Kierkegaardian Repetition Brought to Light: Time, the Eternal, and Trembling

By

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For my mother

Bibliography

List of Abbreviations

DO *Johannes Climacus or, De Omnibus Dubitandum Est* (1843)

E/O I *Either/Or Volume I* (1843)

E/O II *Either/Or Volume II* (1843)

FT *Fear and Trembling* (1843)

R *Repetition* (1843)

PF *Philosophical Fragments, or a Fragment of Philosophy* (1844)

CD *The Concept of Dread* (1844)

S *Stages on Life's Way* (1845)

CUP *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846)

SUD *The Sickness Unto Death* (1849)

TC *Training in Christianity* (1850)

PV *The Point of View for my Work as an Author* (1859)

Note: It is particularly valuable in the case of Kierkegaard to know the source of a particular fragment of information. Thus, for the benefit of the reader, I have made use of abbreviations in the place of the year of publication when referring to works of Kierkegaard most frequently referenced.

What then is time? Who can find a quick and easy answer to that question? Whoever in his mind can grasp the subject well enough to be able to make a statement on it? Yet in ordinary conversation we use the word 'time' more often and more familiarly than any other. And certainly we understand what we mean by it, just as we must understand what others mean by it when we hear the word from them. What then is time? I know what it is if no one asks me what it is; but if I want to explain it to someone who has asked me, I find that I do not know.

Saint Augustine

Chapter 1: Introduction

While it is beyond our comprehension that eternity should meet us in time, yet it is true because in Jesus Christ eternity has become time.

Karl Barth

This study will address the themes of time as they manifest, directly or indirectly, in the thought of Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, the chief aim being to reveal the centrality of time to his existential project. It is proposed that for the purposes of an accurate and nuanced understanding of Kierkegaard, a deep understanding of his existential conception of time is crucial. This study aims to show that his views on time, although largely implicit, are intimately linked to many of his core ideas. Considered (in retrospect) the first existentialist thinker, or at the very least the father of existentialism, Kierkegaard was one of the first thinkers to explicitly emphasise subjective experience, asserting that abstract thought has but little relevance regarding the personal development of one's self. One has a responsibility primarily towards one's own life, and one ultimately has the responsibility to think and judge for oneself.[1] In Kierkegaard's Christian existentialism, time is lent a special status of urgency: the state of my spirit needs to be addressed *hic et nunc*, and my decision in this moment affects not only my future perceived as in this world, but also (possibly) my *eternal* future.

One of the key aims of Kierkegaard's project was to explicate the task of becoming a Christian, and to (re)assert Christianity as a meaningful approach to life, rather than as abstract doctrine. The milieu in which Kierkegaard lived was dominated by German idealism, particularly Hegelian idealism, and Kierkegaard was keenly aware of the risk such a line of thought might signify for the individual, for underlying it is a fatalistic conception of time, which Kierkegaard feared might negatively impact individual freedom and agency. Controversial for his time, and risking public scorn in the small city of Copenhagen, he opposed the Danish Church which was heavily influenced by Hegelian thought. There are numerous instances in Kierkegaard's life where he experienced intense personal challenges, for example, the famous 'Corsair affair'[2] and his broken engagement to Regina. Kierkegaard's mysterious 'secret' was something that evidently caused him a great amount of angst. Even as a child, Kierkegaard was often teased

[1] Notably, one may consider Kierkegaard's text *Judge for Yourselves!* which is written under Kierkegaard's own name. His entire indirect authorship, however, is written with the aim of prompting the reader to think or feel with passion about the decision to become a Christian.

[2] These events are detailed in Walter Lowrie's *A Short Life of Kierkegaard* (pp. 176-187).

for the way he was dressed. His own life reflects a tenacity to deal with such difficult experiences, and his own personal selfhood cannot be detached from his thought. Reflecting on Socrates, in his *Journals* Kierkegaard writes that he wanted to find "a truth which is true for me... the idea for which I can live and die" (in Solomon, 1988:87). His own life reflects not only the courage to make critical decisions, and the suffering and potential loneliness this can bring, but also the merit of living 'authentically,' and the value of living a truly thoughtful or *examined* life.

Time is imbued for Kierkegaard with a subjective significance, and it is such a personal, lived experience of time which is of interest to this study; this is to say, not of time conceived abstractly in the sense of what time 'really is,' but rather as corresponding to the flow of one's inner 'world.' This, of course, does not mean that we cannot study the nature of time, or the causal flow of physical events, but that for human beings the immediate experience of time may surpass a purely scientific understanding of time. Although this dissertation centres broadly around the theme of personal time, however, it is however not limited to it, although to be sure, a personal conception of time lies at the heart of Kierkegaard's project as well as my own. I aim to show how Kierkegaard's conceptualization of time may be extended towards that which Kierkegaard himself does not give much attention; that is, more objective historical movement. The way in which Kierkegaard re-envisions time for the individual human being may be shown to have implications not only on the individual, but also for the way in which history may be understood. This still does not imply an abstract conception of time or history as such, however, but rather, life is breathed into history by virtue of being comprised of concrete individuals.

Thus, at the core of this dissertation is the aim to expose Kierkegaard's view of (personal) time, and examine its centrality to Kierkegaard's existential project. I propose that two major implications are the result of such an analysis. The first relates to how Kierkegaard appropriates his predecessor Hegel. There have been many interpretations of how Kierkegaard differs from Hegel, and generally most interpreters show *either* that Kierkegaard radically opposed Hegel, *or* that Kierkegaard's own philosophy is closely aligned with Hegel's. It is part of my thesis that one might be able to account for this tension through a close examination of Kierkegaard's conceptualization of time and eternity, in relation to Hegel's historical dialectic. The second implication relates to how Kierkegaard's philosophy itself may be read today. I propose that by drawing out Kierkegaard's thought on time and the eternal, some of the potential problems of Kierkegaard's own thought may be offset. For Kierkegaard, in order to become a concrete

and self-conscious individual, one must become isolated from others. Especially with today's increasing emphasis on thinking within an era of globalisation and pluralism in terms of value and culture, the isolated self becomes problematic and must be addressed if Kierkegaard's thought is to remain relevant today. This latter implication I leave relatively open-ended. The common thread running through my dissertation is a development of dialectic which does not come to an end, but may be extended beyond both Hegel and Kierkegaard, blending into various strands of more contemporary postmodern and deconstructive thought. As much as possible, I maintain a self-conscious bearing, acknowledging my own historical limitations of which I am not aware. The aim of this thesis is thus threefold and builds dialectically, the common theme being an investigation of time and dialectic in Kierkegaard's work, and how they underlie or rather *traverse* our understanding of the very nature of *existing*. Not only may an analysis of Kierkegaard's personal time help us to understand Kierkegaard's predecessor Hegel, but may furthermore impact how we might understand Kierkegaard and the dialectic of time in the present with an eye towards the future.

1.1 Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 will detail the precise nature of time within Kierkegaard's existential project. Some of his clearest and most detailed comments related directly to time are found in *The Concept of Dread*, which will be discussed with relevant contextualization. Kierkegaard opposes traditional views of time, which he thinks are essentially, whether implicitly or explicitly, abstract. Kierkegaard emphasizes the view of *tensed* time, and develops an existential perspective which expressly situates human beings within a lived and experienced frame of time.

Contrasting with Kierkegaard's concept of 'the eternal,' we may come to see how his concept of time differs from the concepts of traditional philosophy. Kierkegaard's notion of the eternal lies in an explicitly paradoxical relation to successive time which is epitomized by the absolute paradox, or the incarnation of God (the eternal) within time. The self furthermore contains elements of time and eternity which may be paradoxically held together in a self-conscious striving by the individual. The highest achievable inwardness of the self is possible through religious (Christian) consciousness.

Kierkegaard provides us with the terminology of 'repetition' which is closely related to the notions of the 'leap' and the 'instant.' The Danish word for repetition, '*Gjentagelsen*,' includes the meaning of gaining something *in addition* to the repetition of the same, and relates to a kind of restitution of one's self. When the self experiences repetition, it takes up into itself its past experiences with a bearing directed towards the future. The notion of repetition, as we shall see, recurs throughout Kierkegaard's works, whether directly or indirectly, and will in turn recur throughout this dissertation. Each time it will gain a new layer of meaning, in the spirit of Kierkegaard's dialectic. In each chapter the concepts of time and the eternal, the leap, and the Paradox, will be expanded and more accurately contextualized, granting these concepts the depth and richness that Kierkegaard's thought merits.

Chapter 3 will address in detail the meaning of the concepts of time and the eternal, which resonate differently at each stage (Taylor, 1975a:33). *The Sickness Unto Death* puts forth that the human being is a synthesis of the finite and the infinite, necessity and possibility (*SUD*, 9), and the temporal and the eternal. Kierkegaard's notion of repetition will be given concrete contextualisation in relation to the stages, in line with the true import of the notion, for we miss the point if we merely *think* repetition as an abstract category. Repetition is foremost a religious and existential category which, if it to have the true significance Kierkegaard intends, the reader must personally take to heart and appropriate for him/herself.

Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel will be recounted in finer detail in Chapter 4. There is an extensive amount of existing research on this subject, which, within the limits of this dissertation, is neither tenable nor necessary to cover comprehensively. My main concern is to show *how* Kierkegaard opposes Hegel and to uncover the precise mechanism of his critique of Hegel. I aim to expose Kierkegaard's reformulation of time and the eternal as at the heart of his critique. It is important to note that my focus in this dissertation is not on Hegel, but on Kierkegaard, and his relation to Hegel. This thesis is most concerned with the 'leap' that Kierkegaard makes from Hegel's mediation to his own repetition, and thus how repetition may be seen as playing both an intellectual and concrete role in his appropriation of Hegelian mediation.

Chapter 5 structurally reflects Chapter 4. I turn to Kierkegaard with a similar approach to Kierkegaard's treatment of Hegel, in effect turning Kierkegaard towards himself. My point is to show that Kierkegaard's introduction of movement to Hegel's dialectic allows him not only not only to overcome the potential stasis inherent in Hegel's system, but moreover to overcome some of the traces of metaphysics inherent in Kierkegaard's own philosophy of which he may

not have been explicitly aware. My interpretation of Kierkegaard in this chapter thus allows for a sympathetic reading of Kierkegaard, while simultaneously posing a critique.

1.2 Some Considerations

It is well known that Kierkegaard is a difficult thinker to work with. His method of indirect communication makes it difficult to know what may be attributed to Kierkegaard himself. In addition, it is all too easy to attribute a particular sentiment to Kierkegaard which may well be one's own projected mental state. It is generally accepted that Kierkegaard's indirect works are indeed written with the *intention* of reflecting one's self back to oneself. Thus, it is important to maintain a balance or tension between allowing oneself to immerse oneself in Kierkegaard's writings, and keeping a reflective distance between oneself and the pseudonymous writings. Keeping in mind the active role of *interpretation* is integral to this study.

1.2.1 A Note on Hegel

Although Hegel inevitably forms an important part of any analysis of Kierkegaard, Hegel's philosophy unfortunately cannot in all its depth and nuance be dealt with comprehensively. Sufficient attention is nevertheless paid to the relationship between Kierkegaard and Hegel, and for no arbitrary reason. Indeed, a comparison raises the question of the subtle nature of reality itself. Hegel was the first philosopher to think deeply about time and history, and his influence can still be felt today.[3] The importance of Hegel's influence in examining Kierkegaard is such that to neglect the influence of Hegel is at the very least to have an incomplete understanding of Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard remains one of the first recognised critics of Hegel, often seen as ruthlessly attacking Hegel's abstract system of thought. Kierkegaard indeed remarks that the speculator has just about reflected himself out of existence, and Kierkegaard quips in his *Journals* that one so immersed in Hegel's thought might become so anonymous that it would be impossible even to have a letter addressed to him (in Solomon, 1988:89). However, their relationship is a complex one. It is argued that

[3] One may think, as a notable example, of Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), which is a contemporary application of Hegel's notion of the End of History which has, according to Fukuyama, culminated with the principles of liberalism. Furthermore, one can scarcely read any recent continental philosopher without having to trace some implicit or explicit influence back to Hegel.

Kierkegaard does not simply dismiss Hegel, and I argue that the concepts of time and the eternal which lie at the centre of Kierkegaard's project may help to better reveal the nature of this complex relationship.

Relating to temporality, one on the most prominent ways in which Kierkegaard diverges from Hegel concerns his emphasis on the individual. The individual is driven not by History, but develops inwardly as he/she grows closer to God. The *telos* of the individual is not related to the overarching *telos* of History, but is precisely to be in a relationship with God. Kierkegaard often speaks of the 'movement' of the self, but never does he use the word 'progress,' which is associated with development towards some definitive end. The notion of historical progress is thus thwarted, as the development of the *individual* shapes the movement of *history*. Kierkegaard, going against the mainstream adulation of Hegel and recognising the (potentially dangerous) sublation of the individual under Hegel's System and the ultimate fallibility of Reason, reminds the individual of his or her finitude and temporality in relation to God. Again, as much as I make reference to Hegel and as important as he is, it must be stressed from the outset that within the practical limits of this dissertation, I cannot extensively go into depth concerning Hegel, and nor is it entirely necessary, for the focus of this dissertation is on Kierkegaard. I focus primarily on the way Kierkegaard himself read Hegel, and make use of some various interpretations of Hegel to gauge the fairness of Kierkegaard's critique.

1.2.2 The Bearing of the Postmodern Dialogue on this Dissertation

To what extent contemporary thinkers influence my own work is not by any means an inconsequential consideration. My own historicity and situatedness inevitably inform my own horizon of understanding which always already shapes my thought. It would be impossible to completely bracket my influences, and furthermore, not necessarily desirable. To do so might only *obscure* my understanding of the past. As Gadamer maintains, one's 'prejudices' both place a limit on one's understanding *and* permit understanding in the first place. To neglect my own historicity might even be seen as irresponsible, a refusal to open up dialogue with past or contemporary thinkers. The very title of this dissertation is no inconsequential nod to Heidegger's play on the notion of light. Heidegger's appropriation of the Greek *phainomenon* is associated with light. Drawing on the verb *phainesthai* meaning 'to show itself,' the 'phenomenon' becomes that which shows itself by bringing itself to light. "The *phainomena*,

'phenomena,' are thus the totality of what lies in the light of day or can be brought to light" (Heidegger, 1996:25). Heidegger further utilises the Greek term *alētheia*, suggesting an uncovering of what has been obscured. It is a process of *exposure* which is not a recovery of presence, but indeed a *generation* of meaning. It is roughly in this sense that I hope to 'reveal,' nestled within the contours and shadows of Kierkegaard's thought, the central role of time, eternity, repetition, and paradox, by letting Kierkegaard's works 'show themselves.'

A question worth consideration arises: Am I superimposing certain Heideggerian presuppositions onto Kierkegaard's thought? There is no doubt that Heidegger read Kierkegaard, and the influence of Kierkegaard on Heidegger is substantial, but to what exact extent this is the case is debatable, and to a large extent, remains 'concealed.' While Heidegger has been described as a 'secularised Kierkegaard' (Baring, 2015), one must be careful not to underestimate the potentially sharp qualitative contrast between the religious Kierkegaard and the secular Heidegger. Heidegger proposed an understanding of time and of 'being-in-the-world' which ontologically precedes an 'ontic' understanding of the world. According to Heidegger we have forgotten the meaning of the question of 'Being,' and it is essential to remember *who* asks about the question of Being, i.e. human beings. Kierkegaard's understanding of time can be interpreted, as it is done in this dissertation, as similarly being connected to our *pre*-conceptual experience of the world, and he may be seen as embarking on a process of regaining what had been 'lost' through the abstraction of time and the individual. Human beings, Kierkegaard protests, have forgotten what it means to properly exist *qua* human beings. In positing an abstract notion of time, we lose something of the '*fullness*' of time. In order to allow for the possibility of such comparison, and in order to (re)think Kierkegaard in light of contemporary thought, the theme of time again gains significance. Again, I want to allow, as much as possible, Kierkegaard's thought to 'show itself,' while simultaneously keeping in mind Kierkegaard's influence on Heidegger as well as Heidegger's influence on my own research.

The purpose of this study is thus foremost to show that Kierkegaard's understanding of time is integral to understanding his thought. This may then be taken further to show how Kierkegaard's thought may be relevant to our present age. Kierkegaard's existentialism is without a doubt primarily Christian, and is thus easily overlooked by those who are not concerned with the Christian faith. I aim to show, however, that Kierkegaard's ideas regarding time not only have an impact on the lived experience of the individual, but also on the broader concerns of history and freedom. The rethinking of time as concrete has been a consistent theme

within hermeneutic and postmodern thought, particularly from Heidegger onwards, and this dissertation aims to help bring Kierkegaard into (further) fruitful dialogue with some relevant and more contemporary thinkers. Kierkegaard's work may well benefit from a re-reading, one could say a 'repetition,' within a globalised context.

I propose that there are certain elements of Kierkegaard's work, in particular his method of writing under pseudonyms, that entail the possibility that his work *actively lends itself to interpretation*. This allows us to go beyond the original intentions of Kierkegaard as author, indeed beyond his original intended 19th Century audience, and which may extend towards our present pluralistic, globalised, and largely secularised contemporary world. This is in line with more contemporary hermeneutic theories and relates to the question of the intention of the author, beginning with Roland Barthes[4] and including the hermeneutic and deconstructive thought of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jacques Derrida respectively. While it must be noted that these philosophies help to serve as a helpful background and horizon of understanding Kierkegaard, given the limitations of a Master's dissertation it is not practicable to discuss in detail the various post-structuralist and postmodern strands of thought. Suffice it to say that an author's intentions no longer have the weight that traditional historians and philosophers imbued texts.[5] Again, as Gadamer contends, one can never escape one's own horizon of understanding; one is always influenced by one's historical situatedness. To attempt to reconstruct an author's intentions is not only untenable, but even irresponsible, insofar as meaning is distorted and reduced, and one's own present context denied. Again, I myself can only interpret Kierkegaard from my own historical perspective, and with the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to relate Kierkegaard's thought to more contemporary philosophy. In a similar vein, I cannot claim to have discovered any ultimate truth of Kierkegaard's writings, since meaning continuously develops and shifts. Kierkegaard's use of pseudonyms fragments his own voice, and distances him as author from his pseudonymous works.

Relating to our historicity which precedes us, is the primary role that language plays. Terminology such as 'historicity,' 'projection' (into the future), and 'situatedness,' are largely taken from the dialect of more contemporary philosophers such as Heidegger, Gadamer, and Foucault. Along with such terminology is brought the nuances of thought which are intertwined

[4] Barthes was the first to propose the notion of the 'death of the author.' Kierkegaard notes that: "A genuine martyr never used his might but strove by the aid of impotence. He compelled people to take notice" (*PV*, 35). Through the 'impotence' or passivity of the pseudonyms, perhaps Kierkegaard could be said to actively distance himself in the sacrificial act of writing under various pseudonyms.

[5] It may be noted that a text may be any piece of writing, artwork, or even event which can be interpreted.

with such concepts. ‘Authenticity’ is another term that one should use with care. Kierkegaard himself did not use the word ‘authenticity’ as such, but the self is characterised as becoming more of a self, progressing towards being a self which is fully conscious of itself as spirit. Heidegger introduced the concept of ‘owning’ one’s self, or making the self one’s *own*, the meaning of which is contained within the German *Eigentlichkeit*. Within the larger context of existentialism, it would not objectionable to extend the term ‘authenticity’ to Kierkegaard, but generally his specific designation of ‘becoming a self’ is retained.

1.2.3 Kierkegaard’s Pseudonymous Authorship

Kierkegaard was constant in his resolve to write ‘without authority,’ for he believed that God alone, and Christ by extension, have authority in matters of the spirit (*TC*, 49). He was suspicious of anyone who claimed to be in an intellectually better position to understand the subjective relationship of a person with God, for this relationship is a private one between the single individual and God. Although Kierkegaard studied theology, he decided not to become a pastor or a professor since either profession meant that he would have had to work under the authority of the Church or the State respectively (see Lowrie, 1965:190). He was wary of the influence of the authoritative voices of Denmark, for example the bishop Jacob Peter Mynster (1775-1854) and especially the latter’s successor, Hans Lassen Martensen (1808-1884) (Backhouse, 2015:387-8; Lowrie, 1965:240-241). In line with this denial of authority, Kierkegaard indirectly wrote many of his works under a pseudonym, without ‘author-ity.’ In the *Fragments*, one may see how even the pseudonymous author Johannes Climacus scrupulously takes care not to present the ideas as his own, claiming that he is simply working at exposing or uncovering the truth. In this particular example, Kierkegaard *doubly* obscures his own voice.

Kierkegaard also chose the mode of indirect communication as a special means by which religious experience may be communicated to the non-religious reader. I do not think that indirect communication suggests a semantic impossibility of communicating the religious, but rather the profound depth of the Christian experience of being in relation to the Absolute. It also addresses the particular challenge of engaging with one who may be resistant to the Christian doctrine. Like Aesop’s fable “The North Wind and the Sun,” a strong gust of wind is the most obvious yet not necessarily the wisest way to get a man to rid his coat; indeed, he will

only cling to it more tightly. The rays of the sun that beat down upon his back may however more effectively achieve that aim, through the motivation of the man himself. If one is to become a Christian, one must take the individuating leap of faith alone. Just as one is born alone, and dies alone, so must one take the leap of faith alone. As Kierkegaard expresses in the voice of his pseudonym Climacus, "The very maximum of what one human being can do for another in relation to that wherein each man has to do solely with himself, is to inspire him with concern and unrest" (*CUP*, 346). Kierkegaard (1962:35) himself as author furthermore says: "In all eternity it is impossible for me to compel a person to accept an opinion, a conviction, a belief. But one thing I can do: I can compel him to take notice." Direct communication, in contrast, may be may be employed between two individuals who both exist within the ethical sphere or between two individuals who both exist within the religious sphere; the edifying works are thus intended for one who is already religious.

The pseudonymous works represent various idealised scenarios of each stage of existence. We may liken Kierkegaard's pseudonyms to a theatre; the pseudonyms may be seen as actors, with masks representing different "personas," as Lowrie suggests (in *R*, xi). Because of the distance created between the reader and the ideal pseudonymous author by virtue of a 'double reflection,' the reader may substitute himself in the place of the author, which may serve as impetus to agree or disagree with the way of life as it is presented, or to appropriate his words on a more concrete level. There is thus a certain 'abstractness' or 'emptiness' to the pseudonymous works, onto which the reader may easily find him/herself projecting, understanding according to his/her own unique set of past experiences. The pseudonymous authorship works aim to reflect the reader back towards his own self, clearly and honestly, if the self is willing. The indirect works can only, after all, reflect what is already there. As Kierkegaard indirectly remarks, "And when for a long while the eye looks at nothing, it sees at last itself, or its own faculty of seeing – so it is that the emptiness around me forces my thought back into myself" (*S*, 327). He humorously quotes Lichtenberg at the beginning of the *Stages*: "Such works are mirrors: when a monkey peers into them, no Apostle can be seen looking out" (ibid., 26). Even the Christian pseudonymous author, Anti-Climacus of *The Sickness unto Death* and *Training in Christianity*, is considered so emphatically Christian that Kierkegaard did not feel he could not associate his own name with such a work. To further substantiate

Kierkegaard's distance from the indirect works, in the *Postscript*,[6] Kierkegaard formally acknowledges that he was indeed the author behind the pseudonymous texts, stipulating that:

> So in the pseudonymous works there is not a single word which is mine, I have no opinion about these works except as a third person, no knowledge of their meaning except as a reader, not the remotest private relation to them, since such a thing is impossible in the case of a doubly reflected communication (*CUP*, 551).

Although Kierkegaard takes no responsibility for the statements of his pseudonyms, many, if not most, Kierkegaard scholars agree either implicitly or explicitly that there is indeed a unified purpose behind Kierkegaard's entire writing (see Lowrie, 1965:169). Kierkegaard himself notes such unified purpose, saying that "the whole of my work as an author is related to Christianity, to the problem 'of becoming a Christian', with a direct or indirect polemic against the monstrous illusion we call Christendom" (*PV,* 6). I take an approach where for the most part I work with the tenet that Kierkegaard's project contains an implicit coherence, and that the meaning of most notable concepts remains consistent. For example, the idea that the self is a synthesis, and the idea of the stages of existence, of time and the eternal, are implicitly consistent throughout the oeuvre of Kierkegaard's work, although there is an implicit idea that each pseudonym relates to these ideas in different ways. Although the aesthete in *Either/Or I* might appear to have his own conception of time and the eternal, in keeping Kierkegaard's works as a whole in mind, and the stages in relation to one another, it is plausible to say that although the aesthete *thinks* he has the right idea of the eternal, in relation to the eternal of the religious stage, the aesthete has a merely derivative conception, or a notion of the eternal which merely parodies the 'true' or absolute eternal.

While I agree for the most part with this claim of the unity of aesthetic works, to overlook the specific individual character of each pseudonymous work potentially 'covers over' the significance of his tactical employment of pseudonyms. Each pseudonym is a singular experience, each with his own point of view, a well-founded argument, each a unique perspective. Thus where appropriate, I refer to the pseudonym that wrote a particular work. This serves not only to remind the reader of the various voices of the pseudonyms, but also complies with Kierkegaard's own request that one quote the pseudonym rather than

[6] The *Postscript* remains a unique case, given that although it is written under the pseudonym of Johannes Climacus, Kierkegaard included his own name as editor. This work thus contains an inherent tension between the truly pseudonymous works and the works written under his own name.

Kierkegaard himself. As he says, "My wish, my prayer, is that, if it might occur to anyone to quote a particular saying from the book he would do me the favour to cite the name of the respective pseudonymous author" (*CUP*, 552).

Thus, in light of the ambiguity of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works, and in order to keep in mind the complex and nuanced understanding of the pseudonymous works, I suggest that one hold in *tension* Kierkegaard as author and the relevant pseudonyms as author. The present study may be understood as a hermeneutic process; to understand the whole of Kierkegaard's intentions and authorship behind the pseudonyms I also need to consider each pseudonym individually. I am thus in agreement with Mackey (1971:xi-xii) who articulates: "Like the unity of the corpus of a poet, the unity of Kierkegaard's writings is a metaphoric rather than a literal unity; his thought is analogically one rather than univocally one," writing further on, "Truth of a sort everywhere, but truth absolute, *sub specie aeternitatis*, nowhere. Whatever truth and reality is imagined in the Kierkegaardian corpus must be sought in the internal organization of the several works and in the reciprocal limitation and reinforcement they offer each other" (ibid., 1971:261).

Stewart (2003:40) cautions against seeing Kierkegaard's pseudonyms as an explicitly intentional ploy, emphasising the continuity between the pseudonymous works. He also notes that during Kierkegaard's time in Copenhagen, writing under a pseudonym was not uncommon practice, given the intimacy of the intellectual Copenhagen community (ibid., 42). Steward also evidences that in some cases, notably *The Concept of Anxiety* and *Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard only decided *ad hoc* that a pseudonym would be used (ibid., 40). [7] Nevertheless, the pseudonyms, even if only decided after writing, were decided upon nevertheless, and I think should be appreciated as such. They are, very much like Kierkegaard's other pseudonymous works, varied and imaginative, each name deliberately chosen, whether from irony, as in Kierkegaard's *Repetition*,[8] or aptness, and thus construe a sense of purpose.

Most commentators do, however, agree that Kierkegaard deliberately and self-consciously employed the pseudonyms. Contrary to Stewart's contentions, Mackey highlights the role of

[7] It must indeed be conceded that Kierkegaard only at the last minute decided not to attach his own name to these two works, and that unlike the purely aesthetic works, as Lowrie (1965:217) postulates, were not meant as distancing via double reflection, but that "the subject was pressed upon the reader objectively." My point remains, however, that in the end, as Christian an author as Kierkegaard as author was, he felt at the very least ambivalent about publishing these works in his own name. His pseudonyms remain, thus, not truly subjective reflections, but always remain at somewhat of a distance from Kierkegaard's subjective authorial intentions.

