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Suspension of a Conflict in a Darkened Son

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Abstract

Antithetical desires displayed throughout Kierkegaard's authorship indicate the disjunctive assumption that the individual exists either in a state of increasing autonomy, expressed negatively as striving for freedom from divine constraint, or in a state of self-annihilating submission, expressed positively in terms of kenotic unification. Proximity to the divine thereby entails forfeiture of individuality, contrary to the explicit aim of Kierkegaard's authorial project, and aversion to materiality. This article enunciates the conflict (I), traces the crescendo of loss that births the pseudonymous authorship and ends in realized longing for death (II), and begins to approach a more holistic vision of psycho-spiritual development (III).

Keywords: Desire, Death, Psychoanalysis, Søren Kierkegaard, Julia Kristeva, Sigmund Freud, St. Augustine, St. Paul

From the outside and in retrospect a child at play epitomizes the innocence of childhood, forebodingly unfamiliar with harms and ills soon to undermine joy.[1] Upon closer investigation, the pristine pleasures of youth lose their veneer of perfection. East of Eden, certain sites of origin become gravestones serving only to commemorate early losses or frustrations, memories buried deep beneath decades of choking overgrowth. In July of 1838 a twenty-five-year-old Kierkegaard returns to one such place and tries to recollect a childhood tarnished by family secrets and hidden iniquity:

> When I stand so and look over Røyen's old place deep into Hestehaven, and the forest thickens deeply in the background,

[1] Deep thanks are due to Will Britt and Richard Kearney, in admiration and acknowledgement of their influence upon, and roles in the composition of this essay, both through their engaging lectures and in time spent together at various events over the past few years. And my utmost respect and gratitude to Vanessa Rumble, whose kindness, humility, and generosity through many, many hours spent in dialogue about topics both philosophical and personal have meant more to me than she knows.

> the shadow and secrecy accentuated even more with the isolated trunks on which only crowns have grown—then I seem vividly to see myself as a little boy running off in my green jacket and gray pants—but alas, I have grown older and cannot catch up with myself. Grasping childhood is like grasping a beautiful region as one rides in a carriage looking backward; one only becomes properly aware of the beauty at that moment, at that very instant when it begins to disappear, and all I have left of that happy time is crying like a child.[2]

Though children may later appear to resign the games of youth in favor of maturation, loss is always compensated through substitutive means.[3] The play of the mind provides an outlet by which psychical distress can be exchanged for more pleasing, imagined outcomes. The cathartic function perdures, veiled and internalized, as fantasy furthers the task of mitigating psychical pressures amplified by loss and other frustrations. *Creative writing* serves this purpose even more efficaciously, alleviating tension at still higher levels.

Over the past two decades, Vanessa Rumble has been refining an acute sensitivity to conflicts boiling beneath the surface of Kierkegaard's writings: the specters of contradiction haunting his unconscious. She traces contours of two currents flowing throughout his life and works: "An arresting feature of Kierkegaard's authorship is the disjunction presented there between the proclamation of individual autonomy and the enduring desire for fusion with a natural, human, or divine other."[4] His pseudonymous authors in particular betray a disjunctive assumption that one exists *either* in a state of increasing autonomy, expressed negatively as striving for freedom from divine constraint, *or* in a state of self-annihilating submission, expressed positively in terms of kenotic unification.[5]

[2] Søren Kierkegaard, *Volume 1, Journals AA-DD*. ed. N. J. Cappelørn, A. Hannay, D. Kangas, B. H. Kirmmse, G. Pattison, V. Rumble, and K. B. Søderquist (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 248. Emphasis removed.

[3] In "Creative Writers and Daydreaming" Freud writes, "Actually, we can never give anything up; we only exchange one thing for another. What appears to be a renunciation is really the formation of a substitute or surrogate. In the same way, the growing child, when he stops playing, gives up nothing but the link with real objects; instead of playing, he now phantasies" (*SE* IX, 145). All references to Freud will be to volume and page numbers from Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1966). Or, turning to St. Augustine: "Behavior does not change when one leaves behind domestic guardians and schoolmasters, nuts and balls and sparrows, to be succeeded by prefects and kings, gold, estates, and slaves as one advances to later stages in life. Likewise canes are replaced by harsher punishments" (St. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008], 22).

[4] Vanessa Rumble, "Kierkegaard and the Uncanny: A Cast of Sinners and Automatons," *Enrahonar* 29 (1998), 131.

[5] Additionally, when the pseudonyms contrast freedom with unfreedom they reveal a belief that the human will is only ever free to choose the good *or* hopelessly enslaved

At one point Rumble contrasts her own position with the developmental reading of Merold Westphal, whose view "offers a compelling presentation of the overall trajectory of Kierkegaard's authorship; it locates Kierkegaard's growing emphasis on Christ as Prototype in its relation to the earlier so-called theory of stages, and there is…something reassuring in what Westphal refers to as the 'dialectical progression' to which he draws attention."[6] Looking for meditation, the problem materializes: did Kierkegaard suspend the antithesis? Or rather, shedding language in which upward strivings of the idealist have been couched and adopting terminology in which the inward, healing-oriented pursuits of an analysand can be expressed: how might the conflict be effectively sublimated? Did Kierkegaard attempt this movement?

Rumble believes not. "Kierkegaard's works cry out for such a mediation, but, in their refusal to proffer it, they stake their claim in the reader's living resolution."[7] Yet theory and praxis entwine, and "living resolution" requires the cooperation of intellect and imagination. The deliberations to follow seek to preserve Rumble's psychoanalytic insights alongside the dialectic of development roughly sketched in Kierkegaard's writings, enunciated with reference to the Hegelian sensitivities of Westphal and Julia Kristeva. The aim is to begin to approach a standpoint from which to behold a more holistic vision of psycho-spiritual development, to suspend this conflict in a darkened son.

