober is to come to oneself in self-knowledge and before God, as nothing before Him, yet infinitely, absolutely, under obligation." This is a clear statement of what Kierkegaard believes man is at the roots of his nature. It is the formulation of his personal reflec-

\[\text{\textsuperscript{4}}\text{For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourselves, p. 120.}\]
tive introspection combined with the revealed knowledge he received through Christianity. Christian sobriety demands that man be conscious both of the fact that he is before God, and that he is nothing before God, completely under obligation.

Consciousness of these three elements, (1) before God, (2) as nothing, and (3) completely under obligation, is infinitization, the awareness of infinite possibility within finite man. Ultimately, this means that man sees himself as loved by God and that his eternal salvation is possible through faith. This is the only knowledge that is the deep self-knowledge of man's possibilities, for Kierkegaard makes it quite clear that by possibility he does not mean a man's natural potentials, talents, powers etc. which he calls worldly shrewdness. He writes: "But then, to live on, having accurate knowledge of and shrewd calculation upon one's own powers, talents, qualifications, possibilities, and in the same measure familiar with what human and worldly shrewdness teaches the initiated—is that to come to oneself? Yes, according to the opinion of the merely human view. But not according to the Christian opinion; for this is not to come to oneself, it is to come to the probable; on that road one never gets any farther." The probable is the world's interpretation of the possible. It can never lead to freedom. Knowledge of the probable is drunkenness with self that draws a man deeper and deeper into himself coaxing him to be inbred.

\[5\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 121.}\]
and selfish. 6

To come to oneself in self-knowledge, and before God. S.K. held this as the primary note of self-realization. Again and again in his writings he lashed out fiercely at the neat, triple-termed syllogisms proposed by philosophers attempting the various proofs of God's existence. Not only were these proofs empty and meaningless as far as Kierkegaard was concerned, but what is more, he felt strongly that they were insults to God. If one were sitting in a room with two friends, would he not feel insulted if one turned to the other and began seriously to prove his presence in the room. This, said S.K., is how God must feel, for He is present to man at all times. He is more present to man than man is to himself. That man should try to prove God's presence is drunkenness with self. He should rather humbly acknowledge God's being and supremacy. "Only by being before God can a man entirely come to himself in the transparency of sobriety." 7

To come to oneself in self-knowledge and before God, as nothing. This is an expression of Christian humility. It is the truth of man's being in relation to God's. If one strikes a match and holds it next to a bright light, he may say the match's light is feeble. Should he hold it next to the sun, he would not even say it is feeble, but that it is nothing. This is what man is when

6Ibid.
7Ibid., p. 122.
compared to God. "The merely human view thinks that to become something is to become sober; Christianity thinks that precisely to become nothing--before God--is the way, and that if it could occur to anyone to wish to be something before God, this is drunkenness."8

To come to oneself in self-knowledge and before God, as nothing, and yet infinitely, absolutely under obligation. Since God is infinitely other than man, His dominion over man is also infinite. Man does not have the right to subject himself "to a certain degree," while withholding himself somewhat from Divine dominion. God's reign extends to the nooks and corners of the universe, and His power reaches into the smallest action of the smallest man. Absolute sway is God's, and only by placing himself infinitely, absolutely, under obligation is man able to acknowledge this truth, and consequently come to himself in self-knowledge. "This maxim, 'to a certain degree,' is precisely what intoxicates, anaesthetizes, makes one heavy and lethargic and torpid and dull, pretty much like an habitual drunkard, of whom it is said that he falls into a state of drowsiness."9

Reflective Expressions

We have studied Kierkegaard's formula for the infinitization

8Ibid., p. 123.
9Ibid.
of the true Christian. To a large extent, and necessarily so, our analytic treatment has lacked the warmth and sincerity of S.K.’s enthusiasm. Perhaps in this section, as we let Kierkegaard speak more for himself, the ease and beauty of his reflective moods will be more apparent. Here we will also be able to see how the white light of formulated Christian sobriety diffuses itself into a spectrum of diverse reflections. As the author reflects on these several subjects, the pattern is always the same. He projects himself out of himself into the particular image he happens to be contemplating, and in this manner infinitesizes himself.

Kierkegaard often exercised his imaginative powers to reflect the meaning of love. Love played a strange role in his life in the persons of his father and Regine. It is no wonder that he asked himself so many times what reality lay beneath this strangeness. Once he answered: "To love him who makes one happy, is to a reflective mind an inadequate definition of what love is; to love him who makes one unhappy out of malice, is virtue; but to love him who out of love, though by a misunderstanding, yet out of love, made one unhappy—that is the formula never yet enunciated, as far as I know, but nevertheless the normal formula in reflection for what it is to love."10

It is easy to read in the author’s mind the context of this statement. S.K. wrote this as he thought of his love for his

father. He never loved another man as he loved his father, and paradoxically, no other man hurt him as did his father. But Søren knew that this pain was unknowingly inflicted; its source was the service of love. In this way he united his reflections on love to the reflections of his past life, idealizing his love in the perfect love, and leading himself to a fuller existence in freedom.

The above definition was but a single expression of love. Kierkegaard took many views of this topic, and some of these reflections are much more penetrating than others. His comparison of love and eternity is impressive for its simplicity of expression and depth of thought:

The temporal has three times, and therefore it never really absolutely exists, or absolutely in any one of them. The eternal is. A temporal object can be said to have them all at one time, insofar as it is what it is in these definite attributes. But duplication in itself never has a temporal object; as the temporal disappears in time, so too it exists only in its attributes. On the contrary, when the eternal is present in a man, then this eternal so reduplicates itself in him, that every moment it is present in him, it is present in a two-fold manner: in an outward direction, and in an inward direction back into itself, but in such a way that this is one and the same thing; for otherwise it is not duplication. The eternal is not merely in its own attributes, but is in itself in its attributes; it not only has attributes, but is in itself when it has attributes.

So now with love. What love does, that it is; what it is, that it does—and at one and the same time: at the very moment it goes out of itself (the direction outward) it is in itself (the direction inward); and at the very moment it is in itself, it thereby goes out of itself, so that this outgoing and this return, this return and this outgoing, are simultaneously one and the same.