[8] *Repetition*, Melberg (1990:72) notes, is "a text on movement was published under the pseudonym Constantine Constantius which ironically suggests permanence.

the pseudonyms, remarking that, "When Kierkegaard signed his books with impossible names like Johannes de Silentio (John of Silence) and Vigilius Haufniensis (Watchman of Copenhagen), no one in the gossipy little world of Danish letters had any doubt about their origin. Nor did he mean they should; his purpose was not mystification but distance. By refusing to answer for his writings he detached them from his personality so as to let their form protect the freedom that was their theme" (Mackey, 1971:247). Westphal (1996:8) would appear to be in agreement with Mackey, stating the purpose of the pseudonyms not as disguises, but as personae, characters which portray various views of life. Finally, the decisive break in Kierkegaard's writings between the indirect and direct works, with the last pseudonymous work, the *Postscript*, revealing the identity of Kierkegaard behind the pseudonymous works, moreover lends to supporting that idea that that Kierkegaard's use of pseudonyms was at least not merely arbitrary.

1.2.4 A Note on Methodology

Kierkegaard wrote with a sense of urgency, and he wrote prolifically. For the purposes of delimitation, I have chosen to focus almost exclusively on the pseudonymous, 'philosophical' works, as opposed to the overtly religious works. Any works used which are written under Kierkegaard's own name will be indicated. Of these, I focus only on the most relevant works or sections that deal most saliently with Kierkegaard's thematics of time and dialectics. As already discussed, Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works tend to lend themselves to interpretation, and thus focusing on the indirect works suits my methodology well. More pertinently, the pseudonymous works are intended to dialectically lead the reader through the stages towards Christianity and inwardness, and this is of central interest to this thesis.

The method of addressing Kierkegaard's thought is not inconsequential, and Kierkegaard's indirect authorship presents a unique challenge. Hannay thus emphasises reading Kierkegaard's works as a whole, with Kierkegaard as author of the unified pseudonymous works. Other commentators such as Garelick (1965:3*ff*) argue that it is possible to analyse the pseudonymous texts as they stand. As already suggested, Kierkegaard's method of indirect communication may serve to break down the unity of authorship, given that many of the views that Kierkegaard expresses in the pseudonymous works are not his own. Again, the problem with analysing Kierkegaard's works as a whole is that this can potentially undermine the

importance of the role of the pseudonyms (Mackey, 1971:ix). On the other hand, analysing the pseudonymous texts independently might ignore Kierkegaard's purpose of writing under a different voice. Thus I have chosen, as noted above, to approach Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works as engendering a *tension* between his own religious intentions as author and the pseudonymous works as they stand.

Furthermore, some commentators such as Hannay (1982) take a biographical and synoptic approach towards Kierkegaard, emphasising the role of his own life in relation to his works. Although at times I refer to Kierkegaard's own life, I do not focus on his life, but rather on his indirect works. In addition, one might interpret Kierkegaard as a theologian, philosopher, or poet. As much as it might be worthwhile to consider Kierkegaard from all these aspects, for the purposes of this dissertation, scope and method must necessarily be placed within limits. I take a philosophical, predominantly hermeneutic and deconstructive, approach. The theological or poetical aspects as such of Kierkegaard's work have a limited bearing upon this dissertation, as this thesis concerns more explicitly the philosophical relevance of Kierkegaard's work.

While *The Concept of Dread* contains Kierkegaard's most explicit views of time and eternity, I aim to reveal that this formula of time can be found to structure, implicitly or explicitly, Kierkegaard's existential project, particularly in the pseudonymous works. Whether Kierkegaard was aware of the foundation of time in his writings is itself a separate debate, but what we may surely note is that Kierkegaard was a thinker most self-conscious of his aims. Thus to repeat, hermeneutics, particularly in a Gadamerian sense, is pertinent here. The crucial act or even *art* of interpretation underlies what is possible to say, and what delimitations might be heeded. In addition, in any discussion of Kierkegaard or Hegel, both of whom have received extensive, and sometimes even contradictory interpretations, it is imperative to acknowledge the role of interpretation. I wish to draw out precisely the complexity of Kierkegaard's work, which itself has been responsible for so many differing and conflicting interpretations. This is both the boon and bane of reading Kierkegaard, for one wants to remain true to Kierkegaard and his intentions behind his authorship, while at the same time Kierkegaard's work seems to call for interpretation.

Chapter 2: Kierkegaard's Notions of Time and the Eternal

If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.

T.S. Eliot

This chapter will provide a preliminary outline of the concepts of time, the eternal, and repetition, which will be explored in increasing detail throughout this dissertation. The aim of this chapter is to provide a conceptual framework and platform from which we may further develop these concepts within the concrete context of Kierkegaard's thought. In order to bring Kierkegaard's view of time and the Paradox to light, and to clarify the way Kierkegaard opposes, appropriates, or surpasses traditional views of time, some of the relevant traditional views of time and the eternal will first be examined in relation to Kierkegaard's thought. Kierkegaard's critique of those views will be considered, as well as his departure thereof. Some of the most relevant ancient Greeks and Kant will be but cursorily examined, but the purpose of including these perspectives is simply so that Kierkegaard's view of time may begin to be revealed as key to understanding his concrete existential movement and his divergence from abstract speculation. Hegel will be examined in more detail. Since Kierkegaard's understanding of time will later be compared with Hegel's, a basic understanding of Hegel's historical dialectic and view of metaphysics is needed for Kierkegaard's appropriation of Hegel's metaphysics to come to the fore. This is itself no simple task, as the metaphysics at the heart of Hegel's dialectic lends itself to differing interpretations. Thus, some interpretations of Hegel's metaphysics will be examined in this chapter, since views on Hegel's metaphysics vary widely.

Kierkegaard's own notion of time will be detailed in this chapter and examined referring specifically to *The Concept of Dread*,[9] where Kierkegaard comes closest to formulating, if not

[9] *The Concept of Dread* has also been translated as *The Concept of Anxiety*, but I have used Walter Lowrie's translation which uses 'dread.' Moreover, I prefer the term 'dread' as it connotes a meaning of anxiety pertaining to the future. As my thesis is focused on time in Kierkegaard, this is no trivial point. Kierkegaard's entire philosophy depends upon a view of human temporality which is future-oriented.

a theory, at least a basic, coherent stance on time. It may be noted that I draw quite heavily on one section within *The Concept of Dread*, and one might inquire whether it is not too hasty to apply such a small part to such a larger whole. However, I work with this section in relation with Kierkegaard's conception of the stages, or perhaps more correctly I supplement the stages with a reading of *The Concept of Dread*, which provides some essential clues to Kierkegaard's thought on time. The *Philosophical Fragments* further elucidates Kierkegaard's view of the finite human being in relation to the Paradox. *Repetition* is also touched upon, chiefly examining the idea of 'repetition,' a notion which is closely related to Kierkegaard's reconceptualization of time and the eternal. Some related ideas which will be introduced are that of the Paradox, faith, and the 'leap.' Although these can be located throughout Kierkegaard's works, the clearest conception of them is to be found in *Fear and Trembling*.

2.1 Traditional Philosophical Views of Time and the Eternal

Kierkegaard's main problem concerning traditional views of time is that they are too abstract, and do not account for the fundamental way human beings perceive or experience the world. This ties in with the existential notions of dread and the possibility of an eternal future. According to Kierkegaard, traditional views of time, from the ancient Greeks to Hegel, deal implicitly or explicitly with a quantitative and abstract understanding of time.[10] The event of the Incarnation, however, according to Kierkegaard has ruptured history itself, providing a new possible way of understanding time to emerge, not only conceptually but *actually*. As Climacus (*PF*, 44) says, "So that if God had not come himself... we would not have had the Moment, and we would have lost the Paradox." We have the possibility of the concrete moment, because of the Moment of the Incarnation.

2.1.1 Ancient Greek Philosophy

For the most part, Kierkegaard refers to the Greeks quite loosely, and when he writes about the Greeks, he refers to them generally as having a backwards-oriented eternity. Here he arguably

[10] Heidegger's view indeed supports this claim. He points out in his *Being and Time* that Aristotle's treatment of time has been particularly influential to consequent Western philosophical thought, that it has "essentially determined all the following interpretations, including that of Bergson" (Heidegger, 1996:23).

has the pinnacle of Greek philosophy in mind, that is, Plato's philosophy. Kierkegaard also maintains that the Greeks generally misunderstood time and the instant, for they lacked the Christian concept of spirit, but this will be examined in more detail in Section 2.2.

There is an elemental aspect of time and movement that remains implicitly at the heart of Kierkegaard's enquiry, that may be found in the thought of the Eleatics and Heraclitus regarding the question of the One and the Many. For the Eleatics, movement is but illusory; the One is ultimately changeless and eternal. The relation between Heraclitus and the Eleatics will come into play at various relevant points in this dissertation, to which Kierkegaard often makes mentions with reference to logic. Kierkegaard as Climacus writes, "The eternal expression of logic is that which the Eleatic School transferred by mistake to existence: Nothing comes into existence, everything is" (*CD*, 12 n.). An essential thematic of Kierkegaard's thought is the question of whether logic allows for movement, or whether logic properly speaking belongs to the realm of the timeless. Kierkegaard states in a disputation with Heiburg, one of Kierkegaard's most notable Danish intellectual opponents: "Now motion is dialectical not only with respect to space (in which sense it engaged the attention of Heraclitus and the Eleatic School…), but it is dialectical *also with respect to time*, for the point and the instant correspond to one another" (*R*, xxx, own emphasis). The beginning of *Repetition* introduces movement in bold terms. Going back to the origins of the debate of movement, Kierkegaard remarks that when the Eleatic School denied motion, "Diogenes stepped forth literally" (ibid., 3), and although this refers to physical motion, Constantine later asks whether repetition is at all possible, referring specifically to existential movement – perhaps we could say, motion with respect to time for the individual.

In *The Concept of Dread*, Kierkegaard engages with the traditional concept of the instant. From the time of the ancient Greeks, the notion of the instant has been problematic for philosophical understanding. Kierkegaard reflects: "Plato clearly enough perceived the difficulty of introducing transition into pure metaphysics, and for this reason the category of 'the instant' cost him so much effort" (ibid., 74). The instant lies between the past and the future; it is not a part of time, yet it could not exist if there were not successive time. The impasse exists: is the 'now' always the same 'now', or is it always new? Although Plato illuminated the *difficulty* of the abstract instant (ibid., 75), Plato did not resolve the problem.[11] The nature of the present

[11] It may be noted that the ancient Greeks did have the notions of *chronos* and *kairos*. A close analysis of these terms in relation to Kierkegaard's understanding of time might generate valuable results, but once again this task lies beyond the parameters of this study.

moment, or instant, will be further examined in this chapter. The notion of the leap will also be examined, which is intimately connected to the moment or the instant.

Plato (2003:203) in the *Timaeus* depicts time as a "moving image of eternity." The eternal forms transcend the realm of time and space. Plato's doctrine of recollection holds that we possess knowledge of certain timeless principles because we *recollect* true knowledge through *anamnesis*. In the *Meno*, Plato (2008:39-48) describes Socrates leading a young boy through a mathematical problem dialectically, not directly telling the boy the answer but only providing certain guiding prompts. The boy, according to Plato, essentially reaches the answer by himself. This is possible, according to Socrates, because he was merely *reminding* the boy of a truth he had forgotten. Kierkegaard's notion of repetition, as we shall see, is similar to recollection, but the direction of eternity is reversed, so to speak (for eternity resists possessing direction), for Kierkegaard's repetition gains a forward-orientation in relation to the eternal future.

One must of course not forget the influence of Socrates's dialectic and irony on Kierkegaard.[12] Kierkegaard has much respect for Socrates, and Socrates frequently appears in Kierkegaard's works. Kierkegaard appropriates the Socratic dialectic of question and answer by indirectly engaging his reader on the question of becoming a Christian. Just as Socrates is merely a 'midwife,' so is Kierkegaard, but Kierkegaard adds another layer to the Socratic dialectic. We may note that while Socrates engaged in active dialogue with his interlocutors, Kierkegaard engages with his reader from a 'distance' through the pseudonymous works. Kierkegaard himself cannot lead the reader to the truth, but can rather only direct the reader to the true 'Teacher,' God (*PF*, 9-13). Ultimately, *I* can only discover my *own* Error (i.e. sin), and only God can bring 'Truth' to the individual.

For Aristotle, the aspect that time shares with (spatial) movement is that both can be *counted*. "Time is the 'number of movement,' that is, the measure of motion" (Taylor, 1973:314), which implies a quantitative approach to time. Still, Aristotle's 'peripatetic'[13] philosophy can probably be said to be less abstract than Plato's metaphysics. I agree with Caputo (1987:11) when he remarks: "Repetition is an existential version of kinesis, the Aristotelian counterpoint

[12] For an understanding of Kierkegaard's distinction between Socrates and Plato, see *The Concept of Irony* (1965:65*ff*), or for a succinct commentary, see Llevadot (2009:292*ff*). Suffice it to say, however, that the distinction lies in their understanding of recollection. Plato's philosophy in a positive sense strives towards an understanding of the ideal, whereas "the Socratic position is much more negative, because although it seems to maintain the thesis of recollection (the truth has been forgotten), it does not really believe in the possibility of recalling it and bringing it to presence" Llevadot (2009:292) so for Socrates the relation to the idea is predominantly negative (ibid.).

[13] This should immediately bring to mind a 'to and fro' or back and forth movement.

to Eleaticism, a movement which occurs in the existing individual." While Aristotle's kinesis refers to physical movement, Kierkegaard's movement refers primarily to existential movement of the self. The notions of potentiality and actuality, which find their grounding in Aristotle, will recur throughout this dissertation. Both Hegel and Kierkegaard significantly appropriate the themes of potentiality, actuality, and necessity (developed in Section 4.5), and both Hegel and Kierkegaard also borrow and appropriate Aristotle's notion of *telos*, Hegel in the sense of a collective historical *telos*, and Kierkegaard in the sense of cultivating one's personal *telos* in relation to God.

2.1.2 Kant

For Kant, time is an *a priori*, transcendental category. For the first time, time becomes an intrinsic part of human being. Yet still, Kant's universal category of time tends to make time abstract and elusive. His idea of freedom is in addition problematic. Kant's distinction between *a priori* reason and the empirical or the phenomenal world supposedly preserves human freedom since Kant demarcates the human mind and will as being possibly exempt from the causality of the truly temporal physical world. Kant admits that the noumenal world must be presumed to exist for the sake of practical reasons. However, as McCumber (2011:24) says, "We cannot understand how Ideas of Reason can be causes, how we can be free, we can only know that it is not impossible that, somehow, we are." The same logic applies to the existence of God and the immortality of the soul; these are notions to be taken as true without our being able to prove them as being true. To be fair, Kant does give an answer to the problem of freedom that echoes Aristotle's final cause. For Kant, the noumenal realm can be thought of as a final cause of the phenomenal realm (ibid., 27), thus freedom may be explained in such a way that human beings may have a causal effect on the world without the (phenomenal) world necessarily affecting human action. Yet, our access to the noumenal realm in the first place remains problematic.

Between Kierkegaard and Kant certain similarities may be noted. Kant notably wanted to "deny knowledge to make room for faith" (Kant, 1998:Bxxx). He concedes that there is a paradox between presence, or absolute being, and the absence of being. He stipulates the proper contradictoriness of the terms, which nonetheless depend on each other dialectically in order to exist conceptually and actually. Yet only to a certain extent can we show the similarities

between Kierkegaard and Kant. Moser and McCreary (2010:130) explain: "One might propose that [Kierkegaard] is developing Kant's critical program of denying knowledge (and evidence) to leave room for faith, but the story is not so simple or familiar." Moser and McCreary propose, instead, that Kierkegaard "denies one kind of knowledge (and evidence) of God to leave room for another, better suited kind of knowledge (and evidence)." A certain distinction between 'profane' and 'sacred' knowledge may come to light. The profane includes historical knowledge, and knowledge gained objectively through reason. In contrast, knowledge gained by revelation cannot be objectively known. It is this kind of knowledge that is relevant to the Christian. Lowrie (in *CUP*, xv) comments:

> Such a scientific method however becomes particularly dangerous and pernicious when it would encroach also upon the sphere of spirit. Let it deal with plants and animals and stars in that way; but to deal with the human spirit in that way is blasphemy, which only weakens ethical and religious passion. Even the act of eating is more reasonable than speculating with a microscope upon the functions of digestion.... A dreadful sophistry spreads microscopically and telescopically into tomes, and yet in the last resort produces nothing, qualitatively understood, though it does, to be sure, cheat men out of the simple, profound and passionate wonder which gives impetus to the ethical.... The only thing certain is the ethical-religious.

While Kierkegaard does not claim to provide a better metaphysical account of freedom as such, Kierkegaard instead provides an *existentially* viable way of viewing freedom, as shall see. Kierkegaard's philosophy makes God absolutely unknowable, and unlike Hegel, Kierkegaard radically *widens* the gap between the unknown and the world as we know it, and makes our 'knowledge' of God truly paradoxical. It is the existential dimension which interests Kierkegaard, and yet, this in turn has real implications for human freedom. Kierkegaard seems to posit a view of God which at first glance resembles Kant's noumenal, since there is an infinite difference between the human being and God. Yet for Kierkegaard, the self is triadic and exists in the form of spirit which is a synthesis of necessity and possibility, and it is precisely in the movement of actualising spirit that freedom is to be found. In this move, freedom, rather than being explained by the noumenal, is explained by the *intersection* of the temporal and the eternal. This will be expanded in due course.

2.1.3 Hegel

Aiming to resolve Kant's noumenal-phenomenal paradox, Hegel wanted to show that thought and being are not necessarily opposed. In a similar vein, he wanted to overcome the opposition between the truth of faith and the truth of reason. Hegel wanted to justify faith rationally, but in the process, religion is necessarily subsumed under philosophy, which we may immediately recognise as problematic for Kierkegaard. As noted in the previous subsection, Kierkegaard instead wanted to *radicalize* the paradox. For Climacus, as Westphal (1999:119) observes, "In existence, subject and object, thought and being are held apart by time," and this lies in direct contrast with Hegel's mediation of thought and being through the movement of History. This, as we shall see, has significant implications for the concrete experience of human beings.

Hegel's metaphysics, and indeed whether Hegel really does have a metaphysics is a disputed question. Beiser (2005:53-57) suggests a helpful means of understanding the many differing interpretations of Hegel. According to him, there are two major (opposing) ways in which Hegel has been interpreted. The 'inflationary view' of Hegel typically views his philosophy as more theological, and similar to that of Plato's metaphysics. In contrast to this, the 'deflationary view' sees Hegel as more closely aligned with hermeneutics, which rejects the idea that Hegel has a metaphysics at all. A third possible interpretation which Beiser suggests is an 'Aristotelian view,' and walks a fine line between the first two interpretations. These various readings of Hegel will be briefly discussed below.

The inflationary reading suggests that Hegel's Absolute is a kind of eternal transcendent realm, capable of existing immaterially. Hegel indeed makes the point that philosophy should be built on a secure metaphysical foundation. In addition, many important contemporary philosophers agree that Hegel *tried* to escape time and history in the final chapter of the *Phenomenology*, but ultimately failed (McCumber, 2011:39). Hegel's 'Absolute Mind' may be seen as an undistorted, rational view of the truth. Philosophy is the ultimate expression of this Absolute Mind, and so is superior both to art (the aesthetic) and to faith (the religious). This view also supports a more literal interpretation of Hegel's 'end of history,' that is, History which ultimately culminates with the realisation of 'Absolute Knowledge.' Hegel seems to retain the notion that we can aspire to an unconditioned 'Absolute' through the process of history, and in this way, his corresponds with Kant's definition thereof. According to Kant, we *cannot* have

access to unconditional knowledge through pure reason,[14] but Hegel makes the subject matter of Philosophy the 'Absolute,' which can and has been interpreted as being synonymous with God. I shall not go into more depth regarding this interpretation of Hegel, which is for the most part the traditional view of Hegel, and which has since been largely revised or opposed in order to (re)imbue the sophistication of thought that should be accredited to Hegel.

On the other hand, Hegel historicises knowledge and rationality, which places his philosophy within the bounds of time and space. The 'deflationary' reading of Hegel (also referred to as a 'post-Kantian' view, given that Hegel supposedly continues Kant's project of showing the limitations of metaphysical knowledge) emphasises this historical aspect of Hegel's philosophy. It implies a nominalism that reduces the universal to the particular, denying that the universal has any metaphysically privileged status. Malabou and During (2000), for example, suggest that Hegel does not posit an end of history, and that his thought suggests a "plasticity," rather than a "nostalgic metaphysics." Another recent example might include Jean-Luc Nancy. Nancy's *Hegel: The Restlessness of the Negative* emphasises the implicit dynamism of the negative in Hegel, suggesting that "immanence [is] always already tense, extended and distended within itself as well as outside itself; space and time, already, as the ex-position of every position" (Nancy, 2002:19). Significantly, Nancy reads Hegel from within a postmodern frame of reference, deconstructing Hegel to bring to the fore the 'restlessness of the negative.' Nancy maintains that Hegel does not assign an end to history, calling this understanding a "confusing vulgarity" (ibid., 25). Yet, as I shall contend, Hegel has, albeit a complex metaphysics, a metaphysics nevertheless.

Beiser suggests a third possible reading of Hegel's metaphysics, an Aristotelian view, which resists a false dichotomy between the views of Hegel either having a metaphysics or not. While the inflationary reading wrongly assumes that Hegel's logical priority of the universal necessitates its ontological priority, the deflationary view mistakenly assumes that because of the ontological priority of the particular, no logical priority of the universal is possible. Hegel himself affiliates his dialectic with Aristotle (ibid., 56), and according to the Aristotelian view, Hegel would appear to exemplify his own strategy of *Aufhebung*,[15] or sublation, in going beyond the traditional view of metaphysics while still retaining a specific understanding of

[14] To what extent Kant's thought itself implicitly leans towards a metaphysics that he criticised in others is, however, itself a debatable question.

[15] *Aufheben*, Hegel's technical use of the German word, translates into the English verb 'to sublate.' *Aufheben* may be understood in three senses: (1) 'to raise, to hold, lift up'. (2) 'to annul, abolish, destroy, cancel, suspend'. (3) 'to keep, save, preserve' (Inwood, 1992:283; Hegel, 1969:107). Hegel often uses *aufheben* in all three senses at once (Inwood, 1992:283).

metaphysics. I agree with Beiser (2005:55): "If Hegel abjured metaphysics as a science of the transcendent, he still pursued it as a science of the immanent." Solomon's (1988:64) view of Hegel may be said to agree with this Aristotelian reading:

> An acorn grows into an oak tree, and only at the end is it what it 'truly' is; nevertheless, there is a sense in which the oak has existed all along as the acorn... In the same way humanity has always been spiritual, in the sense that the capacity for spiritual growth and self-recognition have always been there, but Spirit 'truly' is what it is only at the end of history.[16]

Although the absolute has always existed in a sense, we only realise retrospectively that it that it has been there all along. The conceptual does not have an external reality of its own, but is inseparable from being. Although the particular is ontologically prior, i.e. the particular must exist first, the universal, which manifests itself through the particular, is "first in order of explanation" (ibid., 56). In Aristotelian language this is not to say that the universal is a cause prior in time to a particular thing, but rather the *reason or purpose* of the thing (ibid., 57), only coming into existence *through* the particular. As Hegel (1979:12) himself says in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*,

> What has just been said can also be expressed by saying that Reason is *purposive activity*. The exaltation of a supposed Nature over a misconceived thinking, and especially the rejection of external teleology, has brought the form of purpose in general into disrepute. Still, in the sense in which Aristotle, too, defines Nature as purposive activity, purpose is the immediate and *at rest*, the unmoved which is *self-moving*, as such is Subject. Its power to move, taken abstractly, is *being-for-self* or pure negativity. The result is the same as the beginning, only because the *beginning* is the *purpose*; in other words, the actual is the same as its Notion only because the immediate, as purpose, contains the self or pure actuality within itself. The realized purpose, or the existent actuality, is movement and unfolded becoming; but it is just this unrest that is the self; and the self is like that immediacy and simplicity of the beginning because it is the result, that which has returned into itself, the latter being similarly just the self. And the self is the sameness and simplicity that relates itself to itself.

This view implies that History or Reason has a purpose, and that the particular is somehow 'destined' to reveal the universal. If the universal is first *in any sense*, this undermines the true contingency of history, which is precisely what Kierkegaard wants to avoid.

I have chosen to follow the Aristotelian reading of Hegel, and it is favoured for the purposes of providing a fair and informative interpretation in working with Kierkegaard, as I find

[16] Or perhaps more apt is the 'mustard seed,' located in Mark 4 (Kearney, 2004:940).

Beiser's interpretation of Hegel to be comprehensive and equitable. I agree with Beiser (2005:56-57) that casting Hegel as Platonic would be to give an inaccurate account of Hegel's metaphysics. Hegel's System aimed to encompass previous philosophies, and returning to a simple metaphysics of transcendence hardly gives credit to the complexity of Hegel's thought. On the other hand, the deflationary view ignores Hegel's aim to make philosophy its own foundation and undercut Hegel's characteristically systematic philosophy. This consideration of Hegel's metaphysics must be kept in mind regarding Chapter 4, where the interpretation of Hegel's metaphysics and historical dialectic has significant implications. It must be emphasised that I do not think that this view is the 'correct' way as such to read Hegel, but rather that we have consciously chosen a fair reading of Hegel's philosophy, without potentially obscuring other subtle possibilities of interpretation.

The originality of Hegel's specific sense of metaphysics is demonstrated by his insistence on the compatibility of ontological priority of the particular material realm and the simultaneous logical priority of the universal. To quote Ng (2009:171), "To come full circle, absolute idealism is equally an idealism and a materialism, a logic and an ontology." Ng further notes that "Hegel, in 'completing' Kant, also transforms every facet of his predecessor's philosophy so radically that words, concepts, and the very nature of reality itself, take on fundamentally new meanings" (ibid., 140). Thus Hegel *both* continues Kant's project *and* differs from it.[17] Although Hegel wants to build philosophy on some sort of secure metaphysical foundation, his metaphysics is different from a Platonic metaphysics. Furthermore, if Hegel indeed ultimately tried to continue Kant's thought by opposing metaphysics, as the proponents of the deflationary interpretation propose, I think that Kierkegaard is right that Hegel at the very least betrays an *underlying bias* of metaphysics.

Kierkegaard's view of Hegel may furthermore be fruitfully compared with the Aristotelian view. Kierkegaard appears, if not to align with such a reading of Hegel's metaphysics, at least to share certain similarities with it. Although Kierkegaard emphasises the metaphysical bent of Hegel's philosophy, he also recognises that Hegel's view of metaphysics differs significantly from Plato's. Kierkegaard understands Hegel's ambitious task to somehow resolve the opposition between unchanging truth and the changing world (McCumber, 2011:39). Yet it is precisely this that Kierkegaard distrusts, as we shall come to see. Hegel's metaphysics is, for Kierkegaard, a more insidious kind of metaphysics than Plato's; Hegel's dialectic indeed only

[17] We may note the same concerning Aristotle's metaphysics. Hegel appropriates Aristotle's dialectic, yet at the same time, Hegel (1969:51) avers that logic is "in need of a total reconstruction."

purports to possess movement. Hegelian 'movement' is deceptive and spurious; not only is there no movement but this fact is covered over with ambiguous vocabulary such as 'reconciliation,' 'negativity,' and 'mediation' (McCumber, 2011:82; *CD*, 73).

Kierkegaard critiques Hegel heavily for not being able to explain the concept of mediation. He says in the voice of Constantine that with mediation that "no explanation is forthcoming as to how mediation comes about, whether it results from the movement of two factors, and in what sense it already is contained in them, or whether it is something new which supervenes, and if so, how (*R*, 33-34). McCumber (2011:82) notes that for Kierkegaard mediation is ambiguous "because Hegel takes it to denote both an action and the result of the action." But Hegel seems to be well aware of this. In the transition of Hegel's mediation of two terms, the two terms give way to a new third term. In the *Encyclopaedia*, Hegel (in McCumber, 2011:82) speaks of "a having-gone forward from a first to a second and coming to be from distinct things."