I. Regression

> "…I do not know whence I came to be in this mortal life or, as I may call it, this living death…I was welcomed by the consolations of human milk; but it was not my mother or my nurses who made any decision to fill their breasts, but you who through them gave me infant food, in accordance with your ordinance and the riches which are distributed deep in the natural order."[8]

Introducing the task of *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud presents the challenge of a friend who has tried to convince him that "the true source of religious sentiments" is a "sensation of 'eternity', a feeling as of some-

to sin, where no mediation between these is possible. On this point Climacus's contrast between freedom and unfreedom in *Philosophical Fragments* is especially telling. And from the outset the romantic desire to *return* as contrasted with an idealist drive toward *progress* is striking, especially downstream from the intellectualized conflicts displayed in the works of Kierkegaard's German predecessors.

[6] Vanessa Rumble, "Christianly Speaking, Humanly Speaking: The Dynamics of Leveling and Mimetic Desire in Kierkegaard's *Christian Discourses*," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook* 12 (2007), 210-211.

[7] Rumble, "Kierkegaard and the Uncanny," 131.

[8] St. Augustine, *Confessions*, 6.

thing limitless, unbounded—as it were, 'oceanic.'"[9] Investigations into the origins of this phenomenon inevitably guide the analyst to the heart of an "other primaeval period, which falls within the lifetime of the individual himself—that is, to childhood."[10] The experience in question is based upon intimations of a time when μητήϱ and one's own material were not yet distinguished, a time at which the infant had not yet begun to conceive of itself as a separate individual.[11] Rumble calls into question religious expressions of this regressive desire for primal unity on the basis that the "enduring desire for fusion with a natural, human, or divine other" would necessarily "confound any reliable determination of agency."[12]

But, perhaps intentionally, she does not note that Kierkegaard himself eschews this desire for precisely the same reason. Recurring criticisms belie his fixation upon the gravity pressing in upon each moral decision—and, perhaps, a conscience haunted by his own penchant for flight.[13] Psychoanalytic investigations into the origins of regressive desire affirm Kierkegaard's mistrust. Yet insofar as the analyst learns to look upon patterns of repeated condemnation with suspicion, such criticisms do not acquit him of Rumble's charge that his more explicitly religious works often betray a longing for boundary-dissolving unification with the divine. In fact, his

[9] *SE* XXI, 64. Admitting that he has never had such an experience, Freud explains that this phenomenon must be "…a feeling of an indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a whole" (ibid., 65). He also likens it to the "height of being in love," at which "the boundary between ego and object threatens to melt away" (ibid.).

[10] *SE* VII, 173.

[11] Rumble describes the religious extension of this feeling as "a nostalgic immersion in one's surroundings" and "a boundary-destroying moment of absorption in the Other" (Rumble, "Kierkegaard and the Uncanny," 131). Analyzing the visions of St. Teresa of Avila, Julia Kristeva provides a window into these magnifications of oceanic feeling: "Teresa began her 'search' by a 'suspension of powers' to attain what must be referred to as a state of *regression* where the thinking individual loses the contours of her identity, and below the threshold of consciousness, becomes what could be called a "psyche-soma." In this state—which for the psychoanalyst goes back to the archaic states of osmosis between the newborn, even the embryo, and its mother—the relation to self and other are fleetingly retained by an elaborate infra-linguistic sensibility whose intensity is in direct proportion to the loss of the faculty for abstract judgment" (Julia Kristeva, "The Passion According to Teresa of Avila, trans. Anne Marsella, in *Carnal Hermeneutics*, ed. Richard Kearney and Brian Treanor [New York: Fordham University Press, 2015], 257). The phenomenon in question, expressed in the accounts of Freud's friend, Kristeva's Teresa, and Rumble's Kierkegaard, culminates in an experience in which boundaries between oneself and another collapse, inhibiting one's sense of identity and capacity for abstraction.

[12] Rumble, "Kierkegaard and the Uncanny," 131.

[13] Criticisms of first immediacy emerge throughout the signed and unsigned works of Kierkegaard's authorship. As noted above, one locus of such renunciations is *Works of Love*, a signed work that contrasts the pleasures of immediacy with the self-denial required by an other-directed love. Here he writes, for example: "What a difference there is between…that play of the powers of immediacy…and the earnestness of eternity, the earnestness of the commandment in spirit and truth, in honesty and self-denial!" (Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995], 25).

denunciations may point in the opposite direction, insofar as the analyst learns to suspect that the degree of vehemence with which an analysand expresses condemnation likely corresponds to the degree of vehemence with which an inclination toward the contrary has been repressed.[14]

This is to say that Kierkegaard's renunciations of first immediacy may well serve to conceal his own desire for it. These would strengthen his resolve in maintaining conscious disapproval while also reducing the store of libidinal energy being used to hold back the repressed. But why might the desire for unification have been repressed in the first place?

A few reasons can be adduced. First, Kierkegaard himself diagnoses the flight to immediacy as fundamentally regressive. When he condemns the conflation of "faith" and "first immediacy" he sets an anti-ethical, backward-looking movement against ethico-religious striving.[15] At a level most accessible to conscious reflection, therefore, the regressive desire directly conflicts with his reasoned view of religion as centered on "becoming" rather than on "being."[16] In this first case the regressive desire would have been repressed in the service of contrary, progressive desires.