This passage is a perfect translation of Kierkegaard's dialectic toward freedom. It is a translation into life with all the overtones of love. If ever Kierkegaard employed his dialectic of interacting relations to explain life, it is here. Perhaps we can reverse the process and use our experience in life to grasp the meaning of his dialectic.

Husband and wife, parent and child—all these have experienced love. They know what it is to love and to be loved. They see no difference between love and an act expressive of that love. Where one is found, the other is expected. A person cannot love without acting out of love, nor can the act proceed from a love that is absent. As the love grows, so does the expression, and reciprocally, a greater expression creates a greater love. This is the experience common to all. And who of these, husband or wife, parent or child, who would complain that he or she was not free in love? Would not each one willingly say, "If I am to be free, if I am to be what I am and become what I should be, then I must love. I am bound to love."

This is the freedom found by Kierkegaard. Freedom in this context is the choice of self when the self chooses to love because it must love. It is at once a being (the direction outward) and a becoming (the direction inward), because the actual choice, as an expression of love, returns to itself in a growth of love. That is why Kierkegaard says that "this outgoing and this return, this return and this outgoing, are simultaneously one and the
same." If this love and its expression do not exist, then the man, woman, or child, whoever is lacking this love, that person is not free, for he was made to love; he was created for love.

There is little wonder that the dialectic of love parallels the dialectic of eternity in time. The activity of man proceeds according to his nature, and as love is a human activity, it must resemble man's dialectical composition of the eternal and temporal. "Man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity." This is man's nature, and we will understand this nature insofar as we understand the activity which flows from it. Therefore, from what has already been said of the dialectic of love, we can learn about the dialectic of eternity in time.

In the above quotation which relates love to eternity, S.K. wrote that "when the eternal is present in a man, then this eternal also reduplicates itself in him, that every moment it is present in him, it is present in a twofold manner: in an outward direction, and in an inward direction back into itself, but in such a way that this is one and the same thing; for otherwise it is not duplication." This outward direction is man's infinitization of himself, that is, his imaginative reflection on his personal participation in the eternal. Similarly, the inward direction is man's actualization of himself, the realization of eternity in time.

12Sickness unto Death, p. 17.
At this point, the dialectic is explicable through the analogy of love. Infinitization, the outward direction, is likened to the expression of love, while actualization, the inward direction, corresponds to love itself. Personal experience has already told us that love and its expression are identified in us, and that it is precisely this relationship of identity that constitutes our freedom. In like manner, infinitization and actualization become identified in the self, for it is through this dialectic that the self, which is a relation, relates itself to its own self. This is freedom. That in the relation which relates itself to itself is freedom.

This reflection revealing to a man what he is at the core of his being, this reflection unveiling to a man his potential freedom, all this is infinitization. That is why the passage dealing with love and eternity is such a fine example of Kierkegaardian reflection. This was S.K.'s method of opening to himself the avenue toward freedom.13

According to Kierkegaard, the reflective activity of imagination should ever be approximating the perfect expression of man's freedom. In his efforts to achieve this perfect expression, he spent much time contemplating Divine Love and its comparison

13 While treating here of Kierkegaard's dialectic, it is interesting to note how closely it resembles the Hegelian dialectic of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Although Kierkegaard's entire philosophy is a violent reaction against Hegel's idealism, we cannot deny that he was strongly influenced by this German idealist, as is evidenced here.
with human love. In his later years, Kierkegaard constantly thought of God only under the aspect of love. No doubt, this was a natural reaction to his father's puritanical training which had introduced God to him as a God of wrath. Whatever the cause, love for S.K. became the truth of God. We may say that infinitization was simply an effort to express the truth of his personal relation to God. That is why this radical self-knowledge had to be of himself as nothing before God, yet infinitely under obligation. In his discourse, "Love is a Matter of Conscience," Kierkegaard expresses beautifully this relationship of love between God and man:

The free heart has no history; when it renounced itself it acquired no history of its love, happy or unhappy. But the heart infinitely bound to God has a preceding history, and therefore it understands that earthly love and friendship are but an interlude, a contribution to this, the sole history of love, the first and the last. You who know how to speak so beautifully about earthly love and friendship, if you understood that these constitute only a very little section within that eternal history; how brief you would be compared with the brevity of the section! You begin your history with the beginning of love and you end with a grave. But that eternal history of love began far earlier; it began with your beginning, when you came into existence from nothing, and as truly as you do not become nothing, so truly the history does not end with the grave. For when the deathbed is prepared for you, when you gave gone to bed, never more to rise, and they only wait for you to turn to the other side to die, and the stillness grows about you--when gradually the nearer friends go away, and the stillness grows because only the dearest remain, while death comes nearer you; then when the dearest go softly away, and the stillness grows, because only your own family remain; and when then the last one has bent for the last time over you and turns away, for now you turn to the side of death there yet remains One by that side, He the last at the deathbed, He who was the first, God the living God--if for the rest your heart was pure, which it became only by loving Him. 14

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14 Works of Love, pp. 121-122.
In this passage S.K. has mirrored love according to the
phenomenology of infinitization. He has expressed himself and all
men as loved by God. This is truth; it is self-knowledge, and
therefore it is infinitization.

We cannot help but wonder as we read such a passage what
factors in his life enabled him to feel so poignantly the truth
of love. To express philosophy and theology in such a way is a
high degree of personalism. That is why we wrote in our introduc-
tion that to understand the man is to understand his work. So very
much of this passage deepens in meaning when we reflect upon
Kierkegaard's love for his father which culminated in pain, and
love for Regine which ended in sorrow. His experience with human
love was totally unlike that of the common man. It was as unlike
as Kierkegaard himself was unlike the common man.