Yet for Kierkegaard, the 'new' does not arise from Hegel's dialectic. For Kant, the new comes about through synthetic judgements, whereas Hegel allows analytic judgements to do all the work (Houlgate, 2005:37),[18] and thus Hegel allows thought to determine itself as 'presuppositionless.' Hegel (1967:10) suggests, "*What is rational is actual and what is actual is the rational*;" thought itself lends to what is real. For example, being and non-being form the third concept of becoming. Purely by *thinking* through the concepts of being and non-being, allows one to see the logical progression; through thought itself the concept of being turns into the concept of becoming (Houlgate, 2005:38). As he says in the *Logic*, "That which enables the Notion to advance itself is the already mentioned *negative* which it possesses within itself; it is is [sic.] this which constitutes the genuine dialectical element" (Hegel, 1969:54). Thought is granted, one might say, its own autonomy and is able to determine itself. "Philosophy," Hegel (1967:11) says, "is its own time apprehended in thoughts." Although Kant did allow the self its own transcendental ground, for Kant new information can only come about in synthetic judgement, *not* from analytical judgement (Houlgate, 2005:37). For Kant, the understanding can intuit nothing, and the senses can think nothing. It is only through their union that knowledge can arise. In other words, representation by the faculty of understanding allows for

[18] Houlgate may be said to fall into the 'revised metaphysical view' of Hegel, which is yet another interpretation of Hegel's metaphysics. I shall not however go into much detail, since it is quite similar in many ways to the Aristotelian view. The revised metaphysical view, too, finds the post-Kantian or deflationary view to do injustice to Hegel's metaphysics, and they also disagree with the more overbearing traditional interpretations of Hegel's metaphysics. Either the revised view, or Beiser's interpretation of Hegels's metaphysics are thus workable for the purposes of this dissertation, but I find Beiser's view particularly enlightening given the Aristotelian nature.

the phenomenal to become present, but there is still a division between the empirical world and 'pure thought.' It is this gap between being and thought that Kierkegaard radically widens.

As we know, Kierkegaard thinks that movement is incompatible with logic, and that logic properly belongs in the realm of the timeless. As Kierkegaard (in *R*, xxix) says in a revealing passage in an unpublished disputation with Heiburg:

> In our days they have even gone so far as to want to have motion introduced into logic. There they have called repetition 'mediation.' Motion, however, is a concept which logic cannot endure. Hence mediation must be understood in relation to immanence. Thus understood, mediation cannot be employed at all in the sphere of freedom, where the next thing constantly emerges, not by virtue of immanence but of transcendence.

As Lowrie reflects, "If motion is allowed in relation to repetition in the sphere of freedom, then its development in this sphere is different from logical development in this respect, that *transition is a becoming*" (in *R*, xxx). Transcendence, as opposed to the immanence of logic, is linked to becoming and to freedom of the individual for Kierkegaard. Haufniensis (*CD*, 12) elaborates:

> In logic no movement can *come about*, for logic *is*, and everything logical simply is, and this impotence of logic is the transition to the sphere of being where existence and reality appear... In logic every movement (if for an instant one would use this expression) is an immanent movement, which in a deeper sense is no movement, as one will easily convince oneself if one reflects that the very concept of movement is a transcendence which can find no place in logic. The negative then is the immanence of movement, it is the vanishing factor, the thing that is annulled (*aufgehoben*). If everything comes to pass in that way, then nothing comes to pass, and the negative becomes a phantom.

Important to note is that Hegel *does* think that movement comes about through logic. He says in the *Logic* that "contradiction is the root of all movement and vitality; it is only in so far as something has a contradiction within it that it moves, has an urge and activity" (Hegel, 1969:439). However, again, this movement is tied to *conceptual* movement, but for Kierkegaard, the conceptual is not tied to being as such. As it will be shown in Chapter 4, Kierkegaard thinks that Hegel did not go *far enough*. Even considering Kierkegaard's relentless critique of Hegel's thought, Kierkegaard by no means carelessly disregards it. Although Chapter 4 will deal with this question specifically, it must presently suffice to say that Kierkegaard both adduces Hegel's thought and takes it further, and even the most sympathetic reading of Hegel would not discredit the ingenious manner in which Kierkegaard challenges

Hegel. Kierkegaard wants to radically go beyond traditional metaphysics, but whether he indeed proved successful in this task is a point that will be grappled with in Chapter 5. Given his meticulous architecture of historical dialectic, Hegel may easily be recognised as one of the first thinkers to be truly concerned with the historical, and both Chapters 4 and 5 will include how Kierkegaard both retains and supersedes the element of the historical in Hegel. For Kierkegaard, however, Hegel betrays an underlying bias of Reason. At the heart of Kierkegaard's dispute with Hegelianism is the *Paradox*. For Kierkegaard, there is *no possibility of a reciprocal relationship between human beings and God, or between the temporal and the eternal for human beings*. It is neither possible nor desirable that faith and reason be reconciled (Westphal, 1998:119).

2.2 Kierkegaard's Concept of Time and the Eternal

At the heart of Kierkegaard's project is the view that time is primarily experienced by human beings, specifically from the point of view of the Christian. Bedell (1969:266) makes an important observation: "Kierkegaard is not simply ruminating about the nature of time but is exploring the question that intrigued him from the beginning of his authorship: What are the kinds of existence that obtain in a civilization organized around the principle of the Incarnation?" Kierkegaard, or rather Vigilius Haufniensis, the pseudonymous author of *The Concept of Dread*, makes the point that an abstract concept of 'time itself' cannot form any basis of how human beings understand time. He describes time as such as infinite succession. Within time merely as infinite succession, however, no distinction may be posited between the past, present, and future. If every moment or instant is merely a 'going-by,' a slipping past of the present, one cannot rightly posit a foothold in such an infinite succession, in order to posit tensed time. Haufniensis (*CD*, 77) explains: "But precisely because every moment, like the sum of the moments, is a process (a going-by) no moment is present, and in the same sense there is neither past, present, nor future." Even if one visualizes time, and brings time to a standstill in this way, this division is indeed only possible because we 'spatialise' time it by representing it visually. This representation of the infinitely successive time is still a "present infinitely void of content" (ibid., 76-77).

Now this present "is not the concept of time unless precisely as something infinitely void, which again is the infinitely vanishing" (ibid., 77). But if infiniteness is not a characteristic of

the present, then the present must be *finite*, something that exists between past and future. However, this is untenable, since each quantum of time would be infinitely divisible. Thus, argues Haufniensis, properly speaking the *present is the eternal* (ibid.); the '*nunc stans*' is that present which never ceases to be present, and also never becomes past. For thought, the eternal may then be posited as the "annulled (*aufgehoben*) succession" (ibid.), and as such, there is not to be found any division of the past and the future. The point that Kierkegaard is making is that time is primarily understood by human beings not as abstract, but in concrete terms as past, present and future. The idea of 'time itself' as infinite succession does not explain how human beings understand tensed time. "Past, present, future arise only when we try to see time purely in terms of our own finite experience" (Bedell, 1969:266). It is not humanly possible to achieve some kind of Archimedean point in time, a standpoint outside of the temporal process.

We may note with Bedell that we can "overcome the giddiness of existence" (ibid., 267), of the infinite succession of time in one of two ways. First, we can attempt to posit the infinite succession as finite. Plato's view of time as a moving image of eternity is one such way of doing so. Because time is cyclical, it is like eternity, but it is also moving, and thus temporal. Yet, as we noted before, Plato does not manage to successfully explain the moment, according to Kierkegaard. Bedell explains:

> In making this move, one endows each moment with finitude just as a rhythmic beat finitizes intervening periods. But it also gives each period an equal value (there are no 'arhythms') which is to deprive them all equally of any singular or unique value. Moreover, there are no rhythmical climaxes. There is, in short, no moment (ibid.).

Alternatively, one may annul the succession of time by seeing God as a providential and caring being who may intervene in our lives. "The vectorial character and 'from-to' thickness of the will of God is represented in such phrases as 'the Alpha and the Omega,' 'from age to age,' 'thy kingdom come,' and so on (ibid.)." Kierkegaard defines *temporality* as the intersection of time (the changing) and eternity (the unchanging), and it is this understanding of time that explains the peculiar *human* experience of time. We may understand past, present, and future, given that the present moment is precisely the intersection of successive time and the annulled succession, or the eternal. This moment is still fleeting, and difficult to 'pin down,' but successive moments in this conception of time are not quantitively identical, but rather the flow of time is punctuated by qualitatively different moments. Kierkegaard says in the *Fragments*, "The moment has a particular character. It is brief and temporal indeed, like every moment; it

is transient as all moments are; it is past, like every moment in the next moment. And yet it is decisive, and filled with the eternal… let us call it the *Fullness of Time*" (*PF*, 13). The intersection of time and eternity may be grasped because of the Christian notion of the Incarnation, where the eternal paradoxically came into temporal being. Bedell (1969:267) explains:

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

The moment, or the instant, is the locus of purposeful activity. The sensual life which is lived in time, has no present *per se*. The modern aesthete lives only in the instant, the instant here is understood as something abstracted from the eternal, and if this is to be accounted for the present, is merely a *parody* of it.[19] The Greeks, belonging to the broad category of the aesthetic, may be excused for not comprehending the nature of temporality, however, because the Incarnation had not yet taken place. As Haufniensis explains, since for the Greeks spirit was not yet posited, they lacked a proper understanding of the instant and the concept of the temporal. Time and eternity are thus conceived abstractly (ibid., 79). It is only with Christianity that the eternal becomes *essential*, since the eternal, specifically the eternal future, becomes relevant to the individual. In the modern era, we tend to understand the eternal as having a forward thrust, which corresponds with the Christian notion of the eternal life ahead. Broadly speaking, as Haufniensis notes, "if there is no instant, then the eternal appears to be behind, like the past" (ibid., 80). Because what has been is absolutized, recollection excludes movement forward, '*the new*' (Melberg, 1990:74). For the Greeks, the instant was understood as an atom of infinite succession, but properly understood, the instant is an atom of eternity, which is associated with the future. But according to Kierkegaard, the future may indeed be understood as "the whole of which the past is a part" (Bedell, 1969:269). We indeed see the future as the

[19] Kierkegaard uses both the terms 'eternity' and 'the eternal,' for the most part interchangeably. However, 'the eternal' seems to gain a particularly Christian connotation, whereas eternity may be used both in the context of Christianity (properly understood to be synonymous with the eternal), and in other secular or pagan contexts, where the concept of eternity is (mis)understood as abstract.

disguise in which the eternal will make its appearance, although it would of course be folly to confuse eternity with the future (ibid.).

For Hegel, like the Greeks, the future is abstract. McCumber (2011:38) explains Hegel in the following way: "The future is unknown, while the present does not stay long enough to be even pointed at; all we have is the ongoing past. This ongoing past is now to count as ultimate truth." Furthermore, "Hegel's disregard for the future is thus entirely consistent with his view of philosophy as a purely theoretical enterprise that always comes on the scene too late to change anything about the world" (ibid., 78). As Haufniensis says, "logic… always arrives too late, even when it goes at full speed" (*CD*, 34). Hegel holds that it is futile to attempt to predict the future, let alone affect it (McCumber, 2011:78). For Hegel, the future is, in McCumber's words, "the becoming of the present as possibility, and thus as formless (*gestaltloss*)" (ibid.).

Hegel's understanding of the past as ultimate truth is illusory according to Kierkegaard. As Climacus writes: "A contemporary does not perceive the necessity of what comes into being, but when centuries intervene between the event and the beholder he perceives the necessity just as distance makes the square tower seem round" (*PF*, 65). He further inquires: "*Is the past more necessary than the future? or, When the possible becomes actual, is it thereby made more necessary than it was?*" (ibid., 59). What Kierkegaard wants to avoid is the sense of fatalism that traditional philosophical views of time imply, which also relates to despair of the self. "The determinist, the fatalist, is in despair, and in despair he has lost his self because for him everything is necessity" (*SUD*, 45). Looking back on a past decision, it is still possible to say that one could have chosen differently, since that moment was full of possibility, and possessed the openness of the future and the possibility of freedom. "The future has not happened. But it is not *on that account* less necessary than the past, since the past did not become necessary by coming into being, but on the contrary proved by coming into being that it was not necessary" (*PF*, 63). Again, Hegel's dialectic, for Kierkegaard, does not explain the 'new,' and does not allow for existential movement. Hegel's dialectic is abstract, like the Greeks, but unlike the Greeks, who had an innocent conception of time, his cannot be excused for having no concept of the instant.

Hegel's metaphysics could be said to reduce the fullness of the myriad of particularities, contingencies, and possibilities of life, to the general. The universal which is manifested through the particular at the very least undermines the contingency of history. The direction of time as experienced by individual human beings makes little difference to Hegel's historical process. Logic could be said to *superimpose* a linear form onto the past. Particularity and

individual human existence, is a necessary component of the process, an essential building block of the process of *Aufhebung*, yet for Hegel the individual does not hold nearly as much sway in the historical dialectic, as the underlying purpose of History.

2.3 Kierkegaard's Notion of Repetition

The notion of 'repetition' can be identified throughout Kierkegaard's work. Chapter 3 will look at repetition in the concrete context of Kierkegaard's three stages of existence, i.e. the aesthetic, ethical, and religious stages through which the self may dialectically develop, becoming more a self. Chapter 4 will examine repetition in relation to Hegel's dialectic of History and his idea of mediation. The purpose of this section is to set out a preliminary overview of the notion of repetition.

The word 'repetition' at first glance perhaps seems to be associated with cyclical time, rather than linear Christian eschatological time. However, Kierkegaard appropriates 'repetition' in a unique manner.[20] He explains that, "Mediation is a foreign word, repetition [i.e. *Gentagelsen*] is a good Danish word and I congratulate the Danish language upon having a good philosophical term" (*R*, 33). This is because the Danish word 'repetition' includes a sense of gain and not only merely getting back something exactly identical. The Danish literally translates into English as 'the taking back;' thus, the meaning of repetition thus could also be located in the sense of "'retake' as in a cinematic second or third 'take,'" as Mooney (1996:28) writes, adding: "Hence it is close to the idea of dropping an initial approximation in favour of a version done better, or being richer in meaning" (ibid.).

Repetition has such significance that, as Lowrie (in *R*, xxvii) notes, one may say that in no other place does Kierkegaard state so clearly his "metaphysical position." Kierkegaard avers in the voice of Constantine Constantius, the pseudonymous author of *Repetition*:

> I must ever be repeating that it is with reference to repetition I say all this. Repetition is the new category which has to be *brought to light*. If one knows something of modern philosophy and is not entirely ignorant of the Greek, one will easily perceive that precisely this category explains the relation between

[20] We may note with Bedell (1969:269) that: "Although repetition may not be strictly equated with the classical Christian understanding of the eschatological, perhaps we can say that repetition bears close affinities to what has recently been termed 'realised eschatology,'" the actualization of the kingdom of God not occurring with the end of time, but within historical time. We may add Kearney (2004:941): "Even though the Kingdom has *already come* – and is incarnate *here and now* in the loving gestures of Christ and all those who give, or receive, a cup of water – it still always remains a possibility *yet to come*."

> the Eleatic School and Heraclitus, and that properly it is repetition which by mistake has been called mediation… Incredible how much just has been made about mediation in Hegelian philosophy (*R*, 33, my emphasis).

I in turn aim to bring to light the notion of repetition in Kierkegaard's writing, which occurs in subtly different forms throughout Kierkegaard's writing. We may already note Kierkegaard's challenge to Hegel's concept of mediation. Kierkegaard expounds unusually clearly the notion of repetition in the following passage:

> The dialectic of repetition is easy; for what is repeated has been, otherwise it could not be repeated, but precisely the fact that it has been gives to repetition the character of novelty. When the Greeks said that all knowledge is recollection they affirmed that all that is has been; when one says that life is a repetition one affirms that existence which has been now becomes. When one does not possess the categories of recollection or of repetition the whole of life is resolved into a void and empty noise. Recollection is the pagan life-view; repetition is the modern life-view; repetition is the *interest* of metaphysics, and at the same time the interest upon which metaphysics founders; repetition is the solution contained in every ethical view, repetition is a *conditio sine qua non* of every dogmatic problem (ibid., 34).

The future-oriented repetition may be defined specifically in relation to recollection, which is backwards-orientated. Re-collection, re-cognition, signifies an 'again,' a 'repetition' of the past in the present. This is specifically a 'repetition' of the eternal past. Through recollection, one *re*-gains through anamnesis knowledge one once knew in the past eternal and then lost when one entered the finite world. But repetition in the Kierkegaardian sense implies an activity, a creation of something that has eternal, *future*, status. As Melberg (1990:74) elucidates:

> 'Repetition' here is a movement in time: re-take, re-peat, re-turn, re-verse means going back in time to what 'has been.' But still, in spite of this movement backward, 'repetition' makes it new and is therefore a movement forward: it is 'the new.' The reason this movement backward is actually a movement forward is temporal: you cannot re-pear/re-take what has been, since what has been has been. The *now* of 'repetition' is always an *after*.

With repetition, one recovers the Same from the past but with something gained *in addition*. Constantine (*R*, 3) says, "Repetition and recollection are the same movement, only in opposite directions; for what is recollected has been, is repeated backwards, whereas repetition properly so called is recollected forwards." This may imply that the difference between 'repetition' and 'recollection' is not absolute after all (Melberg, 1990:75). Both terms suggest bringing a sense

of order to flux of existence, without which, existence could be likened to 'noise' without discernible meaning (ibid.). This "void and empty noise" likely refers to Hegel's mediation, which only purports to give an account of movement.

Kierkegaard maintains that movement is possible by virtue of the orientation of the eternal being *futural*; the Christian conception of the possibility of the eternal lies not in the past but precisely in the future. "In existence the watchword is always *forward*" (*CUP*, 368). It is the moment that is so weighty, as we make a choice in the moment that may affect my eternal future. Repetition may be compared with hope, which is also future-orientated. However, hope lacks both the surety that faith requires, and the decisiveness that implies that I may actively change the future, with the awareness that for God anything is possible. "Like that of recollection it has not the disquietude of hope, the anxious adventuresomeness of discoverers, nor the sadness of recollection; it has the blessed certainty of the instant" (*R*, 4). Faith views the present as full of possibility, related to the eternal future. In other words, hope as such still implies a fatalistic sense of time. Constantine says further: "It requires youth to hope, and youth to recollect, but it requires courage to will repetition" (ibid., 5).

Repetition is inextricably linked with, and occurs within the instant and the leap. "The temporal dialectics of 'repetition' suspends temporal sequence: the now that is always an after comes actually before – it is the now of 'the instant,' the sudden intervention in sequential time, the caesura that defines what has been and prepares what is to become" (Melberg, 1990:74). "In 'the instant' past, present and future coincide… 'The instant', therefore, has the character of being past and future at the same time" (du Toit, 1983:190). The possibility of the instant properly understood allows us to understand that the past can be repeated, but with an essential difference. The instant abstractly conceived does not allow for the bridging of two distinct moments, but the leap arises when the instant is conceived as an atom of eternity, or more precisely, where the eternal as such intersects with successive time. "…the individual does not always know exactly *what* he is choosing… the individual hurls himself at that which he does not understand, which is above his comprehension" (ibid.). The individual *throws* or *projects* him/herself into a radically unknown future.

The highest repetition occurs in the religious stage, where the greatest actualization of the synthesis of time and the eternal is possible for the individual.[21] However, repetition, which is certainly a "rich and multifaceted idea" (Mooney, 1993:152), is not to be understood as being

[21] This may be supported by the following: "At the instant of death man finds himself at the extremest point of the synthesis; the spirit cannot, as it were, be present, and yet it must wait, for the body must die" (*CD*, 83).

limited to religious experience. Kierkegaard asserts repetition as a *new category*, a way of understanding that arises from the inherent view of time in Christianity. It is similar to *kinesis* and reflects Hegel's mediation, at least structurally, but it is quite a novel concept, or perhaps rather, 'nonconcept' (Melberg, 1990:75). The following chapter will explore the subtle variations of repetition in the context of the concrete stages, so that we may come to better understand the underlying structure of repetition, as well as the nuances that manifest at each respective stage.

The word 'repetition' surely brings to mind differing and even opposite meanings and associations.[22] It means at the most basic level the possibility of whether what has come before can happen again, with the question in mind to what extent it remains exactly the same. Repetition may be seen as precisely a question of *identity*; of what stays the same through time. "Repetition crystallizes the meaning of particulars by placing them under or within a frame – natural, moral, esthetic, or autobiographical. Persons, selves, or souls are rich, complex particulars crystallized in stories, in narrative frames" (Mooney, 1993:153). Repetition is foremost a concrete mode of existing, but the definition of repetition may be extended towards a broader, literary and deconstructive mechanism. Mooney (1996:29) describes repetition broadly in the following way:

> At a basic level, repetition shapes experience by keeping focal patterns salient against their backgrounds. For example, when working through a difficult line of verse, recognizable words emerge from lettered ink. If they fail to jell as poetic line, they will fall away, lacking sufficient stability or vibrancy to be sustained within a field of meaning. But if instead they crystallize as poetry, then words lift off the page in new relief. The *same* words – and yet restored to life. They are restored, as Kierkegaard would have it, through repetition.

For Caputo (1987:12), Kierkegaard's repetition lies at the heart of Heidegger's project, although Heidegger does not really acknowledge his debt. Heidegger's word for 'repetition' is

[22] The theme of repetition is indeed, broadly speaking, not unique to Kierkegaard. Repetition finds a psychological colouring in light of Freud and later psychoanalysis, for example. A neurosis, attempts to deal with a past trauma by playing it out over and over again in the action of 'repetition-compulsion' (*Wiederholungszwang*). One either unconsciously places oneself in similar situations to the traumatic event, or one repeats the circumstance as a memory in dream. This is "an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things" (Freud, 1987:308). By more actively repeating the event, i.e. not a simply obsessive or neurotic repetition, one gains control over the event where one had none in the original experience. It is informative to note that Kierkegaard described himself as a psychologist, and may be thought of as a proto-psychologist before psychology had been definitively established as a new discipline through the work of Freud and Jung. One might only think of Kierkegaard's 'secret,' to which Kierkegaard returns again and again, eventually accepting the truest sense of repetition, salvation.

Wiederholung, also translated as 'retrieval' or 'recapitulation.' Stambaugh in her Introduction to *Being and Time* notes that,

> *Wiederholung*… could also be translated as 'recapitulation' since that word is used in music to refer to what Heidegger seems to intend by *Wiederholung*. In music (specifically in the sonata form) recapitulation refers to the return of the initial theme after the whole development section. Because of its new place in the piece, that same theme is now heard differently (in Heidegger, 1996:xv-i).

Kierkegaard, also relating the theme of music to repetition in the *Journals*, says "The presuppositional basis of consciousness, or, as it were, the [musical] key, is continually being raised, but within each key the same thing is repeated" (in Mooney, 1993:154). The musical theme may be continued in observing Kierkegaard's proclamation: "Hail to the post-horn! That is my instrument… one never can be sure of eliciting from this instrument the same note. And he who puts it to his mouth and deposits his wisdom therein can never be guilty of repetition" (*R*, 78).

Deleuze makes the distinction between generality and repetition in his *magnum opus*, *Repetition and Difference*. Generality marks the order of equivalences, where one particular may be unproblematically substituted for another (Deleuze, 2004:1). This is the empiricist quantitative domain, where for instance, any experiment bearing the same results is suitable. We may compare this with Kierkegaard's quantitatively conceived time, which applies to the development of historical or scientific knowledge. On the other hand, repetition, which he draws from Kierkegaard, is "a necessary and justified conduct only in relation to that which cannot be replaced" (ibid.). One may see how in science it is advantageous to negate those differences which occur on the basis of subjective qualification, where two events, for example, may be seen as exactly alike, regardless of their temporal sequence. A static, linear conception of time arises from this understanding, where the particular is subsumed by the general. But for Kierkegaard and for Deleuze, temporality matters when we regard the experience of the self.

We now have a preliminary idea of repetition, in its broadest and most basic sense. In the next chapter, repetition gains a concrete rendering in the context of Kierkegaard's stages of existence. In Chapter 4, repetition gains further meaning in a 'deconstructive' sense, as a tool which may be textually applied, and the limits of repetition in such a sense are explored in Chapter 5. It is in many different senses, then, that we may say with Perkins (1993:200) that, "Repetition is, then, not only responsive, it is also responsible."

2.4. Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this chapter has been to look at the way Kierkegaard opposes traditional views of time and eternity, which correlates with how he opposes traditional metaphysics. While in this chapter these concepts are broadly addressed and the elemental characteristics of Kierkegaard's time, the eternal, and repetition outlined and explained, in the following chapter these concepts will be expanded and contextualised, granting these concepts the depth and richness that Kierkegaardian thought merits. Kierkegaard amplifies the gap between being and thought, and time and eternity. This move does not mark a return to traditional metaphysics, but arguably drives Kierkegaard's philosophy beyond the bounds of traditional metaphysics. Kierkegaard wants to move away from a metaphysics that arrests the flux of time, and repetition allows for a meaningful understanding of the ebb and flow of time in all its fullness.

Important to note is that in Kierkegaard's view, time is a dynamic, fluid medium in which the individual exists. With Kierkegaard's dialectic, the past does not represent a static, reified truth, but is rather a series of present moments passed. It is perhaps in this sense that Lowrie (1965:31) is able to say: "Foresight is really hindsight, a reflection of the future which is revealed to the eye when it looks back upon the past." It is arguably this existential, lived sense of time in which we as human beings primarily dwell. Regret, nostalgia, anticipation, dread, are inherent to the human experience, and can be positively engaged to encourage a 'thoughtful,' responsible life. Kierkegaard effectively shows us how we can get back to the present, through cultivating inwardness and 'seriousness' of the self, "sober in an eternal sense" (Kierkegaard, 2009:68). The existential 'reality' of the past and the future is as such dependent upon the capacity of the mind to retain the past in memory or project into the future. Indeed, we might say that we understand the very possibility of 'time itself' from the perspective of situated temporality.

Chapter 3: Kierkegaard's Stages of Existence

Time's violence rends the soul; by the rent eternity enters.

Simone Weil

In close relation to Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works is his philosophy of the three stages of existence, viz., the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious stages. Each indirect work is written by a pseudonym portraying one of these three main stages. Philosophically and poetically, both Kierkegaard's works and the stages are part of a dynamic whole, as possibilities of experiencing the world, though at the same time each stage has its own unique defining characteristics. The tension between the pseudonymous works or stages as they stand individually as opposed to in relation to one another respectively, arguably keeps Kierkegaard's project in constant motion. This chapter gives a succinct account of each stage, as well as the function and role of time and eternity in the stages, expanding upon the framework of time and the eternal discussed in the previous one. This will allow Kierkegaard's view of time to become clearer and more concrete, furthermore paving the way for a more in-depth discussion of time and the eternal in Kierkegaard's dialectic in comparison with Hegel's dialectic.

The notion of 'repetition' or '*Gjentagelsen*' will also receive concrete contextualisation, being related interdependently to the notions of time and eternity. This notion is not easily teased out, for it recurs throughout various works and contexts; each stage may be understood to have its own variation of the term (see Mooney, 1996:28), and different works of Kierkegaard have different modulations of the concept (ibid.). Repetition is ultimately, however, a category that is best grasped through a personal and concrete appropriation.

It is important to note that while most Kierkegaard scholars agree that there are various subcategories of the stages of existence, for the purposes of this study, I refer to the main three stages only. This being said, one must beware of treating the stages too rigidly. Implied in Kierkegaard's dialectic is a gradual development of self-consciousness. At the same time, however, there is a discernible leap from the aesthetic to the ethical stage, and an even more pronounced leap from the ethical to the religious stage. Liehu suggests that the stages are not an "unambiguous 'ladder': rather we could speak of a curve diagram ascending steadily – only, however, in a metaphorical sense, because the transition from one stage of existence to another is always a 'leap'" (Liehu, 1990:63).