[14] In his essay on "Negation," Freud explains that the ideational content accompanying repressed patterns of thought or action can be eased into consciousness on the basis of one's negating that content. Rather than forthrightly taking responsibility for a certain repressed inclination, for instance, an analysand may proclaim, often without invitation, "Well, I certainly don't have a desire to do *X*!" Such admissions bring underlying conflicts closer to resolution by allowing the idea accompanying a repressed desire to become conscious. Although ideational content is thereby acknowledged, however, negation also assists an individual in her refusal to take responsibility: "With the help of negation only one consequence of the process of repression is undone… The outcome of this is a kind of intellectual acceptance of the repressed, while at the same time what is essential to the repression persists" (*SE* XIX, 236). In the terminology of Freudian metapsychology, negation enables the ego to apply less energy in maintaining repressions of certain instinctual desires.

[15] Kierkegaard condemns the agency-confounding desire for fusion most explicitly with reference the equation of *faith* with *first immediacy*, and with this conflation in mind he responds critically to F. D. E. Schleiermacher's understanding of *God-consciousness* and its role as the lifeblood of religion. Kierkegaard's suspicion concurs with Freud's criticism of oceanic feeling: "That which Schleiermacher calls 'religion' and the Hegelian dogmaticians call 'faith,' is at bottom nothing more than the first immediacy, the condition for everything—the *vitale Fluidum*—the atmosphere that we, in spiritual sense, breathe in" (Søren Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers: Volume 2, Journals F-K*, ed. Howard and Edna Hong [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970], no. 1096). For a defense of this criticism see Chandler D. Rogers, "Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard, and the Problem of First Immediacy," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 80, no. 3 (2016b), 259-278.

[16] Later criticisms of Schleiermacher's position are congruent with Kristeva's diagnosis of this feeling as a type of regression. Thirteen years after he notes that Schleiermacher's view of religious life is grounded upon a feeling rooted in the spiritual atmosphere each of us already breathes in, Kierkegaard indicates that this view facilitates a flight from responsibility: "The error in Schleiermacher's dogmatics is that for him religiousness is always really a condition, *it is*; he represents everything in the sphere of being, Spinozi[istic] being. How it becomes in the sense of coming to exist and in the sense of being maintained does not really concern him. This is why he is unable to pick up very much from dogmatics. Every

Secondly, in a manner still mostly accessible to consciousness, repression may have been enacted on the basis of the regressive desire's perceived correspondence to an impulse toward self-love. Although infantile origins remain at least partly hidden from view, Kierkegaard makes this connection overtly.[17] Bodily remembrances are always already taken up into consciousness and interpreted, increasing the likelihood of retrospectively conflating intimations of primitive unity and imaginatively constructed "remembrances" of primary narcissism.[18]

Finally, in a manner made completely inaccessible to consciousness, Kierkegaard is likely attempting to smother regressive desire on the basis of the conflict displayed throughout his authorship. Pseudonymous "all-or-nothing accounts of freedom" belie his stubborn insistence upon the necessity of this disjunction: one may *either* exist in a quasi-divine state marked by absolute freedom *or* an in a state of absolute impotence of the will.[19] To trace out Rumble's thought: while Kierkegaard explicitly argues that ethico-religious striving constitutes the core of religious life, his writings exhibit an unconscious belief that this same desire toward individuation is nothing more than a ploy for absolute autonomy.

In this third case, then, repression of the regressive desire would have been carried out on the basis of Kierkegaard's progressive desire toward individuation. This desire would be justified at a conscious level under the banner of ethico-religious striving, yet condemned at an unconscious level as nothing other than sinful striving toward absolute autonomy. This antithesis between unification and individuation entails that forfeiture of

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Christian qualification is characterized by the ethical oriented to striving. From this comes fear and trembling, and the *you shall*; from this also the possibility of offense etc. This is of minor concern to Schleiermacher" (Søren Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers: Volume 4, Journals S-Z*, ed. Howard and Edna Hong [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975], 14). Religiousness properly consists not in the realm of *feeling*, but rather in the realm of *ethical striving*. Adherence to the domain of "being" alone exonerates the individual from her principal responsibility: to persist in the realm of "becoming," of the ethical oriented toward striving. For more on Kierkegaard's fairly drastic change in attitude toward Schleiermacher, from early admiration to late renunciation, see Chandler D. Rogers, "Schleiermacher in the Kierkegaardian Project: Between Socratic Ignorance and Second Immediacy," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook* 21 (2016a), 141-158.

[17] The connection between self-love (*Elskov*) and immediacy is explicated in the many renunciations that occur in Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*. On Freud's account, on the other hand, the newborn already acts on the basis of "self"-love at a time predating the possibility of later psychical remembrances (cf. *SE* XIV, 76-77). Even before we can postulate any kind of distinction between psychic and somatic processes, which would give rise to primary narcissism, autoerotism obtains; the *proto*-self "loves" reflexively, in "self"-interest.

[18] Put another way, bodily remembrances of primitive unity and psychical remembrances of primary narcissism are easily confused, as the former can only be imaginatively constructed from the psychical materials provided by the latter. Freud's investigations shed additional light upon the primal connection between immediacy and self-love, confirming Kierkegaard's suspicions and justifying this second possible reason for repression.

[19] Rumble, "Kierkegaard and the Uncanny," 135.

individuality increase relative to one's proximity to the divine, thereby accounting for the increasing emphasis on "self-annihilation" that intensifies at the end of his life, especially in writings intended to edify the religious believer. It reaches its climax in his realized longing for martyrdom.