Yet, this pain, sorrow, and frustration did not crush his
love and embitter him as it might have. On the contrary, his love
became purified. The spiritual in him became accentuated over the
material. But this, in no way lessening the sorrow, only served
to augment the pain. Reflection taught him that this pain, in
spite of its cruelty, or perhaps because of its cruelty, is love.
Thus he writes in his book Training in Christianity:

It is always painful to have to hide a heart-felt emotion and
to seem to be other than one is—such is the case in a merely
human relationship. Of all human suffering it is the hardest
to bear, and he who suffers thus, suffers, alas, more in one
day than by all bodily tortures taken together. I do not pre-
sume to decide whether such collisions actually occur, or
whether a man who experiences such a collision does not also
sin every instant he remains in it—I speak only of the suffering. The collision is that out of love for another one must hide a heart-felt emotion and seem to be other than one is. The pains are purely of the soul, and they are as composite as they possibly can be. But it is far from being a good thing that a pain is composite, for with every new combination it acquires an additional sting. The painfulness of this experience lies first in one's own suffering; for it is blessed to belong to another in the perfect understanding of love or friendship, it is painful to keep to oneself this inwardness of feeling. In the next place it is suffering on account of the other; for that which in reality is the solicitude of love, of a love which is willing to do anything, even to sacrifice life for the other, finds expression here in something which has a dreadful likeness to the supreme cruel—ah, and yet it was love!\textsuperscript{15}

We need no further proof of Kierkegaard's psychological genius. From what we know of his life, we can correctly induce that this genius grew from an introspection of his personal experience. He claims not to presume to decide whether or not such collisions actually occur, but this is nothing more than a weak effort to avoid self-revelation. His previous life gives the lie to his words. Yet, even if we knew nothing of his life, it is evident that no one could write that way about suffering without having experienced it first. This is not only a deep expression of Kierkegaard's personalist philosophy. More than that, it is great literature, for he has captured a truth that is universal to man, and he has expressed it in a beautiful manner.

Kierkegaard was well acquainted with the inner pain that he describes in the above passage. As there are strong, melancholic overtones to his words, so too there were strong, melancholic overtones to his words, so too there were strong, melancholic overtones to his words.

\textsuperscript{15}Training in Christianity, pp. 136-137.
tones to his life. In 1839, just before his engagement to Regine, he wrote: "I can say of my sorrow what the Englishman says of his house: my sorrow is my castle."\(^{16}\) By saying this, he did not mean to indicate that his life was one of aesthetical melancholy. Earlier, he had distinguished between sorrow and melancholy.\(^{17}\) The person afflicted with melancholy cannot find a cure because he has no idea what is causing his moodiness. This is paradoxical, for the cause is within himself, and only self-knowledge can lead to a recovery from this sickness. On the other hand, the man in sorrow is perfectly aware of its cause. If it is within his power to remove the cause, he may do so, but the cause often turns out to be Divine Governance, and no one can remove this from his life.

S.K. felt that Governance was the cause of his own sorrow. After he broke his engagement with Regine, he wrote: "When God wishes to bind a man to him he calls his most faithful servant, his most trustworthy messenger, and it is sorrow, and says to him: hasten after him, overtake him, do not leave his side (and no woman can attach herself more closely to the man she loves than sorrow.)"\(^{18}\)

His love led to sorrow, and his sorrow led to love. When the cycle was complete, Kierkegaard found that his original love was now purified. What had been dependence upon human love was now

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\(^{16}\) *Journals*, p. 73.

\(^{17}\) *Either/Or*, II, p. 159.

\(^{18}\) *Journals*, p. 103.
sublimated to a dependence upon Divine Love and independence of human. S.K.'s love had undergone a total change of emphasis. In the first instance, the emphasis had been on the object loved, now it was on the primacy of the need to love. Kierkegaard had achieved the knowledge of himself as a being made for love. Love was in his nature. This discovery of inner wealth was the product of infinitization, for the discovery of this treasure was possible only through the means of imaginative reflection.

Let us view one more expression of Kierkegaardian reflection, this time his infinitization of self in hope. Hope is the virtue that fights against the despair of necessity. Hope is the cry of possibility when all possibility seems vain. In a discourse entitled, "Love Hopeth all Things," S.K. counselled: "Never unlovingly give up any man or your hope for him, for it might be possible that even the most prodigal son might still be saved; that the most bitter enemy, alas, he was was your friend, it is possible that he might again become your friend; it is possible that he who sank lowest, just because he had stood so high, it is still possible that he might again be lifted up; it is still possible that the love which grew cold, might again be fanned into flame: therefore never give up any man, not even at the last moment; do not despair, rather hope all things!" 20

19 *Works of Love*, p. 56.
Love. Pain. Hope. We have seen how Kierkegaard infinitized each one of these in his own mind. He looked long and hard at his own shadow cast by the lights of infinite love, pain, and hope. His constant reflection upon his relationship to God brought him to a knowledge of his inner being, but this reflection was not the purpose of his existence. Infinitization is but one moment in dialectical freedom, and to isolate oneself in this moment alone is to fall into the despair of possibility.

The Danger of Reflection

The danger of reflection is that although it is knowledge of the self, it is not the self. To stop with reflection is to lose the self. To stop with reflection is to fail to relate the self to itself, to fail to become free. A man can know himself as nothing before God, infinitely under obligation, but if he fails to act on this self-knowledge, the knowledge is vain.

The distinction is the same as that between thought and action. It is quite possible that a man might stop after the former and never actualize his possibilities. In fact, Kierkegaard was relentless in his accusation against his contemporaries for this very situation. His belief that Christianity had slipped to a nominal state within society led him to a bitter, one-man attack against the Church authorities at the time. His religious works were the result of the "personal vocation" given him by God to direct men back to true Christianity.
Speaking of reflection in The Present Age, S.K. wrote:

"Reflection is not the evil; but a reflective condition and the deadlock which it involves, by transforming the qualities which precede action into a means of escape from action, is both corrupt and dangerous and leads in the end to a retrograde movement." 21

To stop with pure reflection is to miss the purpose of life, for "of what use then is reality if by imagination one were able with complete actuality to conceive it in advance, of what use the seventy years if in his twenty-second year a man could experience everything!" 22

This remote reflection, according to Kierkegaard, had gone beyond the individual and had infected the social thought in Denmark. It was no longer a personal problem, but had become social. Each man "finds himself in the vast prison formed by the reflection of those around him, for because of his relation to his own reflection he also has a certain relation to the reflection around him. He can only escape from this second imprisonment through the inwardness of religion, no matter how clearly he may perceive the falseness of this relationship." 23

Only religion would enable a man to break loose from the

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22 Training in Christianity, p. 186.