One may observe that Kierkegaard's dialectic shares certain similarities with Hegel's. Kierkegaard's three main stages reflect Hegel's three philosophical modes, as exemplified by Hegel's *omne trium est perfectum*,[23] and Hegel's dialectical development is also one of self-consciousness. Yet the difference between Kierkegaard and Hegel's dialectic is significant, for Kierkegaard's underlying understanding of time and dialectic differ fundamentally from Hegel's. Unlike Hegel's historical dialectic, Kierkegaard's personal dialectic applies to the individual, quite apart from their aggregation. There is an active striving, a self-conscious holding together of the opposing parts of the self, in order to become a fuller self. The qualitative leap from one stage to the next is made possible by virtue of the character of Kierkegaard's, or rather, the Christian understanding of temporality, which makes the *moment* possible. The experience of the leap resists being generalised or universalised. Although each stage has its own distinguishing qualities, the experience is always subjectively unique, special precisely because it is experienced by the singular individual, who must *choose* to become a more fully developed self. No underlying logical or conceptual necessity drives the individual to develop from one stage to the next. Unlike the strong element of Reason that underlies Hegel's historical dialectic, Kierkegaard's dialectic is driven by the subjective will of the individual, and made possible through the grace of God. This chapter primarily deals with Kierkegaard's stages, but will also compare Hegel's dialectic to Kierkegaard's stages, where relevant.

3.1 The Aesthetic Stage

The category of the aesthetic plays a prominent role in Kierkegaard's works, and features in some notable works, amongst others are *Stages on Life's Way*, *Repetition*, and of course *Either/Or*. Kierkegaard's writings concerning the aesthetic stage express with charm and alacrity the frivolous life of the aesthete, but his writings generally ultimately warn against the fleeting nature of such pleasure. In his own youth Kierkegaard overindulged in pleasure, which he only later began to view as distasteful. Nevertheless, he remained a devoted arts enthusiast, and continued to frequent the opera houses in Copenhagen (Lowrie, 1965:93). Johannes de Silentio (*FT*, 145) avers: "The aesthetic is the most faithless of the sciences. Every one who has truly fallen in love with the aesthetic becomes in a sense unhappy; but he who has never

[23] Everything that comes in threes is perfect.

fallen in love with it is and remains a *pecus*," and Constantine (*R*, 43) notes that it is only "pitiful or comic when an individual lives himself out in this way."

Kierkegaard's deep appreciation of the arts is perhaps best evidenced in his devotion to the aesthetic sphere in the lengthy *Either/Or I*, written by the pseudonymous and 'anonymous' author, simply referred to as 'A.' In the preface of *Either/Or I*, the pseudonymous author Victor Emerita explains that he discovered the notes of a certain anonymous author he terms 'A' and the letters sent to him by Judge William, who is also referred to as 'B.' The aesthete and the Judge exchange letters discussing the benefits of living the aesthetic or ethical life, respectively, each seeking to persuade the other of the superiority of their respective sphere. Some of the writings of A will discussed in this section.

3.1.1 The Immediate and Reflective Aesthete

There are various subcategories of the aesthete, and I agree with Heidi Liehu that Kierkegaard's aesthetic stage cannot be represented by a single character. She takes account of some of the sub-levels of the aesthetic persona: notably the philistines, demoniacs, seducers, geniuses, speculants, pagans, and fatalists (Liehu, 1990:63). It is, however, unnecessary for the purposes of this dissertation to focus on more than the two main categories of the aesthete, i.e. the immediate and reflective aesthete.

Liehu (1990) gives an insightful analysis of the stages in relation to *The Sickness unto Death*, and I draw on her work in this section to make sense of the self as portrayed by Kierkegaard. In *The Sickness unto Death*, Kierkegaard asserts that the self is a relation between the finite and infinite, the temporal and eternal, and between necessity and freedom (*SUD*, 9). Given that the aesthete lacks a higher awareness of self due to the lack of a synthesis of the opposing elements of spirit, the two types of aesthete may be defined, according to Liehu, as lacking one of the two elements of Kierkegaard's properly synthesised self. The reflective aesthete is characterised as leaning heavily towards the infinite and possibility, whereas the immediate aesthete is characterised by finitude, necessity, and corporality (Liehu, 1990:79). The general shortcoming of the aesthetic stage is that it fails to combine the two opposing terms into a

unifying third (ibid., 64); indeed, the aesthete does not even recognise him/herself as a synthesis.[24]

Examples of the immediate aesthete include the page in "Figaro" and Papageno in "The Magic Flute," but Don Juan is the example *par excellence* of the immediate aesthete. Their immediacy finds expression in the musical genius of Mozart. Not self-conscious enough to deserve the title of seducer, Don Juan is named a 'deceiver' instead. Indeed, he does not even recognise the other as a self-conscious subject. Women are viewed merely as a means to the end of satiating his fleeting and endless desires. Between seeing and loving a woman, there is no distance in terms of time (ibid., 74). As we know, temporality for Kierkegaard is the intersection of successive time and eternity, but the immediate aesthete exists predominantly within the succession of time. He is thus characterised by immediacy, and by fatalism, obeying his desires with little thought for future consequences.

Examples of the reflective aesthete can be found in "The Rotation of Crops" and "The Seducer's Diary" in *Either/Or I* (p. 98). In the latter, the seducer is properly named a seducer, as he possesses the self-consciousness of being a seducer, possessing the patience to plan his seductions carefully in advance. As noted, the reflective aesthete is characterised by infinity and possibility. Although the reflective aesthete still does not synthesise the opposing elements of spirit, unlike the immediate aesthete, the reflective aesthete is at least able to distinguish between them (*E/O I*, 93). The reflective aesthete is able to project into the future, yet again, his capacity to do so is limited. The reflective aesthete is more suited to expression in language, as opposed to the immediacy of music (ibid., 75). Possibility and infinity are more associated with the future, and although futuricity is a core characteristic of the possibility of foresight and responsibility, it is, as Anti-Climacus points out, counter-productive to focus *exclusively* on the possible. As he notes in *The Sickness Unto Death*, more becomes possible for the aesthete, because nothing becomes actual (*SUD*, 39), and the reflective aesthete remains in despair.

[24] This is the case unless the aesthete falls under the specific category of the demoniacal, consciously recognising and denying the religious.

3.1.2 Kierkegaard on Fatalism: Hegel and the Greeks

In the 1750s Alexander Baumgarten defined the aesthetic as criticism of taste, which is more closely associated with common contemporary definition. However, before Baumgarten, the aesthetic was not used in connection with art and had the meaning of sense-perception and feeling, in accordance with the Greek *aisthetikos* (Liehu, 1990:62). Hegel and Kierkegaard retain the Greek sense of the word, although they use the term as a theoretical one associated with art (ibid., 63).

This connection with sensation should thus be kept in mind when considering Kierkegaard's view of aesthetic existence. It is useful to note that no distinction between 'sensation' and the 'sensual' exists in the Danish language; *Sandselig* is the word that encompasses both. As Lowrie remarks, "It was convenient also for [Kierkegaard] that in Danish the same word means 'sensuous' and 'sensual'" (in *CD*, ix). This is significant to consider because for Christianity, the body and sensuality has been seen, predominantly since the philosophy of Augustine, as associated with sin. Kierkegaard takes the aesthete, however, as not even self-conscious enough to be thought of as evil: "for the aesthetical is not evil but neutrality, and this is the reason why I affirmed that it is the ethical which constitutes the choice (*EO I*, 173). Kierkegaard himself mentions that "he who lives aesthetically does not choose" (in Liehu, 1990:146). But the aesthete is not aware of being in relation to the eternal. The material, bodily aspect of the aesthetic is stressed, as is particularly evident in the case of the immediate aesthete. For Kierkegaard, however, and unlike Augustine, the point as such is not that the pleasures of the body must be ascetically denied, but that one cannot actualise oneself as spirit if the body is not held in *tension* with the soul. If either the temporal part or the infinite eternal part of the spirit is neglected, the self cannot be said to be properly developed *qua* self.

As a broad category, the ancient Greeks fall under the aesthetic sphere. For them, the instant is conceived as a fragment of eternity, yet not truly, because eternity is understood backwards, represented by Plato's recollection or *anamnesis*. Greek tragedy operates on the idea of recollection, and indicates a limited sense of freedom. Kierkegaard suggests in *The Concept of Dread* that the Greeks did not have a proper understanding of the instant, nor of freedom. As seen in Chapter 2, the instant cost Plato much effort (*CD*, 74). Hegel, on the other hand, a supposedly Christian thinker, does not acknowledge the aspect of the eternal that came into the world with Christianity. The Greeks thus remained largely innocent; their sense of dread was not as great as with that of the modern aesthetes. According to Haufniensis,

> The concept of guilt and sin does not in the deepest sense emerge in paganism. If it had emerged, paganism would have foundered upon the contradiction that one might become guilty by fate. This indeed is the supreme contradiction, and in this contradiction Christianity breaks forth (ibid., 87).

According to Crites (in Liehu, 1990:76), Kierkegaard's aesthetics corresponds closely with Hegel's, and can be classified as Hegelian concerning the theoretical questions of art.[25] Crites declares that Hegel's only mistake was to extend the speculative viewpoint to the domains of ethics and religion (ibid.). I suggest, however, that Kierkegaard's aesthete is fundamentally different to Hegel's. This is as a direct result of Kierkegaard's consideration that the Incarnation introduced a decisive shift into the very possibility of experiencing time. A crucial point to make regarding the various kinds of aesthete has to do with Kierkegaard's notion of dread. As explained in the previous chapter, dread is tied to the specifically Christian notion of time and sin.

We may immediately discern a divergence of A's conception of the most perfect art from Hegel's conception. Hegel's idea of true art is that which expresses most perfectly the idea of freedom. For Hegel, the best content for art is the Absolute, which is expressed through concrete, sensible means. For Hegel, the aesthetic age peaked in the age of the ancient Greeks. Greek sculpture gives us the purest *ideal* beauty, and freedom is "embodied in an *individual* who stands alone in his or her "self-enjoyment, repose, and bliss… found above all in fifth- and fourth-century Greek sculptures of the gods" (ibid.). The best means to express freedom is *concretely*, however, and Greek tragedy is the most concrete medium. Hegel regards poetry as the "most perfect art" (Houlgate, 2016), because it provides the richest and most concrete expression of spiritual freedom. Greek tragedy portrays real human beings with imagination, character and free will. For Hegel, the Idea becomes manifest only in and through finite human beings, and Hegel supposes that in Greek tragedy the individual expresses real, ethical, freedom.

It is worthwhile to note, in contrast, Kierkegaard's critique of Greek sculpture and poetry. Haufniensis says regarding the Greek statue: "It is noteworthy that Greek art culminates in statuary, in which it is precisely the glance that is lacking. This, however, has its deep reason in the fact that the Greeks did not in the profounder sense comprehend the concept of spirit, and therefore did not in the profoundest sense comprehend the sensuous and the temporal"

[25] See also Carlsson (2016), who shows how Kierkegaard's aesthetics was influenced by Hegel.

(*CD*, 78). He says further, "The effect of sculpture is due to the fact that the eternal expression is expressed eternally; the comic effect, on the other hand, by the fact that the accidental expression was eternalised" (ibid., 79).[26]

With regards to Greek tragedy, I quote at some length from *Fear and Trembling*:

> In Greek tragedy the concealment (and as a consequence recollection) is a relic of the epic based upon a conception of destiny in which the dramatic action disappears and out of which tragedy draws its dark and mysterious origins. This is why the effect produced by a Greek tragedy can be compared with the impression produced by a marble statue which lacks the sovereign glance. Greek tragedy is blind. It is therefore necessary to possess a certain sense of abstraction before one can be influenced by it. A son murders his father and only afterwards learns that it is his father (*FT*, 122-123).

Kierkegaard is evidently referring to the famous tragedy *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles. What Kierkegaard is getting at is the fatalistic tendency of Greek time. Unknown to the mortal human being, his destiny is in the hands of fate to which he is blind. Once the prediction is made about Oedipus killing his own father, his fate is sealed. It is a recollective and fatalistic movement, since there is a truth about the stage characters, or existing human beings, of which they are unaware, which is hidden from them but which will in time inevitably become manifest. As Johannes de Silentio (*FT*, 123) remarks, "This kind of tragedy is hardly appropriate to our *reflective* age. Modern drama has rid itself of destiny and become dramatically emancipated." Instead, "The concealment and the manifestation are the free action of the hero, for which he is responsible" (ibid., 122).

Hegel acknowledges that the Greeks have no choice; the only action they may take is in accordance with their character, or *pathos*, and thus the Greeks are tragic. Kierkegaard, however, thinks Hegel has gotten this wrong: the Greeks are tragic *because* they believe in fate; Greek tragedy cannot represent freedom because of their underlying fatalistic worldview. We cannot truly speak of guilt in Greek tragedy if ultimately their actions are channelled by fate. As Hegel (1975:1216) admits, it is fate that "drives personality back upon its limits, and shatters it, when it has grown overweening." For him, the overarching purpose of history is a driving force in annulling contradictions, which, he admits, may cost the individual dearly.

[26] It is worthy to note that Constantine chooses the word *øieblikket* which literally translates as 'the glance of the eye,' thus effectively critiquing the Greek's notion of the instant. It is further equivalent to the English 'twinkling of the eye' and appears in 1 Corinthians 15:52.

For Kierkegaard, although the Greeks belong to the broad category of the aesthetic, there is a qualitative difference between the ancient Greek view of art and the modern view of art. Kierkegaard's modern reflective aesthete is far more conscious of his sensuous lifestyle than the ancient Greek. It is only with the Incarnation that the sensuous is posited as a principle as such, in relation to the spiritual.[27] This is of course not to say that the Greeks had no conception of the aesthetic. The Greeks rather had an innocent view of the sensual, not yet as defined in relation to the spiritual and sin: "Thus when sin is drawn into aesthetics the mood becomes either frivolous or melancholy; for the category under which sin lies is contradiction, and this is either comic or tragic. The mood is therefore altered, for the mood corresponding to sin is seriousness" (*CD*, 13-14).

3.1.3 The Modern Aesthete

The most perfect harmonious balance of form and content is to be found, according to A, in Mozart's *Don Juan*. He arrives at this conclusion by means of precise deliberation as to what constitutes the most perfect work of art. According to A, one can judge a classic by the criterion of being the least repeatable work of art. This, for A, means that both the medium and the subject matter will be the most abstract. The most abstract subject matter (form), which is the least repeatable, Kierkegaard proposes, is the sensual genius. As we know, Don Juan is the example *par excellance* of the immediate aesthete.

The most abstract and immediate medium is music, since music cannot express historical time (Liehu, 1990:78). Precisely because it is itself immediate, music alone is proper for the expression of the immediacy of the aesthetic stage (Prather, 1978:55). Thus music is the most perfect medium for the idea of the sensual/sensuous, and Don Juan is best portrayed musically. Music occurs in time, but does not last in time; it ceases to exist as soon as it has been performed. Other forms of art are not suitable expressions of immediacy because they exist in time and space and because they demand reflection for full appreciation.

[27] According to Haufniensis, "After Christianity had come into the world and redemption was posited, sensuousness was seen in a new light, the light of contradiction, as it was not seen in paganism; and this serves precisely to confirm the proposition that sensuousness in sinfulness" (*CD*, 66). He goes on to clarify: "Sensuousness then is not sinfulness, but by the fact that sin was posited, and by the fact that it continues to be posited, sensuousness becomes sinful" (ibid., 68).

For the reflective aesthete, as with the Greek aesthete, time is the instant. There is a sense of abstraction and necessity: "Although the lovers have hardly had time to sleep over their heroic decision, the aesthetic regards them as though they had spent many years in a brave struggle for their ends. In fact, the aesthetic pays little attention to time, which passes by as speedily whether in jest or in earnest" (*FT*, 125). It is worthwhile to note that A says in *Either/Or* that while it was necessary for someone to produce the most perfect art, it did not necessarily need to be Mozart. While it is fortunate that the task fell to Mozart (*E/O I*, 38) it could just as well have been someone else. There is a generality implied here, such that the very direction of time matters minimally. As Kierkegaard specifies in the *Postscript*, the more abstract something is, the less it matters *who* said it, for example a mathematical or scientific principle.

The demoniacal refers to the modern aesthete who lives frivolously *despite* being aware of the implications of his actions, in defiance of dread brought about by Christianity. Music is the most spiritually excluded medium, and thus suits the demoniacal well, but the demoniacal may also be indicated by silence. The Greeks did not have such a conception of the demoniacal, for again, they remained innocent. As already said, Don Juan is not self-conscious enough to deserve the title of seducer, and is named a 'deceiver' instead. This does not make him innocent, however, as Don Juan exists within the reflective age. He resists reflection and lives in defiance of dread and responsibility.

3.2 The Ethical Stage

One can scarcely overestimate the importance of the ethical stage for Kierkegaard. Not only must one pass through the ethical to enter the religious sphere, but it is also the stage that has the most universal relevance. The ethical appears, like the aesthetic, in numerous works, most notably in *The Stages*, *Either/Or II*, and the *Postscript*, but its presence may be felt in more religious works too such as *Fear and Trembling* and *The Concept of Dread*. The role of human memory (and language) and the ability to project into the future, are particularly critical here. Whereas both the aesthetic and the religious stages are characterised by immediacy, albeit in different ways, the ethical stage is uniquely characterised by *mediacy*. For the aesthetic and religious spheres, "meaning strikes directly, unmediated by reflective or discursive judgment" (Mooney, 1993:152). Whereas the (immediate) aesthetic sphere requires music as a medium, silence being an indication of the demoniacal, and the religious requires silence, resisting direct

communication, the ethical sphere precisely requires open and direct communication. As expressed in *Fear and Trembling*, the ethical is inextricably related to the universal, and like the universal it is also 'the manifest' (*FT*, 119). The individual is 'the hidden,' but the "ethical task then is to release himself from his hiddenness and to become manifest in the universal" (ibid.).

Despite Hegel's efforts to make ethics concrete, McCumber (2011:82) notes that according to Kierkegaard, Hegel indeed did not even properly have an ethics. Liehu (1990:95-99) suggests that Hegel's speculative philosophy comes closest to Kierkegaard's reflective aesthetic stage, at most bordering on the ethical. Liehu (1990:88), regarding Hegel, rightly comments that pondering over ethical questions does not make one's life ethical. Being infinitely reflective does not allow one to take action and make decisions, but Kierkegaard's ethical sphere is definitively characterised by the capacity to choose. Broudy similarly suggests that Hegel's speculation is situated between Kierkegaard's aesthetic and ethical stages (ibid., 85), remaining too abstract. According to Kierkegaard, the speculant speaks of reality, but forgets that he is talking merely of a conceptual reality. Climacus (*CUP*, 267) states, "Because abstract thought is *sub specie aeterni* it ignores the concrete and the temporal, the existential process, the predicament of the existing individual arising from his being a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal situated in existence." Even if the speculant understood the spirit as synthesis at a conceptual level, he or she would be unable to understand it at the level of concrete existence (Liehu, 1990:91). Hegel, for all his worth as the first truly historical thinker, remains too abstract, and Hegel's individual cannot become concrete enough to be called ethical as such (see Liehu, 1990:160). Perkins (2004:55) even goes as far as to say that "the notion of the self in the writings of Judge William in *Either/Or II* are quite un-Hegelian if not anti-Hegelian."

Naturally, not all commentators agree with the sentiment that Hegel's ethics is at stake. Solomon for instance affirms that "ethics is, in an important sense, at the heart of Hegel's philosophy" (Solomon, 1988:69), effectively critiquing Kant's ethics as abstract and alienating (ibid.), for Hegel felt that Kant's ethics was too abstract and ultimately dehumanizing (West, 1996:35; Solomon, 1988:69). One belongs to a particular concrete social community, which shares a particular set of values and customs, an idea embodied as Hegel's *Sittlichkeit*. It is furthermore a relatively straightforward observation to make that Kierkegaard's ethical stage most closely resembles Hegel's mediation, unlike the immediacy of the aesthetic stage and the explicit tension found within the religious stage. Westphal (1998:106) indeed maintains that

Judge William is a Hegelian, the ethical being comparable to Hegel's *Sittlichkeit,* and Binetti (2007) also closely affiliates Kierkegaard's ethical stage with Hegel's *Sittlichkeit*.

In addition, Kierkegaard's writing may imply that the ethical 'subsumes' the aesthetic, and Dunning focuses on the ethical stage as a synthesis, coming close to Hegel's conception of mediation. The ethical may be interpreted to 'sublate' the aesthetic, as marriage still retains something of the sensual pleasure of the aesthetic, as Judge William (*S,* 106) emphasises. As he comments in the *Stages*, "For the fact is that marriage is a higher expression for love." However, if this may be subscribed as a kind of sublation, it is certainly not merely conceptual, but pertains to concrete existential experience. We may safely say that various readings of Kierkegaard's stages abound, and the ethical stage seems to be the stage which has the least amount of agreement regarding its relation to Hegel. Perhaps this is due to its nature as bridging the aesthetic and the religious stage, containing aspects of both the aesthetic and the religious spheres. I again suggest that Kierkegaard's conception of the ethical is fundamentally different from Hegel's, as a result of Kierkegaard's emphasis on the Incarnation in time. The *individual* is inclined to make more responsible decisions, and this results in Kierkegaard's ethics being more concrete than Hegel's. While I agree that Hegel's speculation falls under the sphere of the aesthetic and not the ethical as such, there are certainly similarities between Kierkegaard's ethical sphere and Hegel's *Sittkichkeit*. Nevertheless, I believe that one would not do Kierkegaard's ethical sphere justice to equate it with Hegel's *Sittlichkeit*. For example, both Kierkegaard and Hegel draw upon marriage as a concrete example of the ethical life, but Kierkegaard focuses on the lived experience of the married person, and on marriage as an individual choice, rather than at an institutional level. As Judge William proposes, marriage is "the most beautiful task proposed to men" (*E/O II*, 8). This decision to commit to another for the rest of one's life indicates the "downright seriousness of life" (ibid., 9). The state, per Kierkegaard, generalises and universalises the individual's choice within the context of the law.

Still, I do not think that Kierkegaard's attack on Hegel's ethics shows Hegel as unambiguously wrong, but rather that Kierkegaard wants to restore the significance of the concrete *individual.* Hegel's problem was to place too much emphasis on the abstract and speculative part of ethics. Hegel is generally recognised as the first thinker to expressly state the historical dimension of knowledge, and to situate the individual within a historical context, and this has had a bearing on much philosophy since. Kierkegaard arguably takes up this historical aspect and makes it truly concrete. While history indeed affects human beings, no rational purpose subsumes the

individual. The realm of the social, the unhidden, means that one is accountable before a group of others, but for Kierkegaard this is not the ultimate *telos* of the individual, which is instead to be in a relationship with the Absolute, God.

Kierkegaard agrees with Hegel that language is the most concrete means of expression, and for Kierkegaard, language finds its home in the ethical sphere. Language, with its mediating and universal capacity, has its presence in *historical* time, as opposed to the instant, "for in the ethical I am raised above the instant" (*E/O II*, 151). The ethicist does not enjoy merely the pleasures of the moment, but is able to cultivate virtues such as patience and endurance, and is able to make a decision that *persists through time*. Caputo (1987:29) remarks: "The ethical individual has learned to do battle, not with dragons and lions, but with the most difficult enemy of all, time." While A does try to convince Judge William of his choice of life and shows good reasons for having chosen it, the ethical individual makes a choice in a way that defines him more stably and concretely. The decision is possible precisely because the modern (post-Christian) self is able to bring the eternal and temporal dimensions of the self together in the moment of decision (Taylor, 1973:325). In this way, the modern aesthete may be said to deny him/herself the full experience of an essentially human possibility, and is consequently in despair.

Finally, concerning the Greeks, for Kierkegaard they did not have an ethics proper, for again as they did not understand time and freedom correctly. They do however contain an 'ethical factor' (*CD*, 15). Indeed, the ethical and aesthetic seem to merge for the Greeks. Hegel is, again, less innocent, being more reflective, than the Greeks. How dangerous, indeed, to assert an ethics based upon a supposedly robust foundation which is, as Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel seems to sometimes imply, largely built around clever rhetoric.

To repeat, the ethical self becomes itself not through abstract mediation, but by a more active synthesis of the instant, which is possible with the rupture of the Incarnation. The ethical self is aware of itself as synthesis, and yet, the ethical self has not yet begun to actualise itself as spirit; the 'limiting' and 'expanding' categories are recognised but have not been brought into relation (ibid., 58). The truest synthesis of the self is achieved at the level of the *religious*. While the ethical stage does contain traces of the religious, it lacks the aspect of being truly and absurdly related to the Absolute. The ethical person chooses himself, though not yet *before God* (Liehu, 1990:65).

3.3 The Religious Stage

Just as the ethical stage takes up the aesthetic stage, so too does the religious stage take up the ethical stage, and thus also in a sense the aesthetic stage. Perhaps we may observe a certain irony in that the religious stage may experience the truly sublime that the aesthete can only strive to achieve. The aspect of the sublime at the religious stage is on a wholly different level to the sensory pleasure of the aesthetic stage. Yet the transition from the aesthetic to ethical stage is also a qualitative *leap*, and the move from the ethical to the religious stage is an even more pronounced leap. Indeed, the ethical sphere is described, by Johannes de Silentio, as *suspended* by one who is religious. This ambiguity will come to be explained in this section, and the subtle implications thereof should come into clearer view in Chapters 4 and 5.

At the religious stage, my duty to God is radicalised, and goes beyond the universal duty of the ethical. Even though the ethical Judge William acknowledges that before God one is always in the wrong (*E/O II*, 292), with the religious sphere, this is radicalised. The most absolute dread, and accountability, are encountered through coming face-to-face with God. It becomes a matter of the highest consequence to choose the right thing, although it is not always obvious what this is. Moreover, what one thinks is right may conflict with the universal mores prescribed by the ethical. At the religious stage, God does not exist to provide or justify a set of external morals and values, but becomes, at its pinnacle, a truly *personal* matter. In Johannes de Silentio's depiction of Abraham, Abraham is most aware of the disparity between his ethical commitments and God's command, and chooses to 'suspend the ethical.' As Mooney (1986:25) stresses, there simply is no right answer to Abraham's dilemma: "No decision procedure exists to provide a 'correct' resolution to these problems, and none can be imagined… Furthermore, they can be telling evidence of the depths of human vulnerability and care, the pervasiveness of suffering, and of the fragile yet awesome resilience of human integrity."

Unlike Hegel, where religiousness represents a reciprocal relation between self and God, Kierkegaard's religious individual stands in an absolute, direct, relation to the Absolute. There is a sense in which Kierkegaard directly opposes Hegel's dialectic. For Hegel, the religious is still merely at the stage of the representational, whereas for Philosophy the 'Absolute' may be conceived at a purely conceptual level. De Silentio laments that in the old days "faith was the task of a whole lifetime," but now one wants to "go further," being a "sign of good breeding and culture to assume that every one has faith" (*FT*, xiii). However, for Kierkegaard, one cannot go further than faith.

Worthy to note is that Hegel does concede that human beings cannot live by conceptual ideas alone; we need faith "to picture, imagine, and have faith in the truth" (Houlgate, 2016). Indeed, in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, Hegel claims that it is in *religion* above all that "a nation defines what it considers to be true" (in Houlgate, 2016). One must consider, however, the universal significance of religion for Hegel. For Kierkegaard, it is not the institutional aspect of religion which is essential – which merely constitutes identity at a universal level – but religion at a personal level, as having significance in becoming inward. Kierkegaard's dialectic pertains foremost to individual spirit, and not the 'Spirit' or *Geist* of History. Nothing is higher than having faith; faith is not for the sake of anything else, but is chosen for its own sake.

As we know, Kierkegaard decisively opposed the Hegelian mediation of opposites. The leap from the ethical to the religious stage presents the most decisive leap and fundamentally opposes Hegel's mediation. It is also a leap from Kierkegaard's own ethical sphere. Johannes de Silentio (*FT*, 75) says, "Ethics is as such the universal, and as the universal it is valid for all… It remains immanent in itself, having nothing outside itself which is its *τέλος,* being itself the *τέλος* of everything outside itself." However, in this leap, the individual may rise above this universal *telos*, and be posited in a higher relation, which is absurd. "For faith is this paradox, that the Individual is superior to the universal, but in such a way, however, that the movement repeats itself, and therefore in such a way that the Individual, after he has once been in the universal, then as Individual isolates himself as superior to the universal" (ibid., 76). The individual is above the universal "in such a way that the Individual, after having been as Individual subordinate in the universal, becomes the Individual though the universal, and as Individual superior to it, so that the Individual as Individual stands in an absolute relationship to the absolute" (ibid., 78). The self becomes elevated through choosing oneself as a synthesis directly before God. Here the religious may precisely contradict the ethical: "The ethical expression of Abraham's action is that he wished to murder Isaac: the religious expression is that he wished to sacrifice him" (ibid., 34). Herein lies Abraham's dread, although at the same time, the paradox is one "which can transform a murder into a holy act pleasing to God, a paradox which no thought can encompass" (ibid., 74).