These are the lines along which Rumble interprets Kierkegaard's category of second immediacy, for instance in assessing Abraham's movement beyond the ethical in *Fear and Trembling*: "In this second immediacy, the distinction between the subject and its Other is once again obscured, the identities of both are placed in question by the suspension of categories which assign agency and regulate ethical judgment."[20] Elsewhere she explains the presupposition: "I would maintain that the desire for fusion with another permeates both the aesthetic and religious spheres, as they are depicted by Kierkegaard."[21] In the aesthetic case the individual swayed by regressive desire evades ethical responsibility in blissful submission to an earthly lover, while in the religious case the individual loses sight of ethical sensibilities in blissful submission to the divine, drawn into the *unio mystica*.

On Rumble's reading the aesthetic and religious, on the one hand, are marked by lack of internal harmony and a subsequent pseudo-oneness feigned in erotic union. When the erotic trance is broken, human or divine, multiplicity ensues. The ethical, on the other hand, marks a drive toward autonomy that eschews human and divine dependence alike.[22] The (false) disjunction: *either* regressive unification in the aesthetic/religious *or* "ethical" autonomy as freedom from constraints imposed by such relations of dependence.

II. Progression

> "In the end, those who were carried off early no longer need us:
> they are weaned from earth's sorrows and joys, as gently as children
> outgrow the soft breasts of their mothers. But we, who do need
> such great mysteries, we for whom grief is so often
> the source of our spirit's growth—: could we exist without *them*?"[23]

From whatever motivates Kierkegaard's uncompromising refusal to acknowledge his mother throughout thousands upon thousands of pages penned, to the reclusive tendencies that seem to increase with

[20] Vanessa Rumble, "Eternity Lies Beneath: Autonomy and Finitude in Kierkegaard's Early Writings," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 35, no. 1 (1997), 95.

[21] Rumble, "Kierkegaard and the Uncanny," 131.

[22] Rumble concludes of the latter spheres, therefore, "that a satisfactory account of individual freedom and identity is adequately expressed neither as an absolute autonomy, nor as an evacuation of individual initiative by inscrutable divine fiat" (Rumble, "Kierkegaard and the Uncanny," 131).

[23] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies and The Sonnets to Orpheus*, trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Vintage International, 2009), 7.

the passing years, even from far off the evidence appears to corroborate the hypothesis of a fundamental psychical conflict between autonomy and dependence. In the absence of mindful suspension, and in response to mounting psychical tensions, while struggling to overcome bouts of debilitating melancholia Kierkegaard commits to an authorial task which demands all of his devotion. His preferred means of self-expression is predicted in the ways he has learned to respond to frustration, the authorship itself his response to sufferings that threaten lucidity to the point of absurdity.

Returning to *Fear and Trembling*, Rumble tunes her ear to layers of trauma that penetrate to the heart of human being, and indeed of all creation:

> Let us assume, then, that a central "confession" of *Fear and Trembling* is that which Augustine in Book IX of his *Confessions* attributes to the whole of creation, the proclamation of our ultimate dependence and incompleteness. "[Let] every tongue and every sign and all that is transient…[grow] silent—for all these things have the same message to tell, if only we can hear it, and their message is this: We did not make ourselves." *Fear and Trembling* can be said to utter the same – that we did not make ourselves and we do not know ourselves. Given the drive for autonomy, control, and exclusion of otherness which Kierkegaard designates "sin"…the journey to this recognition is one fraught with sacrifice – it is the journey up Moriah, it is the way of the cross.[24]

If the seemingly impossible, paradoxical, conflict-suspending task of embracing dependence and fundamental finitude are central themes in *Fear and Trembling*, their presence is determined by chastening of fire. We assume Rumble's posture of silence before the specters of suffering that haunt his writing.[25]

The path to de Silentio's *confessio* follows a crescendo of heightening loss: the deaths of five of Kierkegaard's six siblings (1819, 1822, 1832, 1833, 1834) the death of his mother (1834), loss of faith in his father (1837), the death of his mentor (1838), the death of his father (1838), and frustration of sexual possibility corresponding to his broken engagement (1841). But while authorial sublimation becomes a principal means by which to mitigate progressively unbearable suffering, his final years are character-

[24] Vanessa Rumble, "Why Moriah? Weaning and the Trauma of Transcendence in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*," in *Kierkegaard's* Fear and Trembling*: A Critical Guide*, ed. Daniel Conway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 250-251.

[25] "I wish to clear a path so my reader may approach the specter of a suffering which far exceeds the loss of any Regine, a suffering, may we call it trauma, which left Kierkegaard… with only the breathtaking beauty of a language which could never adequately name his secret" (Rumble, "Why Moriah?" 247-248).

ized by an intensification of the split structuring his psyche, and perhaps every psyche—a hemorrhaging wound for which he stubbornly refuses treatment.

Two days before the first anniversary of his mother's death, drifting between realms at the northeastern coast of Denmark, Kierkegaard writes in 1835:

> This has always been one of my favorite spots. Often, as I stood here on a quiet evening, the sea intoning its song with deep but calm solemnity, my eye catching not a single sail on the vast surface, and only the sea framed the sky and the sky the sea, while on the other hand the busy hum of life grew silent and the birds sang their vespers, then the few dear departed ones rose from the grave before me, or rather, it seemed as though they were not dead. I felt so much at ease in their midst, I rested in their embrace, and I felt as though I were outside my body and floated about with them in a high ether—until the seagull's harsh screech reminded me that I stood alone and it all vanished before my eyes, and with a heavy heart I turned back to mingle with the world's throng—yet without forgetting such blessed moments.[26]

Three days later, visiting the region from which his father rose to affluence, Kierkegaard pens the note in which he determines to find a cause to which he might devote his life, an idea for which to live and die.[27]

Two summers later, in 1837, the desire to unify his faculties in service of a single task takes on new urgency when he discovers the "curse" upon his family.[28] With this loss of first naïveté, an idealized image of his father shatters as it collides with reality.[29] Thoughts of the Figure

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[26] Recounted and quoted in Patrick Stokes and Adam Buben (eds.), *Kierkegaard and Death* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 1.