23 The Present Age, p. 22.
socially accepted and "conceited notion that the possibility of reflection is far superior to a mere decision." While everybody else contented himself with the thought that freedom consists in the possibility of choosing what he pleased, Kierkegaard felt deeply convinced that true freedom was the actual becoming of self according to the will of God. That is why he placed the ultimate determination of self in the will instead of in the imagination. In the final analysis, it is the will which is the decisive factor determining what man will be. The imagination is necessary to propose the possibility of self to man's consciousness, but it is the will which chooses to be that self.

This choice of self by the will radically involves the actual sufferings of reality, for it is precisely through suffering that man works out his salvation. It is through suffering that he forms himself according to the Pattern, Christ. Speaking of the sufferings of life, S.K. says: "But this is what the imagination cannot render— in fact it cannot be rendered, it can only be, and hence it is that the picture of perfection as imagination presents it always looks so easy, so persuasive."26

Reflection, then, is as dangerous as it is necessary. Through reflection, the self imagines its possible self, but it will

24 Ibid.
25 Training in Christianity, p. 185.
26 Ibid., p. 186.
fall into despair unless it relates itself to itself through actualization. We now turn to what Kierkegaard means by "actualization".
Perhaps Kierkegaard's major contribution to modern existential philosophy is his doctrine of actualization, or, as it is more commonly termed, "becoming". For S.K., actualization designates both the process of becoming oneself and the degree of self-attainment. This view of man emphasizes the temporality of his situation, the spatial-temporal event of human perfecting. Consequently, S.K. everts the Aristotelian notions of act, potency, and necessity, wherein a finite being composed of act and potency possesses factual necessity. In that framework, necessity was a synthesis of act and potency. Contrary to this, Kierkegaard's development of existential temporality considers act as a synthesis of possibility and necessity.

As we have already seen, necessity is the third term in the derived synthesis between infinity and finitude. This synthesis is necessary because man discovers himself in this situation without either willing or desiring it. After finding himself thus given in creation, man's imaginative reflection reveals his essential possibility. Possibility is the terminal point in the process
of infinitization. Once a man has understood his natural elements of necessity and possibility, the task of time is to unite these elements into actuality. A man cannot change his given past, for that is his necessity, but he can make use of it to involve himself in the future. Past and future become involved in the present as actualization is synthesized from possibility and necessity.¹

This view of man as a temporal synthesis explains how seemingly disjunctive notions such as self-acceptance and continual repentance are really complementary. Self-acceptance does not mean that a man is perfectly all right as he is, but rather that he sees his past as a given, factual necessity, and insofar as this past is incorporated into the immediacy of the present, he cannot change what he is. His acceptance of self is based on God's acceptance of him. Man is necessarily a sinner, and God accepts the necessary in man. However, any particular personal sin is not necessary, for man joins sin to his being in the process of actualization. This third term between possibility and necessity is not a derived unity, but is created by man himself through free choice. Thus, although man is not responsible for being a sinner, he is still guilty of his own sin. Alongside his duty to accept self, he is placed under the strict obligation of continual repentance.

¹ This formula for actualization is further explained by George Malantschuk in his article "La Dialectique de la Liberté selon Sören Kierkegaard," Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques, XLI (1958), traduction du danois par J. Colette, O.P., pp. 711-725.
Actualization may aid us to understand these other notions, but the purpose of this chapter is to obtain a deeper knowledge of actualization itself. We have already seen that it consists in the practical activity resulting from a man's consciousness that he is before God as a sinner, as nothing, and in absolute obedience. Further explanation revealed that the proportion between infinitization and actualization paralleled the proportion between thought and action.

Kierkegaard generally managed to refrain from any explicit statement concerning the meaning of practical activity. However, from what has been said about the actual sufferings of life, it would seem that he does not relegate action to man's consciousness of self through infinitization. Action is more than thought, and therefore we cannot perform an action by talking about it or viewing it as a possibility, but only by doing it. Action is a form of existence, and as existence cannot be conceptualized, but only judged, so too, a man cannot say action, but can only do it. This fact that actualization cannot be fulfilled through thought explains why S.K. could not apply his phenomenological method to it. Actuality is not a phenomenon for contemplation.

If actualization is truly more than mere consciousness and acceptance of self, then S.K. has stepped beyond the Lutheranism of his day. Yet it is commonly acknowledged that Kierkegaard was a staunch follower of Luther. May we advance here a possible
solution for this seeming contradiction? It is not improbable that Kierkegaard's puritanically protestant upbringing kept him a strong supporter of Lutheranism till his early death in 1855. He was particularly sympathetic with Luther's revolutionary attacks against the status quo of organized Christianity. Yet S.K.'s keen insight into life helped him to realize that man's task of perfecting his being makes morally good acts a necessary complement of faith. Only through a union of the two may man purchase freedom.

This explanation may be true as far as it goes, but it is an inadequate explanation of Kierkegaard's writings. The problem of faith and good works recurs time after time in the religious works, and faith is often represented as the sole condition for actualization. To resolve this difficulty, we must examine what S.K. understood by the term "faith".

Faith and Good Works

The degree of Luther's influence on Kierkegaard may be debated, and this is particularly true regarding this problem of faith and good works. Luther espoused the sufficiency of faith


3 I do not pretend to discuss the subtleties of this theological problem in this thesis. However, S.K. uses the term "faith" in an unusual sense, and we must be aware of this in order to understand the relationship between faith and actualization.
for salvation, and admonished his followers to sin bravely provided they believed more firmly. Sin and faith were quite compatible for Luther. Kierkegaard, on the contrary, would be compelled logically to deny the possibility of such compatibility, for he not only taught the synonymity of "despair" and "sin" as we saw above, but he also definitively identified freedom and belief. The same formula for the condition in which no despair at all exists is also the formula for believing: by relating itself to its own self, and by willing to be itself, the self is grounded transparently in the Power which constituted it. Inasmuch as despair is a disproportion in the self, it is a negation of freedom, and S.K. would convey an identical meaning by stating that sin is the negation of belief. The two are contradictories, and therefore cannot possibly be compatible with each other. Consequently, it would be an absurdity for S.K. to say, "Sin bravely but believe more firmly." On this point at least, he must assume a position of counter-distinction to Luther.