Johannes de Silentio compares the knight of faith, or the knight of 'infinite resignation,' as exemplified by Abraham, to the 'tragic hero.' The knight of faith is "always making the movement of infinity, but he makes the movement with such precision and assurance that he

possesses himself of the finite without any one, even for a moment, suspecting anything else" (*FT*, 52). He continues:

> The knights of infinite resignation are dancers and have elevation. They make the upward movement and fall down again… To be able to fall in such a way as to appear at once standing and walking, to be able to transform the leap into a normal gait, to be able to express perfectly the sublime in terms of the pedestrian – only the knight can do this – and this is the single miracle (ibid., 53).

The knight of faith is elevated above the ethical in the leap of faith, by virtue of the absurd and God's grace. A man can become a tragic hero by his own strength, but he can never, by his own strength, become a knight of the faith (ibid., 95). The tragic hero, unlike the religious hero, does not suspend the ethical, but remains within the sphere of ethics (ibid., 83). The religious stage on the other hand is marked by the 'absurd:' Abraham "believed – that God would not demand Isaac… He believed by the virtue of the absurd; for all human calculation had long since been abandoned" (ibid., 44), and the absurdity lay precisely in the fact that God "demanded it of him one moment and recalled the demand the next" (ibid.). Through the double movement of faith he had "returned to his first state and therefore received Isaac more gladly than the first time" (ibid.). The knight of faith, by virtue of the absurd, believes that all things are possible to God (ibid., 62), acknowledging at once the impossibility of his or her situation and believing in the absurd (ibid., 63).

The knight of faith seems effortlessly, outwardly at least, to make the leap of faith, although inwardly he or she experiences the inevitable dread that accompanies freedom. Whereas the ethical stage demands openness and communication, the religious stage compels one towards inwardness and silence. Argamemnon, an example of the tragic knight, falls into the ethical sphere, and must openly declare the punishment of death for his child. Abraham however suffers silently, his suffering intensifying his inwardness, and his inwardness in turn intensifying his suffering. For Argamemnon, killing his child came as an ethical duty as King, and even though he must bear the immense pain of his decision, he is able to know that he is in the right before the law and the universal. For Abraham, however, there is a conflict between his outward duty and a duty which lies outside the bounds of universal duty (Mooney, 1986:27).

For Kierkegaard, Hegelian philosophy admits no justified hiddenness, nor does it admit of any incommensurability (*FT*, 119). The religious sphere, unlike both Kierkegaard's ethical stage and Hegel's philosophy, has need for silence. The religious experience cannot be

communicated directly, but has need of indirect communication. Even in this case, however, there is no guarantee that the reader will take the Christian doctrine to heart. Kierkegaard wants to make Christianity difficult again, and for Kierkegaard, suffering is part and parcel of the religious experience. Every infinite movement is effected through *passion*, and pure reflection cannot produce such a movement: "*This is the perpetual leap into existence which explains the movement, while mediation is a chimera which, according to Hegel, explains everything, although it is itself the one thing which he never attempted to explain*… What is lacking in our times is not reflection, but passion" (*FT*, 55, n.1). But through passion and silent suffering, we mirror the passion of Christ himself. For Climacus, "the paradox consists principally in the fact that God, the Eternal, came into existence in time as a particular man" (*CUP*, 528); "The paradox is that Christ came into the world *in order to suffer"* (ibid., 529). Christ furthermore did not come into the world as a king, but as a lowly man, as Anti-Climacus (*TC*, 44) says repeatedly, Christ's father a carpenter and his mother a "despised virgin."

The contradictions of the religious stage are not resolved. For the ethical stage, there may be a feeling of resolution of the contradicting erotic love (which exists in successive time) and commitment (which is related to the universal, that is; eternity, relatively speaking); but for the Christian the contradiction between time and the eternal (as such) is absolute and cannot be resolved. Thus the Christian does not synthesise time and eternity, but rather acknowledges and widens the contradictions. Paradoxically, in this manner the religious self consists of a truer 'synthesis' of time and the eternal, and becomes more of a self. This acknowledgement of the truly contradictory is responsible for the utmost tension and inwardness within the religious self.

Finally, Kierkegaard/Climacus makes the distinction between 'Religiousness A' and 'Religiousness B' in the *Postscript*. The self may be in a relationship with a paradox that is not absolute. Socrates for example believed with objective uncertainty that it was possible that God exists, and this Kierkegaard refers to as 'Religiousness A.' But Socrates did not have the absurd certainty that the Christian possesses. Only the Christian is in a relationship with the Paradox, and this Kierkegaard refers to as 'Religiousness B.' Religiousness A is any form of religion that is not 'decisively Christian' (*CUP*, 495), and includes paganism and other religions. It is characterised by immanence, dominated by thought rather than passion. "Religiousness B, or the 'paradoxical-religious,' (ibid., 570; 573) goes beyond both paganism and reason – representing a "break with all thinking' into 'the sphere of faith'" (Bahler, 2011:8). Although it is not speculative philosophy as such, it does have the characteristic of speculation (*CUP*,

505). Religiousness B, by contrast, portrays the Christian relation of the individual with the absolute *telos*. The knight of faith is the exemplar of this category, a category of transcendence. Unlike Religiousness A, which is indeed dialectical, Religiousness B is *paradoxically* dialectical (ibid., 494), and effects the greatest possible inwardness of the self (ibid., 507).

3.4 The Notion of Repetition in the Stages

The aesthetic stage is primarily characterised by sensuousness, and strives to experience pleasure to the highest degree. In the reflective aesthetic of "Rotation of the Crops," in *Either/Or I*, A shows how one might live the life of the aesthete without becoming bored: one must vary or 'rotate' one's pleasures, so that when one repeats a certain pleasurable action, it becomes fresh and new again. This may be viewed as a kind of repetition, albeit an impoverished form of repetition. One deceives oneself if one expects to achieve a fulfilling life through this method, but it is nonetheless a start at attempting to overcome existential boredom and despair. Something of a 'repetition' is also evidenced in the aesthetic sphere by A, who says:

> Through *Don Juan* [Mozart] is introduced into that eternity which does not lie outside of time but in the midst of it, which is not veiled from the eyes of men, where the immortals are introduced, not once for all, but *constantly, again and again*, as the generations pass and turn their gaze upon them, find happiness in beholding them, and go to the grave, and the following generation passes them again and again in review, and is transfigured in beholding them (*E/O I*, 40, my emphasis).

However, although it seems that one partakes of an eternity, whereby an experience is repeated each time anew in the moment, this eternity is not a *religious* eternity. This eternity does not stand outside of time as such, but rather strives to emulate the true eternity as an aggregation of infinite points of time within the immanent succession of time. Although the modern aesthete perhaps misunderstands the eternal as such, nevertheless, his or her understanding of sensuousness is inherently informed by his or her historical context, i.e. a Christian and reflective context. Thus the modern aesthete is dialectically speaking closer to the truth of Christianity than the ancient aesthete, being in denial of his or her being in relation to the eternal. Still, the modern aesthete lives in despair and sin: "Therefore that man sins who lives merely in the instant abstracted from the eternal" (*CD*, 83). A later says:

> As far as Mozart's music is concerned, my soul knows no fear, my confidence is boundless. For partly I know that what I have hitherto understood is very little, so there will always be enough left behind, hiding in the shadows of the soul's vaguer intimations; and partly I am convinced that if ever Mozart became wholly comprehensible to me, he would then have become fully incomprehensible to me (*E/O I*, 48).

This mirrors the religious experience; A speaks as if his experience in fact shares something of the divine, almost worshipping Mozart, the "highest among the Immortals" (ibid., 46). However, the aesthetic stage merely *parodies* time and eternity at the religious stage. Haufniensis (*CD*, 77-78) explains:

> It is true that to characterise the sensuous life it is commonly said that it is 'in the instant' and only in the instant. The instant is here understood as something abstracted from the eternal, and if this is to be accounted the present, it is a parody of it… The instant characterises the present as having no past and no future, for in this precisely consists the imperfection of the sensuous life.

For the eternal of the religious understanding, however, it is the *perfection* of the eternal to have no past nor future (ibid.), i.e., to be truly timeless.

In *Repetition*, Kierkegaard again reveals the problems of aesthetic modes of living (Johnson, 1997:158). Here Kierkegaard introduces the notion of repetition, inquiring whether repetition is indeed possible at all (*R*, 3). Kierkegaard admits *Repetition* to be a "whimsical book," indeed that he wrote *Repetition* in a such a way that the "heretics" would not understand him (*CD*, 16 n.). Constantine undertakes a second voyage to Berlin in order to investigate the possibility and the significance of repetition (*R*, 36). Nostalgically, he hopes his second trip will match in enjoyment his first trip. His hopes give way to disappointment, however, for although he effectively manages to precisely reproduce every event as before, the second trip does not nearly compare to the first. He has failed to recover the actuality of the moment, and in his quest for identical repetition, he has indeed *lost* something in this repetition. He seems instead to have undergone the experience of recollection, whereby the fullness of the present has been diminished in being repeated. Later, when Constantine returns to his home, he notes that: "A monotonous and uniform order was restored in my whole household economy. Everything which was not able to move stood in its precise place, and what was able to go went its accustomed way – my parlour clock, my servant, and myself who with measured tread walked back and forth across the floor" (ibid., 81), indicating his experience of merely successive time, each instant identical to the next.

Constantine also narrates the story of a 'young man' (for he remains nameless) who falls in love with a girl, or rather, he has fallen in love with the *poetic experience* of love. He was deeply in love, "yet at once, on one of the first days of his engagement, he was capable of recollecting his love. Substantially he was through with the whole relationship" (*R*, 12). Suspended and immobilized, he neither wants to reject and humiliate her, nor to enter into the ethical stage of marriage. His situation becomes increasingly difficult to bear, and "his melancholy attained more and more the ascendency" (ibid, 15). He feels guilt for his unreflective actions, yet at the same time feels that he has done nothing wrong. But unlike the innocence of the Greek Age, the young man indubitably lives within the reflective age, and he struggles with the question of his innocence: "Why, then language says I am guilty, for I ought to have foreseen this.– Am I then a victim of fate? Must I be guilty and be a deceiver, whatever I do, even if I do nothing?" (ibid., 117). He has a relatively strong sense of accountability, but his suffering is aesthetic and not religious.

The young man yearns for *repetition*: "I am expecting a thunderstorm…and repetition. What is this thunderstorm to accomplish? It is to make me capable of being a husband. That will crush my whole personality – I am ready for it. It will make me unrecognizable in my own eyes" (ibid., 135). As Constantine reflects,

> The problem which baffles him is neither more nor less than repetition. He is quite justified in not seeking light upon this problem either from modern philosophy or from the Greek; for the Greeks perform the opposite movement, and in this case a Greek would prefer to recollect, unless his conscience were to frighten him (ibid., 93).

The young man rightly does not seek recollection, nor does he turn to the modern Hegel. Instead he draws strength from Job, and hopes to achieve repetition as Job did. For "Job is blessed and has received everything *double*. This is what is called a *repetition*" (ibid., 132). As Mooney (1993:165) observes, "Job is given more than fortune and more than reasons. He is given understanding. This occurs as he is given a new world, a world in which reasons and fortune are differently framed, have acquired new meaning, more precious than before." The young man's mantra becomes "The Lord gives, the Lord takes, Blessed be the name of the Lord," which Mooney (ibid., 151) proposes may be expanded into "The Lord gives, takes, and then gives back again."

Constantine proposes that the young man deceive the girl into thinking he has been corrupt so as to preserve her integrity.[28] At first he is willing to enter into the author's plan (*R*, 25), but he does not have the resolve to carry out Constantine's plan; according to Constantine, "His soul lacked the elasticity of irony. He had not the strength to take irony's vow of silence, not the power to keep it; and only the man who keeps silent amounts to anything" (ibid., 27). "The proposal fails, not only because the youth lacks gall for such deceit, but more significantly because innocence once lost can never be regained by guile" (Mackey, 1971:262). If the young man had succeeded, Constantine asserts, a "*redintegratio in statum pristinum*" (a 'restitution to the original state') might be brought about (*R*, 26). The young man's silence wavers between faith and demoniacal silence. He has deceived a girl, yet, unlike Johannes the seducer in *Either/Or I*, this was unintentional. On the other hand, the young man tries to shift the blame onto fate, whereas the religious man *realises that he is guilty* from the start. He knows that he is always in sin, and that the only way he can hope to achieve forgiveness is through having faith. The potential for guilt and regret, after all, is a penalty of freedom. Perhaps Constantine is right that the young man should speak, for at least then he would achieve an ethical bearing.

Finally, however, the young man's 'thunderstorm' does occur when he hears of her marriage to another (ibid.,143). The young man breathes a sigh of relief: "I am myself again, here I have the repetition, I understand everything, and existence seems to me more beautiful than ever" (ibid.). He feels that he is himself again, in such a way that he "feels doubly" its significance (ibid., 144). Although he does not become religious, a *poetical* impulse has nevertheless been stirred in the young man (ibid., 14), and he becomes a poet. However, Constantine notes that, "If he had had a deeper religious background, he would not have become a poet. Then everything would have acquired for him religious significance" (ibid., 157). A derivative kind of repetition is instead achieved, an aesthetic type of repetition. The young man does achieve a certain degree of inwardness; however, this repetition at the level of the poetic makes the young man's repetition a rather trifling description of repetition in comparison to religious repetition. As Melberg (1990:78) says, "Perhaps Constantin should have told us that the young man had seriously misunderstood the concept of 'repetition' and that by leaping into the nonlinguistic nonorder he approaches something like Kierkegaardian 'despair'?" Ultimately, the young man's repetition does not bring eternal bliss. Although the young man compares

[28] This reflects Kierkegaard's own broken engagement to Regina, where, wanting to preserve her integrity, pretended to have deliberately deceived and seduced her.

himself with Job, he mistakes his situation. Abraham and Job's dilemma are purely of a religious bearing.

Still, it would be a mistake to classify the 'whimsical' *Repetition* alongside "The Rotation of Crops." In *The Concept of Dread*, Haufniensis complains that Heiburg had reduced the significance of *Repetition*, "pompously bringing the question back to the point where... the aesthetic writer in *Either/Or* had brought it in 'The Rotation of Crops'" (*CD*, 17 n.). We may safely say that the young man transcends the simple 'repetition' that A describes, and he stands 'trembling' at the 'borders of the marvellous,'[29] although he does not yet possess the courage to take the very decisive leap of faith. Nevertheless, although he is a poet, whose life "begins in conflict with all life," his soul, as Crites (1993:245) avers, has also gained "a religious resonance." The eternal perhaps touches the actual in a young poet (ibid., 246).

Kierkegaard's repetition, even just at the aesthetic stage, gains a different tone in comparison to Hegel's mediation. The aesthetic stage is abstract compared to the ethical and religious stages, but is still a part of life. As already quoted, it is only "pitiful or comic when an individual lives himself out in this way" (*R*, 43). The 'repetition' that the young man achieves may not be religious repetition, but it is a mirror image of religious repetition. He has still gained a greater sense of individual self-consciousness. He has not made a decision, but he has transcended his previous suspended and immobilised state. Again, Kierkegaard's understanding of time is different to Hegel's, characterised by the Paradox that came into time.

Since the ethical stage is itself considered closest to achieving universal mediation, the ethical is about constant renewal. At the ethical stage, decisiveness is stressed, and the self must *choose itself*. For the ethical self, the tension is actualised through bringing the temporal aspect of the erotic into relation with the universal. This is a continuous process, a continual 'repetition' of the promise of marriage, for example. At the ethical stage it seems that there is a constant tension of time and eternity, but only at the religious stage does the tension become *absolute* (Liehu, 1990:238). The relation is an unmediated one between the self and the Eternal. The renewal of the self's relation to God truly has no end.

Properly speaking then, repetition is a religious category. The self becomes a whole self, a 'healthy'[30] self. One becomes whole, paradoxically, by remaining in a state of becoming, being

[29] "For him it is still a sure thing that the realisation of his love is impossible. So he has come to the borders of the marvellous, and if after all this it is to come about, it must come about by virtue of the absurd." (*R*, 91)

[30] Instructive to note is that in the English language, health comes from the Old English *hælþ* meaning "wholeness, a being whole, sound or well" (Harper, 2017).

in a non-reciprocal relation to the Absolute. It is truly transcendent, a religious movement that occurs by virtue of the absurd. Repetition's true source is the intersection of time and the Eternal. At the moment of the highest repetition, the self mirrors the event of the Incarnation; time and the eternal touch paradoxically. For Abraham, "It is only at the moment when his deed is in absolute contradiction to his feelings that he sacrifices Isaac" (*FT*, 107).

With repetition, even at the level of the aesthetic, one experiences dread: dread that possibility has been lost before it has been lost (*CD*, 82). Haufniensis describes the nascent possibility of dread in Adam and Eve: "Therefore, seeing that in the state of innocence the spirit is characterized as a dreaming spirit, it manifests itself as the future, for this, as I have said, is the first expression of the eternal, is its incognito" (ibid., 81). But the moment the spirit is posited, we have the future, and the possibility of dread as such, but also *freedom*.

Even prior to the Incarnation, a nascent form of dread could be considered present. In the case of Adam and Eve, which Kierkegaard discusses in *The Concept of Dread*, a vague and shadowy form of freedom already exists in the form of dread. Merely the possibility of knowing, of projecting towards an unknown future, provides the *possibility* of choice, and of error (though not yet sin). However, dread (and the possibility of true freedom) comes explicitly into existence with the Incarnation. As discussed, the modern aesthete is more accountable than the ancient Greek by reason of his being conscious of the Incarnation. The category of the aesthetic, particularly the immediate aesthetic, is understood in a negative relation to the spiritual, this negative relation finding its height (or perhaps rather, depth) in the demoniacal. Although the aesthetic stage can be said to be neither good nor evil (perhaps with the exception of the demoniacal), the aesthete is not aware of being spirit, but the Incarnation has provided human beings the *condition* for the Truth. The individual must only seek to understand his or her being in Error.

Kierkegaard himself says in the *Papers* that freedom is first defined as pleasure, and then as shrewdness. "Repetition is assumed to exist, but it is the task of freedom to see constantly a new side of repetition. This has found expression in the chapter entitled 'The Rotation of Crops' in Either/Or" (in *R,* xvi-xvii). However, both these forms of freedom fall into despair, as we have seen for example in the case of the young man, but finally, freedom thus emerges as a possibility to be actualised: "Freedom breaks forth in its highest form, in which it is defined in relation to itself... Now the highest interest of freedom is to bring about repetition… Here the problem emerges: *Is repetition possible*? Freedom itself is now repetition" (in *R,* xvii). As Anti-Climacus (*SUD,* 30) contends, the self that relates to itself is freedom. The greater the tension

within oneself, the greater the possibility of freedom for the self: “Thus consciousness is the decisive factor... The more consciousness, the more will; the more will, the more self” (ibid.)

What characterises repetition in general, then, is that it presents the possibility of freedom. The future stands radically unknown, but the will and the imagination enable the individual to ‘project’ into the future. “The transcendent is what transcends our immediate context – say, as imagination opens possibilities for understanding or action that transcend the actual position we're in,” says Mooney (1993:162). The ethical and the religious stages take up imagination to higher levels respectively. The imagination, Anti-Climacus says, is related to feeling, understanding, and will. “Possibility means *I can*. In a logical system it is convenient enough to say that possibility passes over into actuality, in reality it is not so easy” (*CD*, 44). It is in this constant actualising of ‘real’ possibility (i.e. not simply abstract unrealizable possibility) that we have freedom. As Stack (1970:83) says,

> What Kierkegaard seems to mean, then, is that freedom is possible only in a world in which an individual can imagine (or think about) possibilities and has the capacity to act upon those possibilities or to actualize some of those possibilities. Again, the range of imagined possibility is far more extensive than that of existential possibilities.

For Kierkegaard, the necessary cannot come into being at all: “Everything that comes into being proves precisely by coming into being that it is not necessary; for the necessary is the only thing that cannot come into being, because the necessary is” (*PF*, 61). The movement from one stage to the next has nothing to do with conceptual necessity (Liehu, 1990:16). It is through conscious decision and will that we move from one level to the next. As Collins (1953:45) indeed argues:

> It may be thought that an individual is required to begin with the aesthetic rung of a ladder of life and then mount up, in succession, to the ethical and religious rungs. But Kierkegaard did not intend this schema to be understood according to any temporal order, nor did he mean that one way of life is left completely behind.

As seen in Chapter 2, Kierkegaard holds out the possibility for a more malleable conception of time. This includes the fluidity of the past itself, or more correctly, the possibility that we may come to see the past in a new light. The notion of salvation has particular significance in Kierkegaard’s own life. Kierkegaard’s father believed that he was suffering God’s punishment, and Kierkegaard believed that he had inherited his father’s sin. In addition, he evidently felt

guilty for seducing Regina and then ending the engagement. Yet, as Kierkegaard grew to know, through religious repetition even the impossible[31] may occur: that one might be truly restored, through religious repetition, to a "restitution of an individual to its pristine integrity after an experienced breach" (*PF*, xviii). "A change takes place within him like the change from non-being to being. But this transition from non-being to being is the transition we call birth. Now one who exists cannot be born; nevertheless, the disciple is born. Let us call this transition the *new birth*" (ibid., 13). Going from non-being to a state of being, is a forward repetition which does not signify a repetition of the past, but a 'repetition' of the eternal future, and a creation of something new.

By virtue of the eternal and the moment, salvation is possible. Eternity overcomes the irreversibility of time and goes beyond the idea of direction (Stambaugh, 1972:40), the linear flow of time from point A to point B. The self is thus able to recover itself, or rather, able to be recovered. For the individual, the past period of dread and turmoil becomes subject to reversibility, in existential terms. For the temporal self, however, the direction of time is still *forward*. Thus the self becomes whole, and one does not simply return to one's old self, but gains something in addition. Precisely because the direction of the eternal is futural, our actions gain meaning with reference to the future. From the ethical point of view, it is absurd that one may be redeemed, that faith in the present may change the bearing of one's life when one's past has been full of sin. Through religious repetition, however, one is once again reconciled with the past, and all is as it should be. One may then approach the future with renewed vigour, "for what is repentance but a kind of leave-taking, looking backward indeed, but yet in such a way as precisely to quicken the steps toward that which lies before?" (*PF*, 13).

Something similar to the repetition of the Christian occurs for Abraham, however in this case, unlike the Christian, Abraham does not believe in the paradoxical 'God-Man,' since this event had not yet occurred.[32] Still, Abraham may be seen as an example *par excellence* of having faith. At the last moment of spiritual crescendo, God presents a ram to be sacrificed instead, and Abraham both receives his son back and achieves a renewal and strengthening of faith. The profound difficulty of Christianity is that one is responsible not only before the other, but

[31] Anti-Climacus (*SUD*, 43) writes: "Salvation, then, is humanly speaking the most impossible thing of all; but for God everything is possible!"

[32] I am in agreement with Lee who notes that "I do not disregard the difference of situation between the Christian and Abraham, but I think there is a typological relationship between them" (Lee, 1993:111). Repetition is a term reserved for the Christian, but shares certain similarities with the faith of Abraham.

also before the 'Other.' But through the absurdity that is faith, one may look toward the future with a sense of careful expectancy.

3.5 Concluding Remarks

It is valuable to repeat that all three of Kierkegaard's stages or spheres of existence are *qualitatively* distinct from Hegel's speculative philosophy. Kierkegaard's aesthetic stage, though sharing characteristics with Hegel's aesthetic view, has meaning in relation to the Incarnation, when Spirit as such entered into historical time. Kierkegaard's ethical stage, likewise, although sharing the element of the universal with Hegel's *Sittlichkeit*, sustains a more personal and concrete quality than Hegel's view of the ethical.

It must be further emphasised that the three stages are not mutually exclusive, although each has certain distinguishing characteristics. The stages cannot be seen as three neatly delineated categories, but rather as dynamic possibilities for the self. To see the stages as fixed possibilities of understanding the dialectic of self is to deny the multitudinous array of subjective experience that human existence proffers, and the absence of necessity regarding the movement of the self. Perhaps the young man could have achieved a religious repetition had been more ethical to begin with. Nevertheless, he still developed a substantial degree of subjectivity and reflectiveness. What remains somewhat problematic is the decisive leap that distinguishes the Religiousness A to Religiousness B, as Kierkegaard appears to hold that Religiousness B is *better* than Religiousness A, but this will be explored in Chapter 5.

The relation between the ethical and religious stages will properly come to light in the following chapter, in which Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel will be thoroughly examined. The religious stage is the most definite break from Hegel. Chapter 5 will deal with the question of whether Kierkegaard's religious self becomes abstracted from its historical situatedness, and its ethical relation to others, or whether the religious stage is the most concrete stage of all. In explicating Kierkegaard's precise relationship with Hegel, highlighting the subtleties and nuances, I shall argue that Kierkegaard's dialectic can be interpreted in a way which does not neglect the aspect of the historical.

Chapter 4: Kierkegaard's Departure from the Hegelian Dialectic: An Analysis of Time and the Eternal as at the Heart of Kierkegaard's Existential Dialectic

Humans are amphibians – half spirit and half animal. As spirits they belong to the eternal world, but as animals they inhabit time.

C.S. Lewis

This chapter, in building upon the previous ones, explores Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel in greater depth, particularly regarding the meaning and nature of their respective forms of dialectic and treatment of time. Hegel's influence in Denmark in Kierkegaard's time cannot easily be overstated. Yet while it is generally and correctly held that Kierkegaard was heavily influenced by Hegel, the exact nature of this relation is debatable. There is ambiguity in Kierkegaard's approach to Hegel, and there are various interpretations of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel's philosophy. On the one hand, Kierkegaard is a recognised critic of Hegel, and many interpreters have focused on Kierkegaard's at times ruthless criticism of Hegel. According to Jon Stewart (2003), the 'standard view' of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel purports that Kierkegaard practically vilified Hegel and made his philosophical System a major point of attack. According to this view, if Kierkegaard reflected Hegel's philosophy at all, this was merely to parody Hegel's philosophy.

On the other hand, various interpretations, such as those of Mark C. Taylor (1980), Stephen Dunning (1985), and Jon Stewart (2003), show that Kierkegaard did not vehemently attack Hegel. Indeed, Kierkegaard arguably shows great respect for Hegel, evident in his sincere and meticulous engagement with Hegel, and exemplified by the pseudonymous voice of Johannes Climacus in *De Omnibus Dubitandum Est*. Not only this, but Kierkegaard has quite plainly admitted his respect for Hegel in his *Journals*:

> I feel…at times…an enigmatic respect for Hegel; I learned much from him, and I know very well that I can still learn much more from him… His philosophical knowledge, his amazing learning…and everything else good that can be said of a philosopher I am willing to acknowledge as any disciple—willing to admire, learn from him (in Marsh, 2003).

Nevertheless, respect, of course, does not necessarily imply agreement. Yet it does undermine the idea that Kierkegaard quite simply vilified Hegel.