[27] Kierkegaard, *Volume 1, Journals AA-DD*, 19.

[28] Kierkegaard's mother died in 1834, the entry at Gilleleje was written in the summer of 1835, and "the great earthquake" occurred in the summer of 1837. Stemming from a belief that his father's children were damned to die at or before the age of Christ's death, due to his father's cursing God, Kierkegaard set himself to the task of accomplishing his life's work before the birthday that marked certain death: "How strange that I have turned thirty-four. It is utterly inconceivable to me. I was so sure that I would die on or before this birthday that I could actually be tempted to suppose that the date of my birth has been erroneously recorded and that I will still die on my thirty-fourth" (quoted in Joakim Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography*, trans. Bruce H. Kirmmse [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005], 137). *Concluding Scientific Postscript* was conceived under the assumption that it would be his last work, and Professor Rumble's early work is highly impressive in measuring the impact of these factors upon his writings.

[29] "Then it was that the great earthquake occurred, the frightful upheaval which suddenly drove me to a new infallible principle for interpreting all phenomena. Then I surmised that my father's old-age was not a divine blessing, but rather a curse, that our family's

dwelling above his fallen father provide diminishing consolation, and the direction of a professorial father-figure alleviates pain flowing from two wounds: familiarity with his father's sin and unfamiliarity with his life's task.[30]

But 1838 beholds a loss that brings Kierkegaard to assume his mentor's philosophical pursuits as his own. Toward the end of his life professor Poul Martin Møller had been working on the relations between irony, nihilism, and modern Romanticism, and in the wake of his wife's death questions concerning death and immortality loomed large. Møller's last, unfinished project bears a relevant title: *The Concept of Irony*.[31] Intellectual and personal affinities provide guidelines to shape Kierkegaard's dissertation and the authorial task to come. For now, loss of a paternal confidant drives him to return home and seek reconciliation with his father. But the death of that father occurs just seven months later.

The fictionalized anecdote recorded in Johannes Climacus's *de omnibus dubitandum est* (1842-1843) weds admiration for his father's imaginative omnipotence with the exercise and development of his own creative capacities: "For Johannes, it was as if the world came into existence during the

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exceptional intellectual capacities were only for mutually harrowing one another; then I felt the stillness of death deepen around me, when I saw in my father an unhappy man who would survive us all, a memorial cross on the grave of all his personal hopes. A guilt must rest upon the entire family, a punishment of God must be upon it: it was supposed to disappear, obliterated by the mighty hand of God, erased like a mistake, and only at times did I find a little relief in the thought that my father had been given the heavy duty of reassuring us all with the consolation of religion, telling us that a better world stands open for us even if we lost this one, even if the punishment the Jews always called down upon their enemies should strike us: that remembrance of us would be completely *obliterated*, that there would be no trace of us" (Søren Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*: *Volume 5*, *Autobiographical: Part One: 1829-1848*, ed. Howard and Edna Hong [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978], no. 5430). Freud connects the loss of the idealized father-image to the loss of religious faith. In his study on Leonardo da Vinci he summarizes, "Psycho-analysis has made us familiar with the intimate connection between the father-complex and belief in God; it has shown us that a personal God is, psychologically, nothing other than an exalted father, and it brings us evidence every day of how young people lose their religious beliefs as soon as their father's authority breaks down" (*SE* XI, 123). Religious belief, a first naïveté, splinters when paternal authority is shipwrecked against the reality of sin.

[30] Kierkegaard sets himself to the task of intellectual struggle, finding release in the very act of articulation: "…I seized hold of the intellectual side of man exclusively, hung on to that, with the result that the thought of my eminent mental faculties was my only comfort, ideas my only joy, men of no importance to me" (Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*: *Volume 5*, no. 5431). A line from Climacus's earliest text is telling: "He did not pay attention to people and did not imagine that they could pay any attention to him; he was and remained a stranger in the world" (Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments/Johannes Climacus*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985], 119).

[31] See Jon Stewart, *Søren Kierkegaard: Subjectivity, Irony, and the Crisis of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 99-101.

conversation, as if his father were our Lord and he himself his favored one who had permission to insert his own foolish whims as hilariously as he wished, for he was never rebuffed, his father was never disturbed—everything was included and always to Johannes's satisfaction."[32] Walking alongside his father in the cool of morning, creation takes place without fear or hesitation. These "memories" are painted in shades of *satisfaction*. But when darkness overshadows innocence, imagination becomes a refuge. The page becomes his canvas.

A year later the "Attunement" of *Fear and Trembling* (1843) juxtaposes the paternal and maternal in passionate *quadriga*. "When the child is to be weaned, the mother blackens her breast. It would be hard to have the breast look inviting when the child must not have it. So the child believes that the breast has changed, but the mother—she is still the same, her gaze is tender and loving as ever. How fortunate the one who did not need more terrible means to wean the child!"[33] Caught in the crosshairs of a higher weaning, to look away from the sins of a once-exalted father and away from hereditary sin is to be in the moment of *Anfechtung*, a climax which demands choice.