If we note that actualization and believing are both processes whose terms are identified in freedom, we may argue back to the identification of the processes themselves. Actualization, for S.K., is believing. Does this mean that actualization is narrowed to what we ordinarily mean by "faith," or is faith expanded to new

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4cf. above, pp. 56-59.

5Sickness unto Death, pp. 77-78.
dimensions by Kierkegaard?

It is not surprising to discover various Kierkegaardian definitions of faith in different contexts, nor can we expect easily to comprehend these definitions at first reading. "Faith," S.K. journalized, "is an infinite self-made care as to whether one has faith—and that self-made care is faith." He wrote this in 1848, the same year in which he composed Sickness unto Death, and we find here a unity in his thought. This care for faith is the effort of man to attain selfhood in Christian sobriety, and it is self-made because freedom is not a derived synthesis, but is self-made in the process of actualization. Faith is taken here as both the term and process. It is the goal of Christian perfection and the attaining of that goal; it is actualization and actualizing. Man attains this goal of faith precisely inasmuch as he strives for it by believing.

This unity between the term and process of faith exactly parallels Kierkegaard's treatment of love that we saw in the previous chapter. The expression of love is its very act. What love does, that it is; what it is, that it does—and at one and the same time: at the very moment it goes out of itself, it is in itself; and at the very moment it is in itself, it thereby goes out of itself. So too with the dialectic of faith. Kierkegaard is more

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6 Journals, p. 243.
concerned with the union of a power with its operation than with their distinction.

Over and above this union between process and term, S.K. sought an even higher unity within the unity of man, and he found a union between faith and love. Jean Wahl points out that Kierkegaard identified the domain of love with the domain of faith, because all love is a recognition of the "thou" and the "I". God is the absolute "Thou", and so the domain of love is grounded in a recognition of God; but this can only occur in faith. Then he proceeds to show that S.K. did not consider love to be an interior disposition, but that he identified love with the works of love: that is, he identified the act of love with love's expression. An interior sentiment is the aesthetic definition of love; but the Christian definition is the concrete expression of love in good deeds. This again explains why Kierkegaard could not advocate faith without good deeds, for the two are identified as act and expression. The actuality of faith automatically involves the reality of good deeds.

Kierkegaard's explanation of faith will remain ever mysteri-

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ous to us unless we understand one final point. For S.K., faith is more properly an act of the will than an act of the intellect. This was no philosophical conclusion from logical or psychological reasoning, but a theological position that he culled from Sacred Scripture. As early as 1834, when he was but twenty-one years old, he wrote: "Faith, surely, implies an act of the will, and moreover not in the same sense as when I say, for instance, that all apprehension implies an act of the will; how can I otherwise explain the saying in the New Testament that whatsoever is not of faith is sin. (Rom. xiv, 23)"

This scriptural interpretation by Kierkegaard cannot be overestimated. It totally revamps the ordinary notion of faith, which is usually acknowledged to be an act of the intellect. The will may be an efficient cause of this intellectual act because the evidence of the known object is not present to the mind to compel assent, but the act itself belongs to the intellectual power of the soul. S.K. rejected this limited definition of faith, and expanded the horizons of belief until they were coextensive with the entire area of Christian perfection. Faith became the humble rectitude of will as it conforms itself in obedience to the will of God. No longer is faith a single unit of virtue, but it is the perfection synthesized from the totality of a man's virtues.

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9Journals, p. 3.
This interpretation of Kierkegaard's personal understanding of his own distinction between thought and action may be substantiated by the following passage taken from his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*:

Let us take a religious action. Is believing God identical with considering how glorious a thing faith is, and what peace and safety it can give? By no means. Even wishing to believe, where the interest of the subject is much more definitely involved, is not believing, is not action. The relationship of the individual to the action represented in his thought, is still merely a possibility, subject to repudiation....

Between the action as represented in thought on the one hand, and the real action on the other, between the possibility and the reality, there may in respect of content be no difference at all. But in respect of form, the difference is essential. Reality is the interest in action, in existence.10

This passage should remove any lingering doubts about Kierkegaard's identification of faith and action, or of faith and good works.

**Intensity of Choice**

If faith as Christian perfection pertains to the will, it is easy to see why the act of choice is central to S.K.'s philosophy of man. Freedom to choose is not dialectical freedom, but choice is the final step by which a man becomes himself, and therefore it is the road to freedom. S.K. has been accused of being anti-intellectual, but this is not the case. His emphasis on the will was merely an effort to attack a contemporary weakness in society. Infinitization is the first determinant of a man's self,

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10 *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 304. (emphasis added)
and this is certainly intellectual activity, but it is the will which is decisive. Without the will, a man's self is swallowed up in a gnawing reflection.

The first act of choice in a man's experience, what S.K. refers to as the baptism of the will, is the absolute choice of self. A man recognizes the independence of his spirit and his right to self expression. He decides to control his actions through his will rather than submit them to the control of aesthetical pleasure. This is the absolute choice of self, the choice to be his self.\textsuperscript{11}

We must note here that this initial choice of self which makes man free does not convey unrestricted freedom. No, man is still a sinner before God. Kierkegaard tells us that the one thing from which he was never entirely free even for a day was his melancholy nature.\textsuperscript{12} This highlights the pure notion of Kierkegaardian freedom which is not unrestricted liberty nor freedom of choice, but rather it is the becoming of self; it is the self which has become itself. This does not mean that man creates himself or breaks the bonds of sin which, according to S.K.'s Lutheranism, are part and parcel of man's corrupt nature. It simply means that man re-creates himself by accepting himself as he is, a sinner,

\textsuperscript{11}Either/Or, II, p. 179.