Kierkegaard's thorough engagement with Hegel within the heady Hegelian atmosphere that permeated the milieu of Kierkegaard's day will be brought to light in the following discussion, showing the skilful nuance at work in Kierkegaard's oeuvre. This chapter will explore the possibility that Kierkegaard was neither straightforwardly pro- nor anti-Hegelian. I do not believe that Kierkegaard simply (and irresponsibly) dismissed Hegel's philosophy, although in the final analysis, I do not think that Kierkegaard concedes agreement with the speculative dialectic (especially for the purposes of concrete existence). Kierkegaard seems to reverberate between the abstract and the concrete, the philosophical and the existential. I aim to show in this chapter that the possibility that Kierkegaard placed himself in indirect and *ambiguous tension* with Hegel's thought may help us to understand Kierkegaard's project better. Kierkegaard's appropriation of Hegel's dialectic is not to be seen as merely a stepping stone towards Kierkegaard's own goal. Rather, I will explore the possibility that in working with Hegel's dialectic, Kierkegaard in a sense 'opens up' Hegel's dialectic to make room for existential movement. Within the limits of this dissertation, it would be impossible to exhaustively cover the plethora of readings relating to Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel. This chapter aims to address just some of the relevant interpretations that deal with Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel, both positively and negatively. My more pertinent concern is that while these widely differing interpretations of Kierkegaard's relationship to Hegel certainly present a challenge, I think that the very diversity thereof is more *instructive* about the nature of Kierkegaard's thought than impedimental to understanding his thought. I suggest that the tension between appreciation and critique may indeed be *deliberate*, hoping to prompt the reader to decide for oneself whether Hegel's philosophy is valuable or not.

Just this one aspect of Kierkegaard, i.e. his relationship with Hegel, supports the idea that one strict understanding of Kierkegaard's work is simply untenable. There is a second relevant tension in Kierkegaard's thought regarding his method of indirect communication that warrants some preliminary commentary, that is, the tension between addressing each pseudonym in its own right or addressing Kierkegaard's 'actual' intentions as author. In my view, it is this *tension* which is important; a simple binary opposition poses a false dilemma. While I accept Kierkegaard's possible textual invitation to reinterpret his writings anew, I must acknowledge that I also feel bound by the deepest respect to take into account the personal dimension of Kierkegaard as a Christian existential philosopher.

As already discussed in the Introduction, although there may be a unified purpose behind the pseudonyms, each individual pseudonym still presents an independent exemplification and

idealisation of a particular way of life. Again, I take up the stance that there is a hermeneutic tension between the pseudonymous works as they stand and Kierkegaard's overarching purpose behind the pseudonymous works, a relation which nevertheless undermines the traditional bias of aiming to capture the author's original intentions. Kierkegaard's philosophy, specifically his method of pseudonymous writing, may be seen to *lend itself to interpretation*, which goes beyond the original intentions of Kierkegaard as author. This advantageously leaves room for both Kierkegaard's purpose of reviving religious experience in his day while at the same time having much philosophical relevance. This tension is crucial for both this chapter and the next, and it is this interpretation that will help to open up dialogue towards a more contemporarily relevant reading of Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard's indirect communication contains an inherent supplication for the reader to think for him/herself. Although this is primarily an existential petition, it does not, I think, necessarily preclude the possibility of a more textual and structural analysis, which in turn redirects or recirculates the existential question of meaning.

Mirroring both Hegel's and Kierkegaard' employment of triadic structures, this chapter is divided into three parts. First, an examination of how Kierkegaard may have been influenced positively by the Hegelian dialectic, and where similarities may exist between Hegel and Kierkegaard, is provided, challenging the traditional view that Kierkegaard simply attacked Hegel's philosophy. Second, having pinpointed where the limitations of these interpretations lie, Kierkegaard's opposition to Hegel's dialectic is considered. I suggest that the precise point where Kierkegaard diverges from Hegel is to be found in Kierkegaard's conception of an eternally transcendent God in relation to the essentially temporal human being. Navigating between these contrasting perspectives, a third possible alternative reading is dialectically developed. This interpretation may avoid some of the pitfalls of both perspectives whilst appreciating their respective insights, and may help to explain Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel in a more nuanced way, and which may shed light on the importance of the role of temporality at the heart of Kierkegaard's thought. Kierkegaard radically separates the immanent and the transcendent, and strives to widen the gap between philosophy and religion, between thought and being, and especially between the temporal and the eternal. We will see that Kierkegaard in a sense radicalises some problematic tensions in Hegel's dialectic, which undermines the view that Kierkegaard simply opposes Hegel's dialectic, but also implies that Kierkegaard is not simply in agreement with Hegel.

4.1. Kierkegaard's (Possible) Agreement with Hegel

According to Jon Stewart, the 'standard view' is that Kierkegaard is anti-Hegelian. He mentions several commentators who contributed to the standard view, including the prominent Maluntschuck, but Thulstrup is the principle advocate of the standard view. Stewart does not believe that this interpretation of Kierkegaard is accurate, and aims to correct it by indicating points of connection between Hegel and Kierkegaard. While it may be true that Kierkegaard is generally appreciated as a critic of Hegel, and that this is still the most prevalent view, Stewart does not seem to consider other commentators who have noted a positive influence of Hegel on Kierkegaard, such as the prominent voices of Stephen Dunning, Robert Perkins, Merold Westphal, and Mark C. Taylor, whose interpretations will be addressed in this section.

Since for the sake of the purposes of this study it is not essential to go into extensive detail concerning these arguments, brevity and focus are given priority over meticulous elaboration. I have included such interpretations that disagree with the standard view chiefly as excellent examples of the possibility of a more 'liberal' reading of the Hegel-Kierkegaard relationship, to promote a fair and balanced interpretation.

4.2.1 Kierkegaard's Positive Appropriation of Hegel's dialectic

Kierkegaard's reflection of Hegel's dialectic is one of the most widely accepted ways Kierkegaard may be positively influenced by Hegel; that is, an active appropriation that does not aim merely to parody Hegel's philosophy in order to accomplish his own ends. Kierkegaard may be said to apply the dialectic to the self, or individual human spirit, rather than the movement of History or *Geist*.

Stewart notes the structural similarities between the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and Kierkegaard's *Sickness unto Death*, suggesting that Kierkegaard "directly and unapologetically makes use of a form of the Hegelian dialectic to his own ends" (Stewart, 2003:19). He also notes the technical vocabulary and style of writing that Kierkegaard adopts from Hegel (ibid.). In addition, according to Stewart's interpretation, Kierkegaard's disagreement does not lie with Hegel as such, but more with his Danish contemporaries who (mis)appropriated the Hegelian dialectic for their own purposes. The Danish Churches were at the time strongly aligned with Hegelian philosophy, which reflects just how influential it was. Kierkegaard's fierce polemic

against the idea that the Church is intimately connected with the salvation of the individual, is evidenced most strongly by his later *Attack upon "Christendom."*[33] The Introduction (Section 1.2.2) has already touched on Kierkegaard's disagreement with bishops Mynster and Martensen. However, to problematise Stewart's view, Kierkegaard's grievance was also directed against those very *principles and structures of thought* (such as Hegel's notion of the dialectic, speculation, and the System, objections which appear frequently in Kierkegaard's writing) at the root of the Danish appropriations and which made such (mis)appropriations *possible*. The closely related concepts of mediation, transition, and negativity, are at the very heart of Hegel's philosophical system. The fact that Kierkegaard does not commonly make explicit reference to Hegel is indeed important to note, and Kierkegaard's method of indirect communication makes it difficult to pinpoint exactly where Kierkegaard is attacking Hegel or his Danish contemporaries, but Steward seems to be in danger of overextending his case. Perkins (2004:55) notes that Stewart does not take into consideration the possible implicit un-Hegelian or even anti-Hegelian nature of the ethical writings of Judge William in *Either/Or*, suggesting that the strict limitations Stewart imposes on his study make it difficult to achieve a balanced view.

Taylor also claims that Kierkegaard's stages reflect the structure of Hegel's dialectic. Taylor, too, presents a fairly strong case of a harmonious nature of the relationship between Hegel and Kierkegaard, particularly in his *Journeys to Selfhood: Hegel and Kierkegaard* (1980), underscoring Hegel's view of the development of the self. As Crouter (1982:328) notes, Taylor's *Journeys to Selfhood* "is a serious effort to follow up Stephen Crites's suggestion that Kierkegaard's stages on life's way can be seen to constitute an alternative 'phenomenology of Spirit.'" Taylor makes a comparison between the structure of Hegel's and Kierkegaard's notion of spirit, and he may be on the right track regarding this point. However, as with Stewart, he also runs the not inconsequential risk of overstating his case. Compared with Hegel, Kierkegaard's focus on the individual is significantly prioritised.

It is significant to note that in bringing Kierkegaard and Hegel closer together, both Stewart and Taylor tend towards a *deflationary* reading of Hegel, which makes Hegel appear less metaphysical than he may actually be. As shown in Chapter 2, for the purposes of this study I have chosen to adhere to the Aristotelian metaphysical view of Hegel. In comparing Hegel and

[33] In *Training in Christianity* (p. 39) Kierkegaard writes: "Christendom has done away with Christianity, without being quite aware of it. The consequence is that, if anything is to be done, one must try again to introduce Christianity into Christendom."

Kierkegaard, I feel that Stewart and Taylor lean toward over-emphasising the similarities between the two thinkers to the detriment of taking account of their differences. Their inclination towards a deflationary reading of Hegel downplays Hegel's rational and metaphysical tendencies. While the deflationary reading of Hegel may not be incorrect as such, it does tend to downplay the decisive move Kierkegaard makes regarding the individual, which is absurdly higher the universal, and positively concrete in nature. The following passage from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* certainly evidences, at least partially, Hegel's problematic view of the individual self:

> At a time when the universal nature of spiritual life has become so very much emphasised and strengthened, and the mere individual aspect has become, as it should be, a matter of indifference... the individual must all the more forget himself... [and] all the less must be demanded of him, just as he can expect less from himself and may ask less for himself (in Solomon, 1988:62).

From Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* we have the following:

> But even regarding History as the slaughter-bench at which the happiness of peoples, the wisdom of States, and the virtue of individuals have been victimised — the question involuntarily arises — to what principle, to what final aim these enormous sacrifices have been offered (Hegel, 1861:22).

He writes further:

> A World-Historical individual is... devoted to the One Aim, regardless of all else. It is even possible that such men may treat other great, even sacred interests, inconsiderately; conduct which is indeed obnoxious to moral reprehension. But so mighty a form must trample down many an innocent flower – crush to pieces many an object in its path (ibid., 34).

Kierkegaard on the other hand leaves *no room for doubt* that the individual takes precedence over the universal, whereas this aspect is still at the very least ambiguous in Hegel, which the many disagreements in interpretations of Hegel corroborate.

Although the above interpretations of Kierkegaard have their limitations, at the very least, such commentators point towards the possibility of bringing Hegel and Kierkegaard together, and help to resist the notion that their positions are unequivocally antithetical. Perhaps Kierkegaard saw something in Hegel's philosophy which was key to the structure of human development – only not that of historical Spirit, but individual human spirit. These interpretations help to start opening up the possibility that Kierkegaard thought that Hegel was not completely misguided,

and that there are points of contact between them which allow them to be successfully entered into dialogue with each other.

It is worthwhile to note that this very possibility that Hegel and Kierkegaard can be brought closer together if one takes a deflationary reading of Hegel is revealing. Kierkegaard's thought does not return to a Platonic metaphysics, but at the very least carries Hegel's dialectic in the direction of the infinitely dynamic, towards the possibility of existential movement. In working with such *interpretations* of Hegel, it is implied that no single interpretation of Hegel is correct. However, bringing Hegel and Kierkegaard too closely together, at the risk of conflating much of their thought, overlooks Kierkegaard's emphasis of the individual compared with Hegel's treatment of the individual.

Worth noting in addition to Taylor and Stewart is Stephen Dunning's interpretation which suggests that Kierkegaard is positively influenced by Hegel, perhaps more than he would care to admit. As Dunning (1985:5) contends: "Kierkegaard was quite unconscious of the extent to which he continued, even after breaking with Hegelianism, to think in terms that permit – and often seem to demand – a Hegelian structural analysis." Dunning makes a detailed case that Kierkegaard implicitly uses certain Hegelian structures, comparing the structure of the stages of Kierkegaard's personal dialectic with the Hegelian dialectic. For example, in *Either/Or* he pinpoints the exact locations where Kierkegaard may be said to follow a Hegelian dialectic. However, in doing so, Dunning's analysis at times seems strained as he appears to overlay Hegel's dialectical movement of thought onto Kierkegaard's oeuvre. It is worthwhile to note an observation Stack (1988:162) makes regarding Dunning's analysis:

> [Dunning] finds that [Kierkegaard] has absorbed more of Hegel's dialectical method of exposition and disclosure than has previously been suspected. He speculates that this is an 'unconscious' replication of 'Hegelian systematic structures.' Although this is possible, we should remember that, in the case of [Kierkegaard], we are dealing with the most self-conscious philosophical writer in the history of Western thought. We cannot be too sure that he has not deliberately used a Hegelian method in order to demolish Hegelianism.

This is an important observation. However, Stack's rejoinder might in turn fall back into the 'standard view,' *unless* we may observe the simultaneous positive appropriation or temporary adoption of elements of the Hegelian speculative in Kierkegaard's own aims. What I wish to emphasise is that it is not necessarily contradictory for Kierkegaard to deliberately structure his works in a way that reflects his appreciation for Hegel while still challenging Hegel's

dialectic. Dunning, to be fair, does concede some boundaries of his interpretation, saying that "the dialectical structures… in most of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works are 'Hegelian' *only* in a formal or structural sense, not in terms of content, and certainly not as the objective unfolding of spirit in world history" (Dunning, 1985:259).

Claudia Welz has also pointed out the structural similarity between Kierkegaard's *Sickness Unto Death* and Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (see Welz, 2013:441-2). She argues that Kierkegaard mirrors Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* in his portrayal of the development of the self. For Kierkegaard, truth is reached through untruth, despair being defined as *not* being oneself (Welz., 442), reflecting Hegel's dialectical movement through negativity. Welz further points out the structure of the absolute as 'reduplication,' 'spirit' and 'love.' Yet, as she notes, this does not mean that Hegel and Kierkegaard propose the same thing (ibid., 443), i.e., the *form* but not content of Hegel's work is mirrored by Kierkegaard. She suggests that Kierkegaard "effects a pragmatic turn of Hegel's *Phenomenology*" (ibid.). It has furthermore been suggested that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* sets out as a kind of *Bildungsroman*, in which the reader follows the development of the protagonist who progresses through the various forms or shapes of consciousness (Houlgate, 2005). Kierkegaard's dialectical movement of the self through the stages may be seen to mirror this development of the self. Again, however, it is to be emphasised that while Kierkegaard mirrors Hegel (and probably consciously) he does so only to a certain extent, structurally but not thematically, explicitly relevant to the individual self.

Finally, Kierkegaard's *Concept of Irony* is well known for its Hegelian influence (Westphal, 1998:103). This is Kierkegaard's earliest work, and the positive influence of Hegel is clearer. However, whether this influence continues to be found in his later work, albeit in a more indirect manner, is a debatable question. All things considered, I am in agreement with Merold Westphal that Kierkegaard is never *simply* anti-Hegelian. Those who do argue such, argue that Kierkegaard merely parodies Hegel's triadic structure in this work (ibid.). Westphal quotes Kierkegaard at length, and I follow suit by doing likewise:

> If a dancer could leap very high, we would admire him, but if he wanted to give the impression that he could fly – even though he could leap higher than any dancer had ever leapt before – let laughter overtake him. Leaping means to belong essentially to the earth and to respect the law of gravity so that the leap is merely the momentary, but flying means to be set free from telluric conditions, something that is reserved exclusively for winged creatures, perhaps also for inhabitants of the moon, perhaps – and perhaps that is also where the system will at long last find its true readers (in Westphal, 1998:102).

This is indeed a compliment to Hegel, but, as Westphal notes: “It is just that he spoils his magnificent achievement by making an absurd claim about finality and completeness” (ibid., 102). Thus, it is not necessarily *all* aspects of Hegel’s dialectic that Kierkegaard critiques, but one of the most crucial aspects he critiques, according to Westphal, is that history never comes to an end. According to the deflationary reading of Hegel, this is an inaccurate reading; however, as already noted, this reading tends to downplay Hegel’s metaphysical bent.

I have hereby agreed, specifically with Dunning (1985:5) and Westphal (1998:104), that Kierkegaard’s relationship to Hegel is not *simply* ironical. There must be some point of contact between Hegel and Kierkegaard even though there are definite disagreements. As Stewart (2003:23) observes, “There would be no debate at all since there would be no common discourse or point of contact.” On the other hand, the view that Kierkegaard mirrors and adduces Hegel’s philosophy can only be taken so far. While it is essential to consider the Hegelian dialectical aspect of Kierkegaard’s view of the self and within the structure of his texts, this should also not be emphasised to the point of undermining Kierkegaard’s efforts to oppose Hegel. Tension must be noted to exist in Kierkegaard’s relation to Hegel, which will become increasingly clear.

4.2.2 The Aesthetic Nature of Kierkegaard’ Pseudonymous Works

As discussed in Chapter 3, both Hegel and Kierkegaard attacked Romanticism. We have also established that, for Kierkegaard, Hegel’s thought as a whole still falls into the category of the aesthetic. It is furthermore instructive to consider that Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous works themselves are also known as the ‘aesthetic’ works, as opposed to the more religious, explicitly ‘edifying’ works of direct communication. This section brings to the fore the aesthetic and philosophical nature of Kierkegaard’s thought, and highlights the importance of the Kierkegaard’s method of indirect communication. This has the effect of again destabilising the supposedly unbridgeable opposition of Hegel and Kierkegaard.

The pseudonymous works are intentionally distanced from the reader, and are works of distinct, imagined, possibilities of being. They may be understood as thought experiments and poetic renderings of different personae, each epitomising a specific point of view. Kierkegaard

officially revealed his pseudonymous authorship in the *Concluding Postscript*. He explains in an unusually candid manner that his pseudonymity has:

> an *essential* ground in the character of the *production*, which for the sake of the lines ascribed to the authors and the psychologically varied distinctions of the individualities poetically required complete regardlessness in the direction of good and evil, of contrition and high spirits, of despair and presumption, of suffering and exultation, etc., which is bounded only ideally by psychological consistency, and which real actual persons in the actual moral limitations of reality dare not permit themselves to indulge in, nor could wish to. What is written therefore is in fact mine, but only in so far as I put into the mouth of the poetically actual individuality whom I *produced*, his life-view expressed in audible lines. For my relation is even more external than that of a poet, who poetizes characters, and yet in the preface is himself the author (*CUP*, 551).

Mackey (1971) is a key commentator who strongly supports the idea that Kierkegaard, more than a philosopher or theologian, is a poet. To each pseudonym, an imaginative response may be provoked, and the religious pseudonyms are no exception. Even when the pseudonym is specifically Christian, it is *ideally* Christian, the writings of which Kierkegaard ultimately felt he could not take due credit. They, too, are exaggerated, and are meant to seize and stir the mind and heart. Mackey (1971:243) writes:

> But the fact remains that Kierkegaardian Christianity is imbalanced and excessive. And the decisive fact, still outstanding, is that Kierkegaard knew and meant it that way… *Training in Christianity*, *Fear and Trembling*, the *Fragments*, the *Postscript*, and all the rest were but 'correctives' recommended to the complacent debility of 'the present age.'

According to Mackey, humour and irony are two important devices Kierkegaard uses within his pseudonymous writings. Irony views the comic object from the perspective of an ethical ideal, while humour views the object from that of the religious experience (Mackey, 1971:279). However, Kierkegaard's methods of irony and humour both fall under the category of the aesthetic. Mackey explains: "Humour and irony…are therefore quasi-aesthetic devices because they (temporarily at least) hold the urgencies of temporal existence in abeyance and retreat by way of recollection to an anticipated eternity" (ibid.), and continues: "Their function within the Kierkegaardian schema of the stages reflects two aspects of the aesthetic character of irony and humour. As moments of suspension between two spheres of existence, they are aesthetic in the sense of uncommitted" (ibid.).

I have claimed that Kierkegaard's method of indirect communication is of central importance to his work. While Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works are indeed often enough considered 'aesthetic' or 'philosophical,' this aspect of the aesthetic is more often subsumed under the overarching purpose of Kierkegaard's authorship, that is, of bringing the individual closer to forming a relationship with God. This view corresponds with the view that Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel is merely ironical, or that Kierkegaard merely parodies Hegel's dialectic. Indeed, the matter is one of complexity, Kierkegaard himself deliberating on the matter of whether he is a religious or aesthetic writer throughout *The Point of View*. It is illuminating that he does acknowledge that "the movement of the authorship is decisively characterised by reflection, or rather that it is the movement of reflection itself" (*PV*, 147).

The significance of this subsection was to show that Kierkegaard's existentialism is not diametrically opposed to Hegel's thought, nor is the religious radically opposed to the aesthetic, but there is rather significant common ground to be found. It shows Kierkegaard's willingness to work within and through an aesthetic and philosophical paradigm. However, while this section highlights the possibility of the abstract within Kierkegaard's thought, this by no means negates the importance of his religious intention behind the indirect works. Thus, we may take note of a *tension* that is created by Kierkegaard between his edifying works and the pseudonymous works, or between Kierkegaard as author behind the pseudonymous works and the pseudonymous works as they stand. The next subsection aims to further support the idea that Kierkegaard's appropriation of Hegel's dialectic is not to be seen merely as a stepping stone towards Kierkegaard's own goals. Rather, in engaging with Hegel, the dialectic of thought is 'opened up' to make room for existential movement.

4.2.3 The Philosophical Nature of Kierkegaard's Work

Kierkegaard's engagement with the mechanisms of thought is sincere, particularly as demonstrated by Climacus in *Johannes Climacus, or De Omnibus Dubitandum Est*. It is clear that Kierkegaard, or at least Johannes Climacus, the pseudonymous author of this work, does not irresponsibly discount the sceptical Hegelian climate of his day, but grapples with it tirelessly, significantly indicating Kierkegaard's recognition of his own historicity. Kierkegaard was after all a deeply reflective and self-conscious thinker. Notably, Kierkegaard claims, "I have never had any immediacy, and therefore, in the ordinary human sense of the

word, I have never lived. I began at once with reflection; it is not as though in later years I had amassed a little reflection, but I am reflection from first to last" (*PV*, 81). As he says in *De Omnibus*, "It was his [Climacus's] delight to begin with a simple thought, and from that to mount up step by step along the path of logical inference to a higher thought; for Inference formed his *Scala Paradisi*, and his bliss in mounting this ladder was to him more glorious than that of Jacob's angels" (*DO*, 103-4).[34] As *De Omnibus* is a work of semi-autobiographical nature (see *DO*, 114), this could reflect Kierkegaard's *own* attraction to thought, which was instilled in him as a child via his father's instruction and observing the philosophical arguments among his father's guests. Climacus (*DO*, 107) articulates: "In the twinkling everything would be inverted. What was clear became obscure, what was certain doubtful, contradiction became self-evident." It was as though "a single word" could turn everything upside down:

> When his father was not simply opposing him, but putting forward some thesis of his own, J.C. [Johannes Climacus] observed how he proceeded; how he made his point in successive stages. This taught J.C. to suspect that the reason his father could turn everything upside down with a word, must be that he, J.C., had forgotten something in the sequence of thought (ibid., 108).

Perhaps then for Kierkegaard, it is not that reflection or even speculative thought has no value, only that sometimes it is *not enough*, especially for the purposes of living. There are times when one cannot simply by one's own strength lift oneself out of a situation. At times, thinking becomes circular and only some external force is capable of producing any movement; indeed, it is possible that one does not even *recognise* that one is in despair. The qualitative character of sin and the leap of faith are defining points for Kierkegaard's personal dialectic. One cannot get out of a sinful state by oneself; thought alone cannot help one out of this state, but only the grace of the Redeemer. We cannot be elevated by our own efforts (Croxall, 1958:43). Sin cannot be annulled, it is simply a negative (ibid.), for we may note that sin "means the concrete, for one never sins generally or abstractly" (*CD*, 101). One might understand this better when one considers that "properly sin is: *in time to lose eternity*" (Kierkegaard, 1939:141). Even a situation that has no religious significance as such, such as an ethical dilemma, cannot be resolved by thought alone, but only by finally making a decision. Kierkegaard's concern is that the individual may essentially reflect him/herself out of existence, and forgets what it means to be a finite human being. Climacus (*CUP*, 216) writes that it must be "on account of our vastly

[34] Kierkegaard took the name 'Climacus' from a Greek monk (c. 570-649), author of *Klimax tou Paradeisou* (translated into Latin as *Scala Paradisi*), or *Ladder of Paradise* (Storm, 2017).

increased knowledge, men had forgotten what it means to EXIST, and what INWARDNESS signifies." Kierkegaard sees speculative thought as having little impact on lived existence, for the future is of comparatively meagre worth for speculation. For the individual which is temporal, the individual must *choose* which path of life one wants to venture.

It is perhaps worthwhile to consider for a moment my specific focus here on Hegel's rather than Socrates' notion of dialectic. After all, the influence of Socrates' dialectic on Kierkegaard's thought is quite extensive, and Kierkegaard abundantly engages with both forms of dialectic. But what Hegel and Kierkegaard crucially share is that they both live within a *reflective age*. Kierkegaard finds affinity with Socrates, but Kierkegaard's concern lies with how we live within a time preoccupied with reflection to the point of going *no further*. I want to show that Kierkegaard works *with* Hegel and from within the milieu of reflection to find a better way of approaching life, and it is this ambiguity I want to reveal. For Kierkegaard, the possibility of a reflective age indeed arises precisely *as a result* of the inception of Christianity which has provided a new means of thinking about time and the future. For the Greeks, as we saw in Chapter 3, the sensual was not a category, only became a category as such in relation to sin. The aesthetic genius as well as the reflective aesthete was only made possible with Christianity. Reflection allows one to be truly self-consciously aware of one's state of sin. Kierkegaard urges us not to forget or cover over the possibility of our freedom by emphasising reflection to the grievous demise of freedom. He instead wants to raise reflection to its proper altitude, to the level of *self*-reflection which might inspire *action*.

The history of western philosophy has seen the effort to relate thought with ethics. For Descartes, to *think* rightly, is indeed to *be* good. Hegel's thought was the culmination of the reality and necessity of the idea, and for Kierkegaard this demonstrated an underlying bias of metaphysics. Kierkegaard wants to show that Christianity is not to be subsumed under thought, but if anything, reflection should perhaps be lifted up into a higher category, the religious. Thus it is important to note that Kierkegaard's emphasis on faith does not, on the other hand, necessarily imply that Kierkegaard is a fideist. These ideas will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter.

My focus in this subsection was to draw attention to the complexities of Kierkegaard's *method* itself rather than focus exclusively on Kierkegaard's religious intentions. To reiterate, while Kierkegaard certainly had a religious purpose behind his works, this interpretation if simplified may serve to undermine the role of the aesthetic works. Kierkegaard wanted to lead the individual from the various idealised renderings of ways of life as portrayed by the

pseudonyms, towards the development of appropriation and inwardness. His pseudonymous works imply the importance of the steps taken along the journey of inwardness, and the stages through which one must move in order to realise the *telos* of being in an absolute relation to the Absolute.

4.3 Kierkegaard's Contention with the Hegelian Dialectic

While authors like Mark C. Taylor, Stewart, Dunning, and Welz assert a more harmonious relationship between Hegel and Kierkegaard, most, however, do not (Stewart, 2003). The initial reception of Kierkegaard tended towards a relatively straightforward view of Kierkegaard's rejection of Hegelian philosophy. We have already noted that while the standard view of Kierkegaard is that he strongly opposes Hegel (ibid.). Stewart notes that many of Kierkegaard's earlier commentators had a strong influence on the subsequent evaluation of Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard is indeed, in some instances, explicitly critical of Hegel, and often appears to be at direct odds with Hegel's objective System as a lifeless abstraction which places the individual at the mercy of the 'cunning of Reason.' Kierkegaard is commonly recognised as a key critic of Hegel, but the nuanced way in which he critiqued Hegel must be recognised so that Kierkegaard may be bestowed due credit. It has been shown above that Kierkegaard did not simply reject Hegel, or merely parody Hegel's triadic and dialectical structures, and now it must now be shown in which ways Kierkegaard indeed *did* oppose Hegel's dialectic. In this section I shall focus less on the views of the more traditional Kierkegaard's commentators, such as Thulstrup, and more on certain aspects of Kierkegaard's thought that indicate his opposition to Hegel.