But Kierkegaard cannot look away. His gaze remains steadfastly, backwardly fixed. As with Isaac's weaning, de Silentio's silence is overdetermined: silent in awe of Abrahamic faith, silent messenger before a comprehending reader, ironically "silent" because actually quite loquacious. On another plane, de Silentio's identification with his languid knight of infinite resignation, the merman's estrangement from finitude in the third Problema, bespeak a silence of suffering beneath the weight of effable, incomprehensible trauma.[34]

A year later Haufniensis wrestles rather theoretically with the doctrine of hereditary sin, as deliberations in *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844) demonstrate this darkened son's subsistence in the shadow of his father's iniquity. In this light, Kierkegaard-Haufniensis's emphasis that each individual take responsibility for her own loss of innocence, over and against tendencies to blame one's father or the first father of the race, is telling. Perhaps these injunctions attest to Kierkegaard's struggles to assume responsibility for his own sin, his own melancholy, and ultimately his own faith, apart from laws of paternal inheritance.

The Concept of Anxiety is also the member of the Kierkegaardian corpus in which Møller's spirit is most explicitly resurrected. The motto adorning

[32] Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments/Johannes Climacus*, 120-121.

[33] Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling/Repetition*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 11.

[34] "Where does this black sun come from? Out of what eerie galaxy do its invisible, lethargic rays reach me, pinning me down to the ground, to my bed, compelling me to silence, to renunciation?" (Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez [New York: Columbia University Press, 1989], 3).

this work signals the allegiance of its author: Socrates was labeled eccentric (*en Særling*) on the basis of the "peculiar distinction" to which his words and actions attested, "which an eccentric (*sære*) Hamann first repeated admiringly (*beundrende*) two millennia later."[35] Where Hamann is a contemporary Socrates by way of eccentricity, a partisan by way of admiration, the dedication to follow is a flag flown by a king without a country, bearing the silhouette of paternal transference.

Lauding Møller's affinity for the Ancient Greeks, whom he will repeatedly contrast with the modern Germans, Haufniensis devotes the work with unbridled affection: "[to] my admiration (*min Beundring*), my privation, this work is dedicated."[36] Hamann is heir to Socrates's eccentric cause, Haufniensis to Møller's. Hamann links Socrates to Møller and his eager pupil.

The foreword then begins by noting that one who sets out to write a book does well to consult those who have already become experts on the subject. Continuing this line of thought, Haufniensis writes, "Should he on this way come across an individual who exhaustively and satisfactorily has treated one or another parts of the subject, then he does well to rejoice as the Bridegroom's friend does when he stands by and hears the Bridegroom's voice."[37] Aligning himself with another ancient eccentric, heralding the dawn of a new era, the author of *Anxiety* has indeed rejoiced in the presence of a messianic defector: *behold*, a man of God who casts off the spirit of his age.[38]

This is not the first time Kierkegaard has appealed to relations between the Baptist and the Nazarene in order to express alliance with a perceived prophet of philosophical redemption. After defending his dissertation (1841) Kierkegaard traveled to Berlin to attend the lectures of F. W. J. Schelling, and with the possibility of a scholarly vocation likely in mind

[35] My translation. The distinction is a watchword for Kierkegaard's early works: "For Socrates was great in 'that he distinguished between what he understood and what he did not understand'" (Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation On the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, trans. Reider Thomte [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981], 3).

[36] My translation. An earlier draft of the dedication makes the paternal transference even more apparent, especially in light of Kierkegaard's comments about his relationship with his own father as he reflects on the latter's death: "the enthusiasm of my youth," "the confidant of my beginnings," "my lost friend," "my sadly missed reader," "the mighty trumpet of my awakening," and "the desired object of my feelings" (cf. Supplement in Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 178).

[37] My translation.

[38] Møller casts off the German, speculative Spirit that has taken residence among the Danes, especially those of Grundtvigian descent. See Finn Gredal Jensen, "Poul Martin Møller: Kierkegaard and the Confidant of Socrates," In *Kierkegaard and His Danish Contemporaries – Tome I: Philosophy, Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Jon Stewart (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009).

he betrays his earlier eagerness to join the ranks of an insurgent: "I am so happy to have heard Schelling's second lecture—indescribably. I have been pining and thinking mournful thoughts long enough. The embryonic child of thought leapt for joy within me as in Elizabeth, when he mentioned the word 'actuality'... Now I have put all my hope in Schelling."[39] As the unborn Baptist stirs violently in the presence of the pregnant Virgin, so Schelling's mention arouses the "child of thought" that has been developing in the depths of Kierkegaard's soul, intensifying his anxiousness to give birth.[40]

Finally, the decision to travel to Berlin was itself occasioned by yet another loss, compounding the need for a creative means of sublimation. After defending his dissertation Kierkegaard breaks his engagement, effectively committing to a life of celibacy. Considered in this light, the early portions of *Either/Or* written while he was attending Schelling's lectures emerge as elegies commemorating the deaths of the desires they help him crucify, while that work itself becomes his response to a forced disjunction between marriage and authorial vocation.

A crescendo of successive losses induces the labor of pseudonymous writing. Memories of the deaths of his mother and siblings stir Kierkegaard to search out the idea for which he would live and die, amplifying a desire to please his father by making a name for himself. But admiration shatters when he learns of the curse inherited with his father's sin, and in the aftermath of this earthquake an idealized father figure provides both academic and personal direction. When his mentor dies he returns home to seek reconciliation with the father who would die just seven months later.

With gates to childhood now closed, fastened, and permanently barred, Kierkegaard learns to find refuge in the imagination, to enlist its creations in service of authorial ambitions. The methodology that develops on this basis combines the cathartic quality of creative writing with the distorting function of pseudonymity, thereby mitigating tensions arising on the basis of an absolute insistence on disjunction. When prospects of an academic career are finally renounced at Berlin, and having severed himself from sexual possibility, creative writing becomes his principal means of sublimation.