\textsuperscript{12}The Point of View, p. 78.
while at the same time holding before himself the infinite hope of God's forgiveness. This acceptance of self is the absolute choice of self.

In this baptism of the will and in all subsequent will acts, S.K. stresses the intensity involved. The objective goodness of an act is not the ultimate determinant of Christian sobriety. In the final analysis, it is intensity, enthusiasm, or purity of intention that is decisive. Just as sin is in the will rather than in the object, the same is true of perfection, and S.K. emphasized this even to the point of jeopardizing an objective moral code. He considered himself a spiritual leader whose mission was to combat contemporary deficiencies, and he believed that the blindspots of the age were in the area of fundamental principles. He taught that man must re-cognize himself as a creature whose being is immersed in the power of God, as a creature dependent upon God in hope, love, and faith. Kierkegaard saw the fruitlessness of doing the right thing for the wrong reason, and so he did not attempt to preach a special ethical and religious code before he had reintroduced into society an acceptance of general principles. He tried to lead men to the personal consciousness of self through infinitization, and then indicate to them the freedom to be achieved.

13Because of the severance of Protestantism from Rome, S.K. would probably never have developed a special ethic, except for a man existing in the ethical sphere. S.K. believed that the religious sphere was too much of a personal commitment to God to be involved in an objective, universal code of morality.
This dialectic toward freedom in man is not simply a haphazard forcing together of contradictions. Actualization of self should be a natural sequent of infinitization, or in other words, there should be a direct proportion between intensity of choice and consciousness of self. In the act of choice, which of itself makes man free, the element of depth is determined by intensity, intensity in turn being determined by the degree of consciousness. This is what S.K. means when he says that the first condition determining what man will turn out to be is imagination, even though it is the will that ultimately makes the choice. 14

Within these degrees of consciousness, intensity, and freedom, the supreme perfection abides in the man who has truly become a Christian. Christian sobriety supposes total consciousness of self as ordered to God; faith is the eternal enthusiasm which attains the peak of intensity; and finally, perfect freedom is the Christian eternally united to God in love.

Dialectical Freedom

The more we ponder these ideas of dialectical freedom, the more sharply we realize that they completely evert our commonly accepted definitions of freedom. We have said, "God makes man free;" Kierkegaard teaches: "God gives man potential freedom." We

14*Training in Christianity*, p. 185.
have said, "Freedom is the ability to choose for yourself;" Kierkegaard writes, "Freedom is the solitary choice of God which He Himself commands." We have said, "Man possesses freedom;" Kierkegaard proclaims: "Man is freedom." This is confusing, for when we retrace our thoughts in an effort to track down the source of disagreement, we only find that personal experience corroborates what S.K. has said. True, we must stand firm against the autonomy he gives to man in ethical and religious matters, but this does not affect the truth of his psychological explorations into man. Why, then, this disagreement? In large part, it may be due to the fact that we use the same term to discuss many distinct realities. "Freedom" is an analogous term. We say that the robin in the air is free; the panther freely roams the forest; man freely chooses; and God is free to create. Consequently, in order to understand freedom in its purity, many philosophers abstract it from the imperfections which restrict its perfection in limited being. When this purified notion is predicated of man, the danger is present of forgetting that man is first a creature, and only then free.

Kierkegaard developed a method of approach that did not involve abstraction and purification of the attributes in man. Man is studied as the whole man living and breathing in reality; as man loving and man hating; man working and man resting. The only proof Kierkegaard could advance for his thesis was an appeal to personal experience. All this plus his Lutheran tenets caused his
intellectual study to be more closely akin to theology than to philosophy. He saw man first of all as a creature of God. The God-man relationship was not a conclusion to be reached, but an irrefutable foundation for his further insights into the human personality. He believed that through creation man is bound to God with the strongest of ties. Man is under absolute command to order his life to God as his final goal. In what sense then could man be said to be free? Certainly he is not free to choose, for he is commanded to choose God. Yet, Kierkegaard knew through faith that man is free.15 What is more, he sensed freedom within his own being just as truly as he periodically experienced what he termed a loss of freedom. So, with experience as the material and his psychological mastery as a tool, he set out to fashion freedom.

Those ideas about the freedom of a created human person are best expressed in the Works of Love. The motif of love enables Kierkegaard to speak directly about freedom, for, as we noted above, charity is freedom, and freedom is charity. This theme brings about a clarification of freedom, for what is obscure in our understanding of freedom becomes lucid through our experience of love. Thus Kierkegaard writes: "Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love everlastingly free in blessed independence."16

15Certainly S.K. was aware of the distinction between physical and moral freedom. From what has already been said, it is clear that he was striving to understand another facet of man's reality. What happens when man creates himself?

16Works of Love, p. 32.
Is it not true that the very person who feels a compulsion in his love, the man driven to love from his very being, he is the man who feels free in his love? "And just the one who feels himself so dependent on his love that he would lose everything in losing the beloved, just he is independent--on the condition that he does not confuse love with possession of the beloved. The love that underwent the change of eternity by becoming duty, and loves because it must love, it is independent, for the only one it is dependent upon is duty, and duty is the only emancipating power. Duty makes a man dependent and at the same time eternally independent."

So often we are deceived as to what is dependence and what independence in love. S.K. realized that freedom in love consists in being able to continue loving even when the other has ceased to love in return. He asked whether God's love for the sinner would be so unshakeable if it depended upon man's love for Him. When the sinner proudly cries out to God that he has stopped loving Him, God's freedom still loves with an infinite love.

The point of emphasis is that eternal love does not settle upon the possession of an individual. Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love everlastingly secured against despair. Despair is a disproportion in being; disproportion is sin; and sin

\[17\] Ibid.
is the substitution of a creature for God. So Kierkegaard concludes: "Despair consists in laying hold on an individual with infinite passion; for unless one is desperate, one can lay hold only on the eternal with infinite passion." Again and again he returns to the relationship between God and man which is the first of all relationships. God holds priority over man's being and love. "Priority" is here used in the juridical sense, for God has a right to man. So although a man's heart is truly free when he freely gives his love to another, this is not the primary note of man's love for God. The primary note is that man's heart is first of all a bound heart. Man is made for God and must choose to love God. Consequently, man must know himself as infinitely bound, and then the talk about freedom may begin.