Two major aspects are addressed in this section whereby Kierkegaard opposes Hegel. First, Kierkegaard posits God as absolutely transcendent, as opposed to being in a reciprocal relationship with humankind. Second, Kierkegaard critiques the idea of a presuppositionless philosophy. Both these related points will be examined in detail. What is underscored in this analysis is the view of *temporality* as being the decisive point which gives Kierkegaard's thought its major thrust away from Hegel. This analysis will further allow some of Kierkegaard's more distinct existential concepts to be addressed in more detail and the concrete nature of his dialectic to come more sharply into focus. Some of Kierkegaard's related unique

existential categories will furthermore be elaborated in more detail, such as despair which occurs when the individual is not in a relationship with God.

4.3.1 The *Telos* of the Self is to be in an Absolute Relationship with God

This section will show that for Kierkegaard it is essential that the individual is in a relationship with the absolutely eternal, and how in making this move, Kierkegaard moves away from Hegel's (historical) dialectic. Heidi Liehu in *Søren Kierkegaard's theory of Stages and its Relation to Hegel* (1990) provides a helpful and relevant analysis of Kierkegaard's stages. She bases her reading largely upon Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death*, and explores the relation of each stage to the dialectic of the self, or the self as a synthesis, which Kierkegaard explicates in *The Sickness unto Death*. What she calls the limiting categories, i.e. the body, the finite, and the temporal, and the expanding categories, i.e. the soul, the infinite, and the eternal, must consist in balanced relation in order for the self to become more of a self.

Liehu (1990:49) specifies what Hegel and Kierkegaard mean respectively by 'synthesis.' Hegel never actually used the term himself, as, according to Liehu (ibid.), it connotes a sense of forced unity of separate concepts. The terms 'thesis,' 'antithesis,' and 'synthesis' were originally posited by Fichte and taken up by Schelling, but were never employed by Hegel. Liehu suggests that Kierkegaard uses the term 'synthesis' precisely in this way to critique Hegel's dialectic, implying that some oppositions can never be neatly unified into a third term, stressing that for Kierkegaard that the elements of the limiting and expanding categories must be *actively* held in relation by the individual, in order to realise the third term of spirit (ibid.). In *The Sickness unto Death*, as already shown in Chapter 2, the body and soul, the finite and the infinite, necessity and possibility, and the temporal and the eternal are 'synthesised,' and the third term is spirit. Although the self is *already* spirit, the self must first become *aware* that it is spirit, i.e. composed of the finite and the infinite, the body and the soul, the temporal and the eternal.

The self must bring these into relation in a self-consciousness movement in order to become a self as such, and if the self does not do so, then the self may be said to be in despair. Kierkegaard aims to show in *The Sickness Unto Death* that human beings have an element of, and are in relation to, the eternal, and this relation is *precisely constituted by God*. If the self were able to establish itself as a relation, there would only be one form of despair, that is, not wanting to be oneself. But there is another type of despair, of "wanting in despair to be oneself" (*SUD*, 10).

The problem of despair arises precisely because the human being is characterised as spirit (ibid., 25). Because of this spiritual dimension, the sickness of the spirit dialectically goes beyond that of the physical. Once the despair of the spirit has been established, it is evident that the self has been sick all along, unlike the body, with which sickness arises at a specific point in time.[35] It is possible that the self does not realise that it is in despair until it is shown to be in error, and *becomes aware* of his error. Crucially, we must note that the level of *tension* which the self experiences is proportional to the degree of self one is: "It is the rising level of consciousness, or the degree to which it rises, that is the continual intensification of despair: the more consciousness the more intense the despair" (ibid., 47). Never to have felt that one is in despair means precisely that one is in despair (ibid., 25).

Liehu is correct when she asserts that the essential difference between Kierkegaard and Hegel is that the relation to a transcendent God is a relationship which is *not reciprocal* (Liehu, 1990:60). For Hegel, the dialectic means defining things in terms of their opposite (McCumber, 2011:33), thus finite beings and the Absolute are defined conceptually in relation to each other. But for Anti-Climacus (*TC*, 84), "That the human race is or should be akin to God is ancient paganism, but that an individual man is God is Christianity, and this individual man is the God-Man." The religious stage for Kierkegaard indicates the relation of the finite self with God, the truly Absolute. As Liehu (1990:216) remarks, "in Kierkegaard's dialectics the 'other' necessary for authenticity (God) is left reciprocally unattained in terms of consciousness, for man differs from his God absolutely and is nothing before him." I stand before God, the absolute 'Other,' whom I cannot observe, but know to be the absolute Judge, and who indeed knows me better than I know myself. Like Hegel, we are in relation to other individuals, and indeed the self becomes individuated by recognising oneself in relation to the other. But for Kierkegaard the individual is furthermore in relationship with the Absolute, and thus the self can achieve the *most* individuation by relating to God.

Although the religious stage is the specific stage where one realises that the eternal is absolutely distinct from the self, the self at the ethical stage borders upon this understanding. For Judge William in *Either/Or*, we are always in the wrong when we stand directly before God. This is not a pessimistic assertion, as the Judge emphasises, but a joyful moment. The ethical stage is

[35] I think that Kierkegaard has in mind what is commonly defined as 'sickness' which usually has a beginning within time. If one has always been sick through congenital illness, one would be aware that one has always (actually) been sick. In the case of a genetic predisposition to develop cancer, for example, one has always had the *potential* for sickness but not actual sickness. One may safely say that what fundamentally differentiates spiritual sickness from physical is the component of the eternal. The nonphysical part of the spirit that is eternal, can have been (actually) ill without any outward signs, or even unbeknownst to oneself.

characterised by making an absolute decision. Before the Absolute Judge, any finite decision is made with only the best knowledge at that specific time, and it is the actual making of a decision is significant. The aesthetic self is neither good nor evil. It is more precisely *that* one makes a decision that is essential to the ethical stage, and, humbled before the omniscient God, one can only hope it is the best decision. Before the infinite, any decision one makes is imperfect, for human beings are situated within time.

Within the context of the stages, we might see this as preceding the act of resignation, which is a further step of humbling oneself before the unknown. In a statement which prompts one to think of Hegel, Anti-Climacus (*SUD*, 96) says: "A master who is a self directly before slaves – indeed really he is not a self." This is surely a play on Hegel's master-slave dialectic, where the relation is one of reciprocity. The master would not be a master were it not for the existence of the slave; the master is in as sense dependent upon the slave for his recognition of the master as master. For Kierkegaard, a self that stands alone directly before *God*, is precisely able to become a self. Before the Absolute, one is paradoxically both humbled and elevated. The movement of faith is infinite, one of always becoming; the eternal slips out of one's grasp, but simultaneously one is flooded by the fullness of that moment of experiencing oneself in a relationship with the Absolute. This is the 'double movement' of faith: one gives up everything in the movement of resignation, which is a negative movement, and one simultaneously positively regains everything in the movement of faith.

The Concept of Dread is in agreement with *The Sickness Unto Death* regarding the self as a synthesis of the finite and the infinite, necessity and possibility, the temporal and the eternal. The body and soul are synthesised, which gives rise to the third term, spirit. However, *The Concept of Dread* stipulates that the synthesis of the *temporal and the eternal* is not in fact a second synthesis, but that there is precisely no third term and is thus not a true synthesis. The temporal and the eternal within the self are thus not synthesised as such, but are rather *expressions* of the first synthesis of the soul and the body; they remain a contradiction which, although possible to bring into relation, produces no third term and is thus not a synthesis proper (*CD*, 76). Through being in a relationship with the Absolute, the eternal *as such*, one becomes conscious of being a relation of time and the eternal, i.e. temporal. This relation may be seen as a rough imitation of Christ's true synthesis of time and the eternal; the Christian, however, is a continuous *striving* towards a likeness of Christ's form, and in this sense it may be said that we are made in God's image. But as Climacus (*CUP*, 529) stresses, there can be no true analogy between Christ's form and the form of the ultimately finite human being: "The

absolute paradox is recognizable by the fact that every analogy is a fallacy." Kierkegaard (2009:108) himself writes: "And yet... let us never forget that there is an eternal difference between Christ and every Christian." The self as a 'paradoxical' synthesis is in an absolute relation to the absolute paradox. Only God can understand the true 'mediation' of time and the eternal; as human beings, the best one can do is to bring the two into tension in relation to the absolute.

For Kierkegaard, eternity is not simply a concept which can be mediated by language. Logic cannot accommodate it and it resists being understood in propositional statements. The eternal is real and actual *for the individual*, but cannot be mediated by the universal mediums of language or thought. (This will be covered in greater detail in the following chapter.) Hegel is thus incorrect to assert that philosophy is higher than the religious, i.e. that the individual self's individual experience is taken up by Absolute Spirit. For Hegel, the separation of God and the world signals the 'bad infinite,' which may be represented by the straight line, infinitely extended towards either end, whereas the true infinite is represented by a circle, finite, but bounded. Climacus (*CUP*, 302) states:

> The bad infinite is the [Hegelian] Method's hereditary enemy; it is the Kobold that moves whenever a transition is about to take place, and prevents it from taking place. The bad infinite is infinitely tenacious of life; it can be vanquished only by a breach of continuity, a qualitative leap. But then it is all over with the Method, the facile nimbleness of its immanence, and the necessity of the transition.

Wallace (2005:80) writes, however: "Kierkegaard does not address Hegel's argument – that the 'bad infinite' *fails to be infinite* because it is limited by the finite, to which it is opposed." It is true that *for Hegel* the infinite is not truly infinite unless it is opposed to the finite. The infinite only finds its truth by standing in relation to the finite. However, it is precisely with this that Kierkegaard finds fault. Hegel's system can be understood conceptually, but human rationality is limited compared to God's infinite understanding. The limits of the human being inhibit true understanding; God, not Hegel, can be a Hegelian, as Westphal (1998:117) asserts. As Climacus (*CUP,* 107) says, "Reality itself is a system – for God; but it cannot be a system for any existing spirit." For human beings the absoluteness of the difference of God resists comprehension; and the thought that an infinite Being would furthermore trouble itself to care for the individual is absurd, yet for the individual who has experienced God's love it is more

than possible; it is indeed in an important sense *existentially or ethically real* (see Shakespeare, 2001).

As already discussed, for Westphal (1998:103) one of the main problems of Hegel's philosophy for Kierkegaard is that Hegel's dialectic is speculative and may (possibly) be brought to a close. Closure is what Kierkegaard wants to resist; the individual can be in a relationship to God, can always grow closer, personal development never stops so long as there is striving (and consequentially suffering). What Hegel would call the bad infinite is something of crucial value for Kierkegaard, for whom, in the words of Perkins, "the infinite still calls" (in Westphal, 1998:105); Kierkegaard's problem with speculation is that it tends to see the world *sub specie aeterni* (ibid., 116). Although Kierkegaard mirrors Hegel's dialectical structure, for Kierkegaard the dialectic unequivocally does not come to an end. Being in relation to the eternal, the individual's personal dialectic ends, or rather, comes to full realisation, only with the final possibility of death.

As we know, according to Kierkegaard there can be no movement in logic. Reason cannot be said to be an autonomous driving force of human beings. At most, a supposedly autonomous logic that drives History may be said to be 'superimposed' onto the past. We shall see in due time the further possible ramifications Kierkegaard's personal dialectic has on the movement on 'secular,' *world* history. As already observed in Chapter 2, Climacus (*PF*, 65) notes that the fact that the square tower seems round at a distance is a result of an illusion which occurs when we look back upon history. While logic seeks to be eternal, to generalise from the particular, logic, in this conception, may be said to be 'eternal' in only a derivative sense. The eternal *as such*, no human consciousness can fully grasp. For Hegel, the Absolute and the finite both find their dynamic movement in relating to each other, but for Kierkegaard, this is merely a specious form of movement.

God as the Absolute is absolutely self-positing; to borrow Aristotle's term, the 'unmoved mover.' [36] We cannot expect God to be moved by our pleas. *We* are changed through our interaction with God, but God, being the final cause, is not altered. Yet at the same time, God is absurdly in a personal and loving relationship with human beings. If God contains movement, it is essentially and absolutely, a 'Movement' in which finite human beings partake.

[36] One may observe a parallel with Aristotle's Unmoved Mover. Kierkegaard in turn takes God as the 'final cause.' Kierkegaard says: "But God needs no disciple to help him understand himself, nor can he be so determined by any occasion that there is as much significance in the occasion as in the resolve. What then could move him to make his appearance? He must indeed move himself, and continue to exemplify what Aristotle say of him" (*PF* 18).

The relationship with the Absolute, truly transcendent and eternal, is a source of deep existential movement for the finite human being towards the Absolute. This is not the flux of the merely temporal; it is not merely a 'going-by,' but rather it is movement in the sense of being able make decisions by virtue of the moment. Hegel never truly moves away from the speculative, according to Kierkegaard, but ultimately stays within the limits of the immanent, and in successive, linear time. Again, although interpretations of Hegel vary as to the exact nature of the mediation of the eternal and the temporal, it is certain that Kierkegaard does not think Hegel goes far enough, and the relation between God and world is truly non-reciprocal.

As we have seen in the Section 4.2.2, Hegel's influence on the structure of Kierkegaard's dialectic may be observed, but Kierkegaard's dialectic has an existential orientation and is dialectical regarding *individual* spirit, not historical Spirit. The contradictions are not conceptual contradictions to be worked through via thought, but are rather existentially experienced contradictions. The self is faced with opposing paths of possible choice, for example, or the self is faced with the radical disparity of its temporality in relation to the Eternal. Kierkegaard's existential dialectic is driven by the contradictions within the self, and by the contradiction between self and God. Thus for Hegel and Kierkegaard respectively, movement of history or the self is driven by contradiction. Yet although these similarities are important and a clear influence of Hegel on Kierkegaard is evident as we have already seen, Kierkegaard heavily critiques Hegel's dependence upon abstract thought, observed most evidently in Hegel's *Logic*. The human being as a synthesis is not passive, but is an active synthesis, and its individual freedom is realised by consciously actualising necessity and possibility.

Kierkegaard attacks Hegel's 'both-and' logic of mediation. For Hegel, *Aufhebung* consists of going beyond both concepts as well as retaining them. For Kierkegaard, however, the religious stage in particular does *not* consist of a 'both-and,' a neat synthesis of the temporal and eternal aspects of the self. Swenson (1939:316) notes: "When the 'both-and' point of view comes to dominate existence as well as contemplation, it is the death of spirit; 'either-or is the key to heaven,' says Kierkegaard with epigrammatic incisiveness, 'both-and is the road to hell.'" To reiterate, for Kierkegaard, Hegel's mediation does not imply movement, nor produces anything new.

Dunning (1985:10-11), however, implies that mediation does indeed produce something new. The new whole is greater than the parts of which it consists; the new concept is irreducible to its constitutive parts. While this is not to be denied, I do not however think that Kierkegaard

misunderstood Hegel, as some scholars have claimed (Inwood, 1975:20), although, as we have seen, what it means to truly understand Hegel is a difficult question. Kierkegaard clearly states in the voice of Climacus (*CUP*, 199): "I am well aware that the German word *aufheben* – has various and even contradictory meanings; it has often enough been noted that it can mean both *tollere* and *conservare*." In *The Concept of Dread* (p. 28, n.) in the voice of Haufiensis, Kierkegaard's position is clarified: "Hegel affirmed the leap, but affirmed it in logic… But Hegel's misfortune is precisely this, that he wants to assert the new quality and yet does not want to, since he wants to do it in logic, which, no sooner than this is recognised, must acquire a different consciousness of itself and its significance."

Kierkegaard affirms that contradiction or tension and movement are found within *being*, not abstract thought. Here lies the crux: for Kierkegaard, Hegel is incorrect to insist that thought and being are inseparable. As shown above, for Kierkegaard there is an absolute difference between the transcendent, which logic aims to be, and the flux of temporality. Hegel's insistence that we can come to understand this very fact through thought, presents Hegel as arresting the flux of existence (see Caputo, 1987). It is this distinction between thought and being that will again come into play in the following subsection, which shows how Kierkegaard's thought implies that concrete being precedes abstract speculation.

4.3.2 Kierkegaard's Opposition to Presuppositionless Philosophy

The second major point that Kierkegaard unambiguously critiques in numerous different works is that of Hegel's 'presuppositionless' philosophy, already touched upon in Chapter 2. The method of modern philosophy, beginning with Descartes, was intended to remove all presuppositions in order to have a (supposedly) pure starting point for philosophy. By systematically doubting everything, one ends up with what is indubitable and self-evident: the *cogito*. Hegel's philosophy follows Descartes' method, and his presuppositionless philosophy could be said to be the continuation or even realisation of the idea of the Cartesian aims of presuppositionless philosophy (Stewart, 2003:244). Thought does not need anything outside of itself in order to develop, and constitutes its own self-justifying conditions; philosophy essentially constitutes its own foundation. In addition to the *Philosophical Fragments* and the *Postscript*, *De Omnibus Dubitandum Est*, a work to which I have already alluded above, is centred around Johannes Climacus. It is a small and often overlooked work, and published

posthumously, but one I feel is revealing in terms of Kierkegaard's sincere grappling with Hegel's thought. Here Climacus takes up the radical task of doubting everything, including the proposition that philosophy begins with doubt.

The act of doubting (a mode of thinking) is that which might allow for philosophy to begin. But modern philosophy at the same time seems to be saying that its beginning was something more than merely historical. On the one hand, the universality that especially Hegel's System boasts seems to imply that the System is neither confined to space nor time, at least according to Kierkegaard's reading of Hegel. As Climacus (*DO*, 131) says, the System is supposedly applicable outside of history, eternally; it is "indifferent to time," and "has neither beginning nor ending." Yet Climacus notes that at the same time, it seems to acknowledge its historicity by specifically calling itself *modern* philosophy. It seems to imply that at previous times philosophy proper had not yet begun (ibid., 119), and which "was only called philosophy by adaptation of its meaning," including Greek philosophy, which did not begin with doubt, but with wonder (ibid., 118). The immediacy of wonder seems in fact to ironically accomplish a greater continuity through time than modern philosophy. On the other hand, the very names of Descartes and Hegel seem to be irrelevant or *replaceable*, such that it does not matter how philosophy began in time, but again rather that the bounds of time and space are irrelevant.

It is worse that Climacus's (or Kierkegaard's) contemporaries seem to be completely unfazed by this approach, and use these incompatible statements interchangeably, namely that philosophy begins with doubt and that *modern* philosophy begins with doubt. Through the persona of Haufniensis (*CD*, 73), Kierkegaard articulates a scathing critique of Hegel's presuppositionless philosophy:

> While Hegel and the Hegelian school startle the world by the mighty thought of the presuppositionless beginning of philosophy, or that nothing must precede philosophy but the most complete absence of presuppositions, no embarrassment is felt in employing the terms 'transition,' 'negation' and 'mediation,' i.e. the principles of movement in Hegelian thought, in such a way that no place is definitely assigned to them in the systematic progression. If this is not a presupposition, I do not know what a presupposition is; for to employ something which is nowhere explained is in effect to presuppose it.

What Climacus seeks is clarity of thought, but ambiguity seems to be obscuring something of significance. Climacus is not easily placated, and after painstaking analysis, he writes that "it still was by no means clear to J.C. how he was to imagine such a coalescing of time and eternity, history and philosophy. His anguished soul was full of unrest and foreboding. He suspected

that this situation must be something extraordinary" (*DO*, 124). There seems to be a contradiction or at least an inconsistency in saying that modern philosophy begins with doubt and yet at the same time maintaining that this is not a historical statement.

I suggest that Kierkegaard's dialectic 'resolves' the problem of Hegel's presuppositionless philosophy through the Paradox, which, however, does not attempt to mediate the contradiction, as Hegel does, but instead aims to *radicalise* the contradiction. At the heart of this critique is the idea that some contradictions cannot be resolved. For Kierkegaard, the eternal in time is one such contradiction. Paradoxically, although the punctuation of the eternal in time marks a definite historical point in time, and a starting point for Christianity, (ibid., 119), the eternal has unambiguously always existed and will always exist. The System of thought, on the other hand, came into historical time with the particular existence of the philosopher Hegel.

In *De Omnibus*, Climacus asks what kind of *personality* must have come up with the proposition that philosophy begins with doubt, and whether this indeed matters, or whether, like a mathematical principle, mere talent is needed, for it makes no difference as to its truth who utters a mathematical proposition so long as it is true (*DO*, 135). On the one hand, the abstractness of the System seems to imply that personality does not matter, so long as the idea of philosophy came into existence. On the other hand, personality does indeed seem to matter. Climacus comes to conclude that *doubt* is a subjective operation, which may be said to correlate negatively with the subjective act of faith. Thus Hegel's philosophy must begin in time, having the presupposition of the doubting individual, but the System also tends to negate the role of the individual.

In vain, Climacus strives to find positive implications for the individual, and wants to know how the individual should relate him/herself to the System. Climacus (*DO*, 124) laments the demise of the individual that modern philosophy seems to imply:

> He suspected that to be a philosopher nowadays must be something indescribably difficult. If modern philosophy was like this, the individual philosopher must be the same. *He must be conscious of himself; then of his significance as a factor (moment) in modern philosophy; then modern philosophy must in turn see itself as a factor in a foregoing philosophy; and this philosophy must in turn realize that it is but a factor in the historic unfolding and development of the eternal philosophy*. The mind of the philosophy must, therefore, contain the most prodigious oppositions within it: on the one hand, his own personality, and his little contribution; on the other hand, all the philosophy of the world as the unfolding of eternal philosophy.

After a sincere engagement with the idea *de ombibus dubitandum est*, that to doubt everything is the beginning of philosophy, Climacus finally finds a prudent way to interpret it, but he must finally let go of his teachers, ironically doubting even the great thinkers. In the last pages of *De Omnibus*, Climacus concludes that being or actuality *precedes speculation*,[37] denying that philosophy is 'presuppositionless.' Kierkegaard stipulates further in the *Postscript*: "*How does the System begin with the immediate? That is to say, does it begin with it immediately?* …The beginning which begins with the immediate *is thus itself reached by means of reflection*" (*CUP*, 101). However, "the possibility of doubt *as disinterested reflection* lies in that third term of Consciousness" (*DO*, 151, my emphasis).

Again, the limitations of human thought are underscored. Perhaps Hegel had "forgotten something in the sequence of thought," essentially that human beings are ultimately finite and temporal. Here again, at the heart of Kierkegaard departure from Hegel, time comes into play: in addition to the radical distinction between the temporal and the eternal, existence may be seen as ontologically (and temporally) preceding abstract thought. Climacus in the *Fragments* would agree; "Thus I always reason from existence, not toward existence, whether I move in the sphere of palpable sensible fact or in the realm of thought. I do not for example prove that a stone exists, but that some existing thing is a stone" (*PF*, 31). Kierkegaard thus maintains that there is indeed a very important 'necessary' presupposition of philosophy, that is, the presupposition of existence (Thomas, 2011:65). Climacus (*PF*, 34) continues:

> As long as I keep my hold on the proof, i.e., continue to demonstrate, the existence does not come out, if for no other reason than that I am engaged in proving it; but when I let the proof go, the existence is there. But this act of letting go is surely also something; it is indeed a contribution of mine. Must not this also be taken into the account, this little moment, brief as it may be – it need not be long, for it is a leap.

Thus Kierkegaard argues that the eternal, if truly eternal, must exist wholly independently of time. The System ultimately begins in time, and is only eternal in a limited or derivative sense; although logic indeed aims to be atemporal, Christian eternity is the true atemporal eternity. This underscores the hubris of Hegel's System, the desire to posit a System that transcends the finite human condition by mediating time and the eternal. Kierkegaard simply does not think

[37] This is reminiscent of the existentialist, specifically Sartrean, claim, that 'existence precedes essence.'

that this is possible for human beings, but only for God. We have forgotten that we are human, finite, and temporal.[38] Climacus (*DO*, 125) says:

> That the individual could be conscious of the eternal, J.C. fully realized. An earlier philosophy had thought so too, provided [sic] there had been an 'earlier' philosophy! But to be conscious of the eternal as it exists in the whole panorama of concrete history (and measuring too not only by the past), this seemed to J.C., almost to require divinity itself. Nor could J.C. grasp at what moment a man became so transfigured that he could know himself not only in the present but in the past. That, thought J.C., must be reserved for eternity, and eternity is only present in time in an abstract sense.

For human beings, the eternal becomes something which Hegelian reason resists, and yet, it has significance for the singular individual. According to Climacus, "The eternal is not to be understood abstractly but concretely, as a task" (ibid., 499). "But more concrete than all other understanding, the only absolutely concrete understanding there is, is the understanding by which the individual comprehends himself in comparison with himself before God" (ibid., 420). The existential and Christian nature of Kierkegaard's eternal may be easily observed in the following passage:

> Moreover, I know that some have found immortality in Hegel, others have not; I know that I have not found it in the System, where indeed it is also unreasonable to seek it; for, in a fantastic sense, all systematic thinking is *sub specie aeterni*, and to that extent immortality is there in the sense of eternity, but this immortality is not at all the one about which the question is asked, since the question is about the immortality of a mortal, which is not answered by showing that the eternal is immortal, and the immortality of the eternal is a tautology and a misuse of words (ibid., 143).

We already know that to suppose that thought *ontologically* precedes being is a Platonic reading of Hegel. But even according to the Aristotelian reading of Hegel, thought is prior in a (logical) sense. This is because being and thought are inseparable for Hegel; but it is only in hindsight that one may see how the universal was manifested through being. For Kierkegaard, the particular unambiguously precedes thought, and being and thought are radically separate. Whether we take the deflationary or Aristotelian reading to be correct, Kierkegaard's emphasis

[38] In asking about the meaning of being, Heidegger explicitly held that the meaning of being is linked inextricably to human being, to out being-in-the-world. I believe that Heidegger articulates explicitly what is implicit in Kierkegaard's thought, and indeed at the heart of existentialism; that is, the very possibility of thought is dependent upon our primordial being in the world. But it must still be remembered that Kierkegaard's approach is overtly Christian, unlike Heidegger's secular approach. Still, Kierkegaard seems to at least pave the way for such further thought, and earns the merit of being the first existential philosopher.

that being and thought are separate cannot be denied. While the deflationary view tends to make Hegel less metaphysical than he really might be, and tends to cover over Kierkegaard's explicit contributions, Kierkegaard's contributions may still be highlighted through examining his concepts of time and the eternal. Hegel still tends to implicitly lean towards the bias of metaphysics, which in Kierkegaard's view tends to arrest the flux of existence.

McCumber makes a point that is in line with the present reading of Kierkegaard. Although he tends towards a deflationary view of Hegel and thinks that Kierkegaard tends towards incorrectly interpreting Hegel as too metaphysical, McCumber (2011:81) notes that *in any case*, "there is for Kierkegaard a great divide between the necessary, atemporal realm of logic and the changing, contingent world in which we live. With a mere word Hegel tries to overcome the discrepancy between the timeless realm of true being and the messy, changing world of contingency," echoing Aristotle's complaint about Plato (ibid.)

4.4 A Possible Third Alternative Interpretation

In this third section of Chapter 4, a possible third alternative interpretation of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel is proposed. The structure of this chapter in effect mirrors the triadic schema that both Hegel and Kierkegaard employ, as the first two sections are roughly in opposition, although I have constantly alluded to my suggested third alternative. To recapitulate, on the one hand, Kierkegaard at least mirrors Hegel's dialectic, which is in all probability deliberate. Kierkegaard mirrors Hegel's dialectic only in a structural or formal sense, however, not in terms of content. I suggest that Kierkegaard's dialectic may in a certain manner of speaking be said to 'sublate' Hegel's dialectic. As Westphal (1998:101) notes, Hegel "took himself to be the *Aufhebung* of Fichte and Schelling as well as Kant, to say nothing of Plato and Aristotle, Anselm and Aquinas, Descartes and Spinoza, and so forth," I agree with her that Hegel was perhaps indeed "outtrumped" by Kierkegaard (as well as Feuerbach, and Marx[39]) (ibid.). Kierkegaard arguably works *from within* the Hegelian milieu, reflecting Hegel's triadic structures and dialectical form. Perhaps we may venture to say that this familiarity of Hegel's method to Kierkegaard's contemporary reader complements his method of indirect communication, which further increases the possibility of the actively engaging the reader. To claim that Kierkegaard merely parodies Hegel's dialectic is to miss this *positive* engagement

[39] Hannay (1982) similarly notes that Kierkegaard, Feuerbach, and Marx all 'stand Hegel on his head.'

with Hegel. To overemphasise a *simply* ironical and critical reading of Hegel by Kierkegaard does not take into enough consideration Kierkegaard's appreciation of Hegel's thought, which is possibly indirectly expressed through a structural mirroring of Hegel's works.