[39] Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*: *Volume 5*, no. 5535. For more on Kierkegaard's early hope and growing frustration at these early lectures, see Chandler D. Rogers, "Schelling in the Kierkegaardian Project: Between Kantian Critique and the Second Ethics," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook* 22 (2017), 245-265.

[40] But allegiance to Schelling's cause does not last long, and Møller comes to assume his role. Forfeited hope in the prospects of speculative philosophy constitutes another loss to hasten nativity, but it also preserves the style that members of his dissertation committee had censured, the creative approach that creeps in at times in *The Concept of Irony* (1841).

III. Sublimation

"Whisper of running streams, and winter lightening.
The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry,
The laughter in the garden, echoed ecstasy
Not lost, but requiring, pointing to the agony
Of death and birth."[41]

Merold Westphal's account of dialectical progress culminates in a final embrace of finitude and neighbor, "Religiousness C" as corroborated by Kierkegaard's religious works following the publication of *Postscript*.[42] But Rumble points in response to exclusionist tendencies that increasingly characterize Kierkegaard's authorial production, paralleling a heightening emphasis on self-annihilation:

> Kierkegaard's vision in the "second authorship" of the relation of the human to the Christian, and the temporal to the eternal, is if anything increasingly polarized … *Fear and Trembling*'s earlier moving paean to the joys of receiving Isaac back – is but a vanishing echo in the measured adagio of *Christian Discourses*' formation: "So, then: either seventy years in all possible enjoyment, and nothing, nothing for eternity…or seventy years in suffering and then an eternity for blessed recollecting."[43]

Ed Mooney comments further of *Fear and Trembling*, "The widescreen drama of Isaac and Abraham haunts as a moment of *death*."[44] Yet de Silentio's fainthearted vision of a knight of faith lives on.

Mooney pans in further and catches a few glimpses, writing, "But there is the moment of life that occurs as the infant's cord is severed in birth and as the breast is blackened in weaning, not to mention the moment of rebirth at Isaac's restoration." He continues, "If we figure separation not in mortality alone but in natality, then the infant's weaning becomes a foretaste of life, and the weaning of Isaac and Abraham,

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[41] T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991), 187.

[42] See Merold Westphal, "Kierkegaard's Teleological Suspension of Religiousness B," In *Foundations of Kierkegaard's Vision of Community: Religion, Ethics, and Politics in Kierkegaard*, ed. George B. Connell and C. Steven Evans, 109-129 (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International, 1992), and Merold Westphal, *Becoming a Self: A Reading of Kierkegaard's* Concluding Unscientific Postscript (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1996).

[43] Rumble, "Christianly Speaking, Humanly Speaking," 210.

[44] Edward F. Mooney, "On Faith, the Maternal, and Postmodernism," In *The Future of Continental Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Clayton Crockett, B. Keith Putt, and Jeffrey W. Robbins [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014], 70.

a foretaste of rebirth, as in the return of Isaac from the dead."[45] Perhaps what would be required is a second birth—a faith to receive back temporality.

Additionally, Mooney locates a legacy of shared attunement connecting Kierkegaard to Julia Kristeva. She becomes heiress to de Silentio's strivings and failures: "My claim is that Kristeva's thinking is so attuned to what we might call the deep meaning of religious separation, trauma, and the possibilities of rebirth, or birth itself, that we *cannot but* see her continuing Kierkegaard-Silentio's depictions of the trauma and promise of weaning as homologous with faith."[46] Our own deliberations culminate in a reading of "Paul and Augustine: The Therapeutics of Exile and Pilgrimage," the fourth chapter of Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves*, tuned to the same key. The aim is to catch more enduring glimpses of a vision of a more holistic kind of healing, bordering on a standpoint *beyond* renunciation, in which the religiously inclined individual might again embrace finitude, in this lifetime.

From familiar to foreign and back again, we travel from an all-too-present present to the deep past and return home changed. When familiar experiences of foreignness recede we find ourselves as strangers in strange cultures, beginning in Ancient Greece and moving into Judea.[47] Even on Kristeva's telling this Western lineage conjures the trans-dimensional question that has intrigued pilgrims of multiple millennia, citizens of earth and heaven: to which city do I pledge allegiance? Flesh or spirit, profane or sacred, mundane or celestial: the real task is in the mediation.

St. Paul is the product of divergent worlds: Greco-Roman fatherland and Hebrew motherland, or vice versa. In Kristeva's analysis, his way of navigating the cultural tension begets a third that unifies the best of both. Outer reflects inner: "Paul the Cosmopolitan" is strange in appearance but more importantly strangely *cultured*, a world-traveler whose affection for Rome's marginalized increases with travel.[48]

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[45] Edward F. Mooney, "Julia Kristeva: Tales of Horror and Love," In *Kierkegaard's Influence on the Social Sciences*, ed. Jon Stewart (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), 189.

[46] He immediately qualifies, "Mine is not an invitation to speculate on a possible direct influence of Kierkegaard's portraits on Kristeva (perhaps such an influence will be established). Mine is an invitation to see Kristeva commenting on those portraits by the way we might see my neighbor's struggles with affliction as commenting on the Book of Job. If Job can address my neighbor across centuries, Kristeva can address 1843 mothers weaning. I invite readers to an occasion of mutual address and acknowledgement" (Mooney, "On Faith, the Maternal, and Postmodernism," 67).