Dialectical freedom defies definition. Kierkegaard himself tried to define it when he said that: the self is a synthetic relation, and freedom is that in the relation which relates itself to itself. But it requires much reflection and much reading of this melancholy Dane to understand what he meant by this definition.

18 Ibid., p. 34.
19 Ibid., p. 120.
CHAPTER IV

FREEDOM AND GOVERNANCE

Closely connected to the problem of freedom in Kierkegaard is the equally subtle problem of Divine providence, or as his English translators have agreed to render it, the problem of governance. In many respects, discussions of these two problems naturally intertwine. Indeed, Kierkegaard himself often treats of them in relationship to one another, or even as though they were the same reality. To proceed one step further, it may well be true that he actually did understand them to be one reality—viewed under two different aspects. This reality would be the relationship of man to God, wherein God draws man to Himself, and man responds with freedom. Whatever the case may be, it is certain that S.K. considered governance basically important to any full explanation of his life. Governance gave him the vocation of a religious writer, and whether he was conscious of it or not at the time, he later felt it had been governance directing his entire life to that end. Obviously, a discussion of governance at this point would cast further light upon our problem of freedom, but we cannot hope completely to lay bare the subtlety of this question. The problem of reconciling providence with human freedom baffled man's intellect centuries before Kierkegaard's birth, just as it continues to
do so today. This antinomy is present in the most insignificant human action, and it reaches its climax in the mystery of the crucifixion. It may be that man will never understand this problem until he sees it for the first time in the light of the Beatific Vision. Nevertheless, a brief exposition of what S.K. felt governance to be may help us understand dialectical freedom.

Predestination forced itself upon S.K.'s thought as early as 1834, when he was only twenty-one years old. At that time he wrote: "From every point of view the concept predestination may be considered as an abortion, for having unquestionably arisen in order to relate freedom and God's omnipotence it solves the riddle by denying one of the concepts and consequently explains nothing."

It took Kierkegaard twelve years to solve this riddle to his own satisfaction. In the intervening period he had experienced a great deal of life, and no doubt it was reflection on this personal experience that made him write in 1846:

The greatest good which can be done to any being, greater than any end to which it can be created, is to make it free. In order to be able to do that omnipotence is necessary. That will sound curious, since of all things omnipotence, so at least it would seem, should make things dependent. But if we rightly consider omnipotence, then clearly it must have the quality of so taking itself back in the very manifestation of its all-powerfulness that the results of this act of the omnipotent can be independent. That is why one man cannot make another man quite free, because the one who has the power is imprisoned in it and consequently always has a false relation to him whom he wishes to free. That is why there is a finite self-love in all finite power (talent and so forth). Omnipotence alone can take itself back while giving, and this rela-

1The Journals, p. 1.
tionship is nothing else but the independence of the recipient. God's omnipotence is therefore his goodness. For goodness means to give absolutely, yet in such a way that by taking oneself back one makes the recipient independent. From finite power comes only dependence, and omnipotence alone can make something independent, can create something out of nothing which endures of itself, because omnipotence is always taking itself back.  

This explains how it is possible for an omnipotent God to create a free creature, and we have already spent a good deal of effort trying to understand human freedom. But the problem of the real interaction between Omnipotence and freedom still remains. Once again we face the same type of problem that has occurred time after time in our study of Kierkegaardian thought. The abstract formulation is logically sound as in the passage we have just quoted, but such a formulation was merely an afterthought for S.K. His primary concern was to explain reality as we meet it in everyday life. Consequently, when he looked at the problem of governance, he looked at it under this same light.

Reading through Kierkegaard's Point of View, the reader discovers that the author was extremely conscious of the fact that governance had played a part in his life. S.K. does not concern himself in this work with the question of how governance is possible, but only with the fact of its being. So he writes: "Since I became an author I have never for a single day had the experience I hear others complain of, namely, a lack of thoughts or their failure to present themselves. If that were to happen to me, it would

2 Ibid., p. 180.
rather be an occasion for joy, that finally I had obtained a day that was really free."\(^3\) It is certain that S.K. felt that this constraint was placed upon him by a power other than himself, and that this power was divine governance. So we read: "The urge of productivity in me was so great that I could not do otherwise; I let the Two Edifying Discourses come out, and I came to an understanding with governance. ...Governance had me now securely bound. Like a suspicious character perhaps, I have been put on a very spare diet. I have been accustomed so to live that the maximum time I expect to have left is a year—sometimes, and not seldom, when a special tension is required, I live with the prospect of a week, yes, even of a day. And governance had put checks upon me in every sense."\(^4\)

Evidently this awareness of governance goes beyond the conviction that his nature had been fashioned and presented by God. How else explain this time-table life to which he felt submitted? Had he believed that his natural constitution was the sole cause of this pressure, would he have spoken about his authorship as he did? How strange to say of the Edifying Discourses that he "let them come out!"

In an effort to explain "with categorical precision" the share governance had in his authorship, S.K. says that governance educated him and that "the education is reflected in the process of

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\(^3\)Point of View, p. 70.
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 86.
the productivity."\(^5\) He compares this education process to the activity of the civil police with this one difference: governance, as identified with God who is perfect Love, employs a person only for the sake of love. The analogy of governance with the civil police is grounded in S.K.'s conviction that he was under the most unconditional obedience to governance.\(^6\)

Not only was Kierkegaard conscious of this Divine Power directing his life. He was thankful for it. He desired it. Often he reflected upon the horrible consequences of a life set adrift by God. "Be grateful to Him if through the use of mildness or of severity He teaches you to bring your will into agreement with Him—how fearful if He makes no move to arrest your course."\(^7\) No individual would be able to traverse the sea of life and eventually find the port of heaven did God not direct him. S.K. believed that when a man feels the pressure of God's hand at his back, the Divine purpose is not to crush him to the earth, but to push him forward. So he teaches that a man feeling this pressure should praise God:

So he finds himself—God be praised! (for away with cowardly talk! and accursed by paltry jesting! where only congratulation is in place)—He finds himself—God be praised!—in a serious strait. It depends upon divine governance (but let us never forget that here is love) how many holes (if I may speak thus) it will bore in him, how hot (if I may speak thus) it will heat the oven in which like gold he is to be tried.

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 73.
\(^6\)Ibid., p. 88.
\(^7\)For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourselves, P. 235.
Perhaps he is yet far from having a complete survey of the true situation, for governance is love, and though his probation is taken seriously, there is nothing cruel about this seriousness, which deals gently with a man and never tempts him beyond his capacity to bear.

Kierkegaard provides a beautiful explanation of this interaction between governance and human freedom in his discourse "He Will Draw All Things to Himself." As in so many other instances, his method here is theological rather than philosophical. He feels that a man who leads a true life will have a connaturality with truth, and automatically assent to it when he finds himself in its presence. Experience, he believed, was the only proof, and this, not in the sense of rationalistic poverty, but rather in the sense that experience is unique in its power to convince.

There are several ways by which one being may draw another to itself, depending on the nature of the object drawn. For instance, a magnet is able to draw iron to itself. But as the iron is not a self, the entire action is a simple action on the part of the magnet.9 In the case of a self drawing another self, the action is composite and therefore more complicated.10 Actually, instead of being restricted by being drawn toward another self, man finds a fuller expression of freedom in this activity:

Furthermore, with a deeper understanding of the matter, what is meant by drawing to itself depends upon the nature of what


is to be drawn. If it is in itself a self, then the phrase 'to draw truly to oneself,' cannot mean merely to draw it away from being its own self, to draw it in such a way that it loses its own existence by being drawn into that which draws it unto itself. No, in the case of that which is truly a self, to be drawn in such a way is again to be deceived. This, the deceit, will doubtless be the last thing to come to evidence; yet this last is what ought first to be said, and said at once: 'It deceives'. No, when that which is to be drawn is in itself a self, the real meaning of truly drawing to oneself is, first to help it to become truly its own self, so as then to draw it to oneself, or it means to help it to become its own self with and by the drawing of it to oneself.—So here the meaning of truly drawing to oneself is duplex: first to make that which is to be drawn its own self, and then to draw it to oneself.11

In the light of this, we see that governance enhances man's freedom and in no way lessens it. Man's task in life is to become himself, and to do so requires a proper proportion between infinitization and actualization. Everyone will admit from his own experience that this is a delicate balance and quite difficult to achieve. Kierkegaard will go one step further and say that it is impossible to achieve without God's help. And this help is governance. 'In the first instance, God helps man to become himself by presenting to him a choice. He has created man, and so knows that man can only become free through the activity of his personal will choosing the good. Thus, God helps man become free by presenting to him a good choice, and this choice is Christ.12

Once God has helped man to become free by proposing to him

11 Ibid., p. 159.

12 Ibid., p. 160.
the choice of Christ, He then draws man to Himself by commanding this choice. To achieve freedom, man must choose Christianity. If we did not see this statement in the light of Kierkegaard's entire dialectic, it would seem strange indeed. At first glance, it is a copulation of contradictories. However, should we not expect just this? After all, it is only a paraphrase of what we already conceded to be a mystery, namely, the interaction of governance and freedom. Perhaps Kierkegaard's solution to this riddle is not the ultimate answer, but at least he is consistent with himself. No, more than this, Kierkegaard's solution in large measure satisfies the intellect, for it corresponds to our own experience which is S.K.'s criterion for truth.

At the beginning of this chapter, we stated that the abstract formulation of any truth was only an afterthought for Kierkegaard. His primary concern was to explain reality as we meet it in everyday life. This attitude was the source for his reaction against Hegelianism. Not that he had no use for abstraction and systematic philosophy. On the contrary, such a methodical procedure is too much in evidence in his own thought for anyone seriously to accuse him on that account. No, his attack against Hegel was based on the fact that Hegel, and many others, conclude their thought with abstractions, and therefore never come to grips with reality. Consequently, we would do S.K. an injustice to leave this problem of governance and freedom with merely the analytic treatment that has been presented so far. Rather than do this, let us
turn for a final time to the *Works of Love* where he is discoursing on God's commandment of love. This passage pulls together the many threads of Kierkegaardian thought that have been unraveled in this thesis. Here he speaks of sorrow and love. He speaks of the Divine Command. And underneath it all is the understanding of human freedom:

Thou shalt sorrow is both true and beautiful. I have no right to harden my heart against the pain of life, for I must sorrow; but neither have I the right to despair, for I must sorrow. So also with love. You have no right to harden yourself against this emotion, for thou shalt love; and just as little have you the right to corrupt this feeling in you, for thou shalt love. You must preserve the love and you must preserve yourself, and in preserving yourself preserve your love. There where the purely human would rush forth, the commandment retards; there where the purely human would lose courage, the commandment strengthens; there where the purely human would become weary and prudent, the commandment enkindles and gives wisdom. The commandment consumes and burns up the unsoundness in your love.13

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13 *Works of Love*, p. 36.
CONCLUDING UNSCIENTIFIC POSTSCRIPT

As a mirror of Kierkegaardian freedom, this thesis leaves much to be desired. Perhaps within these pages the disproportion between excess and sufficiency parallels the disproportion of a melancholy aesthete. The sin here would be the sin of finitude, for this thesis falls far short of mirroring the amazing possibilities within Kierkegaard's psychology of person. That the melancholy Dane actually possessed these possibilities is a widely accepted fact today. His influence is widespread, and because his thought is neither a philosophy nor a theology, but a marriage between the two, it need not supplant existing philosophies, but can well be their complement. Certainly this much may be said: although this personalist philosophy may not be entirely palatable in some respects, nevertheless when its defects have been weeded out, there yet remains a large body of thought that is truth and wisdom.

Søren Kierkegaard claimed that he was not a formal philosopher. Perhaps this is true, but whether he was or not, he brought to light a truth which many formal philosophers had previously passed by in darkness.
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The thesis submitted by Frank Joseph Granzeier, S.J. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

March 19, 1959
Date

Signature of Adviser