[47] This is the movement from the first chapter, "Toccata and Fugue for the Foreigner," to the second, "The Greeks Among Barbarians, Suppliants, and Metics" and on to the third, "The Chosen People and the Choice of Foreignness."

[48] Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 77.

A third mission begets the Pauline ethic that is surely a product of his bi-cultural upbringing. Ephesus, hosting a "Panhellenic" mix of strangers that includes Jewish exorcists and priestesses of Artemis, is his base: "Paul adopted, developing it to the highest degree, an essential feature of the spirituality characteristic of a place teeming with foreigners: hospitality."[49] Blending currents with deep roots in both of the traditions that raised him, and stripping them of nationalist and separatist tendencies, the emerging Pauline ἐκκλησία soon offends rulers in both worlds. Zealous descendants of Athens and Jerusalem are repulsed by the tradition they've spawned.

Object of greatest ambivalence, most deeply repressed: cast out before there was an "I" to reject, *every one of us the product of two worlds*, no matter the nations. If of Adam's race then fundamentally fractured, if alive then structured by death. The foreigner reminds me that no matter my father-land—Judea, North Africa, Denmark, Austria, Bulgaria, America—and no matter my mother tongue, I am never at home, I am always seeking home, my very being is structured by this lack. Unwittingly the foreigner confronts me with my deepest desire, my story of origin. And so long as *forgiveness* remains foreign, I reject the stranger without as I've learned to reject the strange within. The roots of this tendency extend far below the persona I've donned. We are strangers to ourselves.

Children of earth aren't so different after all, the borders between nations not nearly as absolute as they purport to be: every mother shares the pain of birth, every child the pangs of separation. All striving grows from the same root and reaches toward the same end. And as this conflict climbs from out of the depths of St. Paul's soul he paves an upward path that culminates in ultimate unification:

> Beyond the material unease of foreigners, Paul spoke to their *psychic* distress and he proposed, instead of an insertion in a social set aimed at satisfying their needs, a journey between two dissociated but unified spheres that they could uncover in themselves ... he spoke of the Body of Christ as Risen, that is, as having come from death to life. He identified Christ with the Church: their merging is erotic, nuptial. To that dyad he added a third equivalence, the Eucharist: to Commune with him was to share His Body.[50]

From primal union to abjection, from abjection to erotic reunion. Foretaste of an ultimate unity to come, relief from exile in a fleeting moment of carnal fusion. Lost Eden, lost Object: a thorn in the flesh that spurs the pilgrim in search of a second garden, a city of freedom in which body and soul, the animal and the rational might be *suspended*, or taken up into a higher, heavenly harmony.

[49] Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, 79.

[50] Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, 81.

St. Augustine the Abject is a Pauline pilgrim, captive even as a citizen in Christendom. By his time the foreigner-turned-pilgrim adopts a spiritual status, "*Civitas Peregrina*."[51] Whether worthy or unworthy, faithful or unfaithful, difference meets not with censure but *forgiveness*, with *caritas*.[52] But this is the height at which Kristeva's blessed vision begins to vanish. On her reading, the *City of God* will stretch the antithesis between temporality and eternity to its breaking point, and historically the ideal soon collides violently with the real.[53]

The Empire evolves and those seeking to wield power from within assume the saintly task of caring for peregrines. "Peregrine Hospitality" becomes "A means of proselytism, or even of pressure," and "such hospitality when all is said and done forced the pilgrim to be a pilgrim of Christ, and forced every wandering person to become a Christian."[54] Kingdom takes Kingdom by force, a broad road splits from the path whose end is crucifixion. Within a handful of centuries these germs infiltrate fully in Inquisition, when "Christian cosmopolitanism" is finally shipwrecked upon the rocks of politico-religious exclusion. Kristeva's dialectical genealogy moves on, traversing the broad movements of Western history.[55]

Yet the apparitions remain, only yet beginning to materialize: visions of the "weaning of a child who lives to give birth to its father in faithful stride, at home in the world," of a father who receives his son back in this lifetime, of a pilgrim who lives long enough to recognize nourishment and weaning alike as gifts given from within the natural order, where that order itself is recognized as being *very good*.[56] Visions of a more holistic conception of individuation, where faith is integrated in higher and higher unities from within the psyche; the movements of death and a second birth, of renunciation and a higher receptivity, of erotic spiritualization *and* agapeic incarnation.

[51] Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, 83.

[52] Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, 84.

[53] Her reading of an absolute antithesis between flesh and spirit, however, even while acknowledging an erotic, nuptial union in the eucharistic transformation, ultimately belies an insistence upon the antithetical disjunction from which our inquiries began. It neglects to heed St. Augustine's incarnational conversion of the Neo-Platonic paradigm of descent and ascent: "The task in the *Confessions* is not to spiritualize the flesh, but to incarnate the spirit, and in this regard the verticality of the Greek schema (Platonic and Neo-Platonic) of ascents and descents has to be abandoned for the sake of a communion between exteriority and interiority." The hunger of which Augustine speaks is spiritual, to be sure, but it is also deeply carnal: "Yet, so long as hunger is only 'interior,' that is, spiritual, it is not even perceived as hunger at all." The transformation we seek is both spiritual and carnal, both erotic and agapeic. John Panteleimon Manoussakis, "On the Flesh of the Word: Incarnational Hermeneutics," in *Carnal Hermeneutics*, ed. Richard Kearney and Brian Treanor (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 310.

[54] Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, 85, 87.

[55] She diverges from Hegel and ends with Freud, with the *Unheimlich* at the heart of human being.

[56] Mooney, "On Faith, the Maternal, and Postmodernism," 63.

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