On the other hand, it is also not entirely true that Kierkegaard 'sublates' Hegel's dialectic as such, for in taking Hegel's dialectic further, Kierkegaard paradoxically decisively moves away from Hegel's speculative dialectic. Through emphasising the eternal absolutely eternal, the transcendence of freedom is reinstated. Kierkegaard makes what may be termed a 'leap' away from Hegel's immanent dialectic towards an existential dialectic, and Hegel's dialectic is in this way radically transformed with the recovery of existential movement, and the possibility of repetition. To repeat, as Kierkegaard as Constantius has suggested, "Repetition is the new category which has to be brought to light" (*R*, 33), and which is distinguished from both recollection and mediation, as we have seen. Thus, to overemphasise Kierkegaard's positive Hegelian influence downplays Kierkegaard's purposes as a Christian existentialist writer, and his notion of repetition as a new category.

Here lies an important tension that is all too easily oversimplified, and in this subsection I aim to substantiate that Kierkegaard is neither simply pro- nor anti-Hegelian. A third possible third alternative interpretation is suggested, which is that Kierkegaard reflects Hegel's dialectic in a positive way, while simultaneously critiquing Hegel. This not necessarily a logical contradiction: the possibility that Kierkegaard was not always in conflict with Hegel does not necessarily indicate a problematic inconsistency in Kierkegaard's thought. Kierkegaard presents his reader with tensions to prompt and encourage the reader to decide for himself which direction to choose, and I believe that his rendering of Hegel is no exception. The very tendency of many commentators to render a one-sided interpretation of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel is a telling point, and may indicate an impulse to flatten out the sophisticated tensions that can be found in Kierkegaard's work. As Kierkegaard himself stresses the importance of tension, there is certainly irony in interpreting Kierkegaard in a one-dimensional fashion. I shall argue that through mirroring Hegel's dialectic, Kierkegaard also manages to go radically beyond it. At first glance it seems that Kierkegaard merely mirrors the Hegelian dialectic and applies it to the individual, but there are certain dramatic repercussions that may be noted. Kierkegaard's exact engagement with Hegel's dialectic will be expounded below, which will highlight both Kierkegaard's mirroring of Hegel's dialectic as well as divergence from it.

Hegel's reader is invited to undertake a journey through the *Phenomenology*, at the end of which the individual sees for him/herself the reality of the System. Spirit must become

conscious of itself as Spirit, and only at the end of this historical process do human beings concretely realise the Absolute as the ultimate *telos*. Hegel begins by considering immediate sense perception and moves towards the more general, the Absolute. It is implied that Philosophy begins without presuppositions, and that in the end thought, the universal, is seen to be logically prior. In comparison, Kierkegaard's dialectic moves in the *opposite direction*. Kierkegaard's individual is first confronted with idealisations and thought experiments, with the hope that the reader will move towards concrete existence, and inwardly towards him/herself.[40] The stages, presented in an indirect and 'aesthetic' form, must be inwardly appropriated, and realised in a subjective manner. Through engaging with the contradictions or tensions Kierkegaard's personas experience, one may reflect on one's own personal experiences. One is thus potentially prompted in real life to appropriate a particular mode of living. Kierkegaard leads his reader, through engagement with the pseudonymous works, to the point where he or she may *choose* to take the leap. Kierkegaard's reader, unlike Hegel's, is presented with a personal challenge, to actualise the possibility of their one's own spirit. The existential dialectic can only be taken up at the level of the individual self, interrupting the generality and universality of Hegel's dialectic. The individual may be seen to 'break through' the immanence of thought in a movement of transcendent repetition to reclaim his or her personal existence. Unlike Hegel's more passive aim of dialectically leading his reader to become self-consciousness, Kierkegaard can only lead his reader up to a certain point, but one invariably stands alone at the precipice before the leap. Only once I become self-conscious in relation to the God do I realise that this was always my ultimate *telos*, and in addition, that my *concrete* and particular existence has been a fact all along. Kierkegaard demonstrates that truly one was never abstracted to begin with, but, as he concludes in *De Omnibus*, always an existing individual who had forgotten that he or she is a finite human being. Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works could be said to be a demonstration of the priority of the individual and the particular over the universal and the abstract, which is however realised through self-conscious and practical appropriation by the individual self, and cannot be demonstrated through thought alone.

[40] Kierkegaard (*PV*, 142) describes the movement of his authorship itself "*from* the poet (from aesthetics), *from* philosophy (from speculation), *to* the indication of the most central definition of what Christianity is," from 'Either/Or', through 'The Concluding Postscript' with his own name attached, and to the 'Discourses,' which he wrote under his own name, indicating the temporal progression Kierkegaard would prefer his reader to follow (*PV*, 142*ff*).

We may observe that the repercussions of Kierkegaard's appropriation of Hegel's dialectic indicate a fundamental and qualitative shift in dialectic. There is a mirroring but also a fundamental *differing* in Kierkegaard's appropriation of Hegel's dialectic. Kierkegaard radically *pushes the boundaries of thought* through reinstating God's absolute transcendence, showing the limitations of thought, and that some contradictions simply cannot be resolved. In this move, Kierkegaard engages with Hegel at a philosophical level, not only reflecting or mirroring Hegel's dialectic, but *inverting*[41] or *reversing* it, turning it upside down, so to speak. Hannay's observations are complimentary to my own:

> Hegel goes from private to public, from inner to outer, from individuality to a consumption in 'publicity' that 'consumes' individuality... The progress is outward from an 'immediacy' (sense-certainty) to a public domain where spirit finds itself completely at home... Kierkegaard's journey on the contrary is inward, turning Hegel 'on his head' and 'outside-in' (Hannay, 1982:53).

I suggest that repetition may be seen as not only a personal and concrete category, but one which may also have philosophical and strategical relevance. Melberg (1990:81) rightly notes regarding the notion of repetition: "*Ordo inversus*, the reversed-repeated order, means putting things on their heads: putting them right. The philosophy of the subject inaugurated by Kant and radicalised by Kierkegaard makes subjectivity into truth."

Kierkegaard's complex appropriation of Hegel's dialectic may be observed to have a further effect of reversal and inversion: while at first glance it seems that Kierkegaard imitates and mirrors Hegel's dialectic, it may be indeed seen to be the *opposite*. By affirming the primordiality of reality, not thought, it is implied that it is really *Hegel's* dialectic which is a derivation of the existential dialectic. McCumber makes a point which is relevant to my interpretation. He notes that: "Kierkegaard is, indeed, claiming that Hegelian logic is *not atemporal enough* (McCumber, 2011:82). He goes on to say: "There is a Twist: if we subtract movement from the logical realm, and make it truly atemporal, it also ceases to be logical.

[41] The idea of inversion appears also in Malesic's illuminating argument that Kierkegaard can be seen to be influenced by Feuerbach and refers to Feuerbach in an indirect fashion in the Fragments. According to Malesic, Feuerbach's own projection theory which shows the illusion of theology, that God is just a projection of our own limitations, is inverted by Kierkegaard, who reveals a deeper illusion that man's understanding is not the measure of all things. Malesic (2007:44) contends that Kierkegaard's reflection of Feuerbach's movements back on to himself reveals "great respect" for Feuerbach, just as Kierkegaard has for Hegel. Although Kierkegaard does not critique Feuerbach in a direct way, Malesic proposes that "Kierkegaard engages in something much cleverer than the direct critique in dealing with Feuerbach – he turns Feuerbach's own intellectual moves against the naturalist hypothesis" (ibid.). Kierkegaard's method shows that one of the most effective methods of critique is not of attacking an idea from the outside, but grappling with an idea from 'inside,' so to speak.

Indeed, it is utterly unfathomable: Kierkegaardian eternity, the source of our dread" (ibid.). In a sense, then, Kierkegaard could be said to 'radicalise' Hegel's dialectic. While Kierkegaard laments that Hegel is too abstract, he may be seen as at the same time making Hegel even *more* abstract. Kierkegaard brings what he thinks is a heavily abstract System to its logical conclusion, thereby arguably subverting or 'sublating' it. We may add Westphal's suggestion that "Hegelian speculation is *insufficiently dialectical*, since it flees the tensions of temporal existence for the relaxation of premature resolution" (Westphal, 1996:viii, my emphasis). In this 'twist' Kierkegaard essentially overturns, inverts, and repeats but differs from Hegel's dialectic. Kierkegaard extends logic to border upon the absurd; reason 'trembles' on the verge of collapsing, and then re-emerges, integrated into a new dialectic of the self. Following the trajectory of logic towards the absurd, one finds oneself finally at the boundary of the marvellous, on the verge of the impossible.

Kierkegaard's repeated mention of Hegel's philosophy perhaps indirectly indicates that Hegel is a thinker of significant value, but that he was simply misguided. Hegel can be seen as being on the right track regarding the historicity of human beings, however, he was also ironically limited by his own historical situatedness, at the very least not taking some of the implications of the historicity of human beings far enough. Repetition, which is essentially freedom, indicates *both* Kierkegaard's appreciation for historical situatedness, *and* also emphasises the present which serves as a springboard from which one may 'project' oneself (to borrow a Heideggerian term) into the radically unknown future. Kierkegaard saw that it is crucial to be able to push the limitations of speculative thought. As the gap between being and thought widens, Hegel's mediation becomes unstable, begins to 'tremble,' and ultimately falters or 'founders.' It is implied that history is ultimately fluid and contingent, and can be actively created in the present by individuals.

Descartes's and Plato's thought may be added to this dialectical twist. Kierkegaard's dialectic overturns Descartes's 'I think therefore I am,' allowing existence to come first. Only then is the possibility for the singular existing individual to come to abstractly think about the nature of its own existence. We may add Swenson's observation:

> In Kierkegaard we have a thinker who completely reverses the Cartesian distribution of emphasis: he reflects where Descartes accepts, and accepts where Descartes reflects… The struggle to find solid ground under his feet was undertaken with a concentration of all his faculties, intellectual and passional; and, in gradually achieving this task for himself, he brought into being a revision of the basic categories of human existence (Swenson, 1939:309).

The stages could be said to resemble Plato's allegory of the cave, moving from an illusory form of knowledge to true knowledge, but again there is an inversion, or a repetition with a difference. For Plato, the forms are static, and time is a moving image of eternity, an imperfect copy of eternity. For Kierkegaard, however, existential movement does not stand in a negative relation to eternity, but in a positive relation to the Paradox. We partake of the divine possibility of movement, because of the gift of the Incarnation. Existential movement is not simply a simulacrum of divine movement, but partakes in that movement by virtue of the absurd.

It may be noted that Stewart thinks that Kierkegaard's notion of repetition has its roots in Hegel's mediation. I agree with Stewart to a certain extent that there is at least ambiguity in Kierkegaard's appropriation of Hegel's mediation, but again, Stewart's enthusiasm of showing Hegel's influence tends to downplay the differences between their conceptions of the individual, and Kierkegaard's absolute distinction between time and the eternal. For human beings, a perfect synthesis of time and eternity is an impossible task, one only achieved by Christ, and one which human beings can only strive to emulate. Perkin's critique of Stewart is similar. According to Perkins (2004), Stewart does not appreciate the definite gap that Kierkegaard emphasises between time and the eternal. As we know, Kierkegaard finds Hegel's metaphysics indeed more insidious than Platonic philosophy. For Kierkegaard, logic is at the very least a retardant of existential movement. If Hegel did indeed realise that even his own philosophy was at the mercy of the movement of history, Kierkegaard has brought this implication or possibility explicitly to the fore. Preferable to Stewart's take on repetition, is Mooney's account:

> In ways reminiscent of Hegel's account of the dialectical development of ever more satisfying concepts of experience, Kierkegaard makes it essential that repetition not annul or erase the initial perception... But contrary to Hegel... when meaning is deepened (rather than trivialized) by repetition, this supplement is conferred by something transcending the first, now-deepened experience (Mooney, 1993:153).

It must be further noted that some prominent contemporary philosophers have interpreted Hegel's mediation in a more liberal way, for example, Slavoj Žižek, Hans-Georg Gadamer, or Jean-Luc Nancy, whom I have already discussed.[42] None of these thinkers focus on Hegel's

[42] See in addition Desmond's article "Hegel, Dialectic, and Deconstruction" (1985), which specifically looks at the deconstructive potential that resides in Hegel's philosophy itself.

rational or metaphysical strategy, but instead emphasise the possible liberating tendencies of mediation, rendering mediation as dynamic and fluid. I contend that Kierkegaard does something similar, possibly even foreshadowing the postmodernists. Kierkegaard however does not directly state the latency of possible movement within Hegel's thought, but hails repetition as a *new* category and qualitatively different form of movement, explicitly highlighting the contrast between passion and speculation, being and thought, time and the eternal.

4.5 Potentiality, Actuality, and Necessity

Earlier it was noted that I chose to concentrate on Kierkegaard's relation to the Hegelian and not the Socratic dialectic. Here I include a few remarks regarding Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, which will not only help to shed light on Kierkegaard's dialectic but also on Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel. In a sentence that reveals Kierkegaard's sentiments regarding the Greeks, Constantine (*R*, 33) says: "One should do better to subject mediation to a searching examination and so surrender a little justice to the Greeks. Their treatment of the doctrine of 'being' and 'nothingness', of 'the instant,' of 'non-being' etc., trumps Hegel. He writes further: "Greek reflection of the concept of *kinesis* (motion or change), which corresponds to the modern category of transition, deserves the utmost attention" (ibid., 34). Kierkegaard's commendation of ancient philosophy might seem, upon first inspection, counter-intuitive, given Kierkegaard's decisive rejection of the pagan understanding of the world in general, and Hegel is surely considered closer to the tradition of Christianity than the pagan Greeks, but as I shall elaborate, the Greeks, despite being pagan, were the more concrete thinkers. Although Hegel is dialectically closer to the truth, having knowledge (consciousness) of Christianity, Hegel *knowingly* posits Philosophy (thought) above concrete individual religious experience.

For Kierkegaard, movement from non-being to being is understood concretely and not in an abstractly dialectical sense. Kierkegaard notes that Socrates was the first to engage with the Sophists' view of 'non-being.' For the Sophist, he notes, there is no such thing as non-being. As Kierkegaard expresses through the persona of Haufniensis (*CD*, 74 n.), "Finally, in the practical spheres the Sophists made use of non-being in such a way that they annulled all moral concepts: non-being *is* not, *ergo* everything is true, *ergo* everything is good, *ergo* a deceit, etc., does not exist." Both Socrates and Kierkegaard felt the need to move towards truth by means

of *concrete* dialectical movement. But for the Hegel, being and non-being are *conceptually* mediated to form becoming. Again, Kierkegaard looks at the categories of being and non-being in a primarily *existential* and *Christian* sense. Haufniensis says that for Christianity "non-being is everywhere present as sensuousness divorced from the spirit, as the temporal forgotten by eternity" (ibid., 74). As already mentioned, salvation, or the 'new birth,' consists in moving from non-being to being. The modern aesthete turns his or her back to the fullness of the present, and the possibility of salvation and becoming whole through the leap. For Kierkegaard, sin can only be defined negatively, as non-being: "Its idea is that its concept is constantly annulled" (ibid., 14). It is in a sense turned away from being: "The true nature of sin is not merely eating fruit, or violating this or that commandment. Sin is *turning away from God*. Towards? –something that cannot be known, since knowledge is traditionally defined as coming from God" (McCumber, 83). But sin also "founders by the aid of repentance" (*CD*, 16). Thus the negativity of sin may in turn be negated through the miracle that is repetition, and one comes back into 'being,' or more correctly *becoming*, which is possible through the fullness of the moment.

Haufniensis notes Socrates's stance on conceptual contradiction: "Socrates remarks that it would not be wonderful if a man were able to demonstrate the contradictoriness involved in a particular thing which is made up of diversities, but if one were able to show the contradiction in the concepts themselves, that would be something to wonder at" (ibid., 75). This brings into question Hegel's dialectic whereby concepts themselves contain contradictions, and whereby contradictions may be mediated by thought. For Kierkegaard, any logical or conceptual priority of the universal is but illusory, and is not identical with being. For Kierkegaard, it is only through *existentially experienced time* that practical contradictions can be resolved.

As we have seen, it even seems that even Plato's recollection, which Kierkegaard critiques, is not as abstract as Hegel's mediation. Even though Plato's philosophy is quite abstract, it does not cover over the difficulty of the instant, as Kierkegaard thinks Hegel's dialectic is culpable of doing. As noted in Chapter 2, the movement of repetition is similar to recollection, only its direction is the opposite. Hegel's philosophy, however, introduces only spurious movement into the historical dialectic. However, as we have seen, Platonic philosophy may be seen as a *derivative* of Christian movement. As Llevadot (2009:295) says, "Christianity implies an overturning of Platonism since actuality is considered a repetition of ideality, not an inaccurate copy of ideality, but the perfect place for ideality to be actualized. This is precisely the movement of repetition, which moves from ideality to actuality, or actualizes ideality."

Whereas Plato's recollection understands ideality as an occasion to reach ideality, Llevadot says, "Far from proposing its renunciation, he calls for an understanding of actuality as a gift and as a task. Repetition is just that existential movement through which individual subjectivity becomes capable of receiving actuality as a gift, but it is also a duty to learn how to love the real" (ibid., 296).

For Aristotle too, movement is more concrete than for Hegel. In Aristotle's *kinesis*, in the process of becoming, being comes into existence. For Aristotle, possibility is not theoretical possibility, but *actual* possibility, so to speak. This is to say that possibility is understood as something actually able to be attained. Haufniensis (*CD*, 74 n.) says, "Therefore when Aristotle says that the transition from possibility to actuality is a κίνησις, this is not to be understood logically but with reference to the historical freedom." It seems that if the Aristotelian reading of Hegel is correct, then Hegel's dialectic is a poor appropriation of *kinesis*.

For Aristotle, the Unmoved Mover is the final cause, and as such, like Kierkegaard's God, also stands non-reciprocally in relation to finite human beings. The Unmoved Mover is of an absolutely different order of being. The highest *telos* of human beings, for Kierkegaard, is to be in an absolute relationship with the Absolute. This move allows the individual human being to exist absurdly in relation with the Mover/the Absolute itself, introducing an even greater possibility of movement for the individual. Although both Kierkegaard and Hegel appropriate Kierkegaard's notion of *telos*, Kierkegaard makes the movement from potentiality to actuality *more* concrete, not less so.

However, although Aristotle shows a meaningful understanding of movement, his understanding is still limited by his historical situatedness. His movement still tends to be fatalistic. As Caputo (1987:18) remarks, "Aristotle alone among the Greeks recognised the contingency in things, although he did not distinguish sharply enough between the necessary and the possible." Aristotle furthermore does not understand the leap, indeed such a notion could not yet even be *conceived*, without the historical Event of the Incarnation. The intersection of time and the eternal engender the possibility for the experience of eternity within time, the fullness of being, and the possibility of the *present* as such. Again, these early conceptions of time are shown to be imperfect copies of the true conception of time and the eternal in the Christian sense. Even for Socrates and Aristotle with whom Kierkegaard is closely aligned, their respective notions of transition are not concrete enough, but the Greeks as a whole could not help but misunderstand time and the instant. Again, whereas the Greeks were innocent of their fatalistic view of time, Hegel, in such an essentially reflective age,

ignores the repercussions of Christianity and the effect of God's Incarnation on the freedom of the individual.

Both Hegel and Kierkegaard work with the notions of actuality, possibility, and necessity. But as we have seen, Hegel only makes *kinesis* more abstract by attempting to introduce logic into the dialectic. The categories of actuality, possibility, and necessity, are intrinsic to the way Kierkegaard differs from preceding notions of time, and may further help to pinpoint his departure from Hegel in terms of his reconceptualization of time and freedom. Kierkegaard echoes but inverts Hegel's schema, so that freedom is shifted to the individual. For Hegelian philosophy, actuality and possibility form necessity, which is freedom (see Hegel, 1969:541-571), but for Kierkegaard, *actuality* is the unity of necessity and possibility (*SUD*, 40), which is *existential* actuality and freedom of the *individual self*. The conceptual thus undergoes a transformation, or rather the existential aspect is found to have been there all along, but needed to be brought to light since it had been obscured by the prioritisation of Reason. Actuality or being is to be actively gained by the individual's efforts, which is the fullness of time and being, the fullness of self within time.

For Kierkegaard, consciousness or spirit is opposition or contradiction (*DO*, 148-149).[43] Consciousness, in terms of concrete potential of spirit, means that one is already spirit, which needs only be actualised. Mirroring Hegel's dialectic, one realises only after this actualisation that one was in despair all along, and that one was concrete spirit all along, that is, a synthesis of possibility and necessity. "What actuality is, cannot be stated in terms of abstraction. Actuality is an *inter-esse* interposed between the hypothetical unity supposed to exist between thought and being" (Croxall, 1958:89). In a sense, repetition is 'recovered' actuality, the meaning of which has been lost due to the confusion between actuality and ideality (Llevadot, 2009:286). "What really bothers... Kierkegaard is the idea that some sort of wholesale necessity could be determinant of reality. The source of this worry... is the suspicion that that if we admit that the actual falls into the grip of necessity, we shall have to give up freedom and moral responsibility" (Kosch, 2003:246). Lowrie (in *R*, xxi) says: "In the sphere of freedom, there is possibility, and actuality emerges as a transcendency. It is in this sense that one 'becomes

[43] Kierkegaard uses the term 'actuality' in two senses. On the one hand, *Virkelighed* – actuality is the "'ethical generality,' the collection of laws and customs... in which the individual perceives himself as such through his place in the community, whether that be the family, society or the state" (Llevadot, 2009:287-288). On the other, *Virkeligheden* "the individual's very own actuality, with his 'purely personal' actuality" (ibid.).

oneself' (*SUD*, 31), and is in this sense that the spirit is able to become 'new,' for every moment presents itself as pregnant with possibility.

A noteworthy comparison with Heidegger may be drawn at this point, who extends the conception of being to be inclusive of our very primordial understanding of existential time. For Kierkegaard, the Christian conception of time which he has brought to light allows for the possibility of tensed time to exist. Kierkegaard's existential view of temporality entails a significant move away from the metaphysics of traditional philosophy, and Heidegger's conception provides an even more primordial understanding of time and our being-in-the-world. (Nevertheless, I want to draw out the particularly existential nature of Kierkegaard's view of time compared with his predecessors which is inextricably linked to Christianity.) Although reality as such (that is, external being) is ontologically prior for Kierkegaard, true consciousness is always yet to be achieved. Although spirit or consciousness is prior to Hegel's possibility of doubt, as a synthesis of possibility and necessity, possibility is, for the individual, existentially prior. Consciousness is therefore not ontologically prior, but one must still actualise oneself by gaining higher self-consciousness, in relation to the Absolute. For the existing individual, *possibility* is ontologically prior. For Heidegger, possibility is also ontologically prior for the individual self. One strives to become authentic by realising the possibilities that lie in the path of the self. "Like the dialectics of revocation of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous texts... this de-structive movement... leaves the reader *interesse* – a naked and unaccommodated being-in-the-world, a *Dasein* in the place of origins, where time, despite its implication in structure, is ontologically prior to Being rather than the other way around" (Spanos, 1993:75).

4.6 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has explored some of the various interpretations of Kierkegaard's relationship to Hegel, his chief intellectual opponent. Looking at the differing interpretations of their relationship, it has been argued that the absolute difference between time and the eternal plays an important role in understanding their relationship and helps us zone in on the precise way Kierkegaard both appropriated and departed from Hegel's philosophy. Kierkegaard shows us that through pushing Hegel's thought dialectically and by making logic truly atemporal, only

the individual can be related paradoxically to the Absolute, and hence the dialectic is applicable only at a particular and individual level.

The traditional view of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel, especially in less nuanced forms, tends to downplay Kierkegaard's purposeful working with Hegel's dialectic. It also tends to ignore Kierkegaard's possible acknowledgement of his own historicity and philosophical milieu. This critique of Hegel from within the framework of Hegelian philosophy is in in line with and supported by his method of indirect communication. The opposing view, likewise in less subtle variations, tends to downplay Kierkegaard's view of God as radically eternal and transcendent. I have argued that a third possible interpretation is made possible via a dialectical engagement with these two opposing views. This interpretation takes into consideration both Kierkegaard's engagement with Hegel, as well as his insistence upon a transcendental God, and allows for a more refined reading of Kierkegaard, helping to shed light upon his nuanced thought which may be all too easily passed over. As already mentioned, Kierkegaard indirectly even admitted to writing *Repetition* in a frivolous way that the 'heretics' would not understand him (*CD*, 16 n.). While his indirect communication may at times obscure his direct intention which he aimed to resolve in *The Point of View*, it may in fact at the same time allow for not only personal but also pedagogic meaning to arise through textual engagement. It must be stressed that this is simply one interpretation of Kierkegaard, yet this interpretation fits with his method of indirect communication and self-conscious style of thinking.

Kierkegaard's dialectic may thus be said to be a 'radicalising' of Hegel's dialectic, to the point where ironically it again makes sense to the dialogical participant *qua finite* human being. This shows that Hegel was simply misguided, and did not see the limitations of his own thought. But once the opposites of time and the eternal in Hegel's dialectic are intensified, we realise that the outcome, the Kierkegaardian personal dialectic, is the true dialectic, the dialectic of the real. We also see the role of thought for Kierkegaard, that thought is simply not enough. Kierkegaard does not simply jettison reason, but nor does he unconsciously apply fundamental structures of Hegelian reason to his dialectic of the self.

To repeat, this view of Kierkegaard's dialectic may indeed not be Kierkegaard's original intention as author. Kierkegaard's writing on Hegel is largely indirect and ambiguous which makes it difficult to settle upon one understanding of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel. However, this third alternative interpretation might not only allow us to understand a new possible way of looking at Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel, but might also aid in interpreting

Kierkegaard's possible bearing on our present age. This will become clearer in the conclusory chapter.

Kierkegaard's decisive opposition of time and the eternal is of significance for the next chapter; the Paradox, the 'God-Man,' which logic cannot comprehend. There is always something that eludes pure intellectual understanding. In this chapter, we have seen the tensions Kierkegaard worked with within Hegel in order to unsettle the inherent stasis which Kierkegaard thought a logical System entails. The aim to expose contradictions has its roots firmly within the Hegelian dialectic itself, but this is also a defining factor of later deconstruction. The golden thread of the basic idea of the dialectic is followed from Hegel, and in this chapter, through Kierkegaard, in order to open up Kierkegaard's existential philosophy and expose possible additional underlying meanings. Kierkegaard, unlike Hegel, however, does not think that contradictions can always be easily resolved in a third term, but rather that the very tension between contradictions allows for dialectical movement. It must be noted that false dichotomy between Hegel and Kierkegaard is to be avoided. Rather, a connecting thread which runs through Hegel and Kierkegaard, and possibly beyond both is examined. Time and the eternal, as well as the related concepts of repetition and irony are shown as potentially deconstructive components at the heart of Kierkegaard's work, which allow dichotomies to slacken and shift, creating a continual restless movement within the texts themselves.

This chapter has predominantly had a backward-orientation, and is interested in Kierkegaard's relation to his predecessor Hegel. However, it opens the way for a more 'prospective' reading of Kierkegaard, which is the aim of the following chapter. Having exposed the crucial role of the Paradox, I will draw out some further implications thereof, this time in relation to Kierkegaard's own work. In doing so, we may hope to expose Kierkegaard's potential relevance today, with an eye towards the future.

Chapter 5: Turning Kierkegaard's Thought Towards Itself: A Critique of Kierkegaard's Thought, and a Possible Defence

There is no past which we ought to long to have back, there is only an eternally New which is formed from the expanded elements of what is past, and true longing must always be productive, must create a new Better.

Goethe

Kierkegaard's reconceptualization of time and eternity, or the eternal, and the destabilizing effect it potentially entails, has come to the fore in my analysis of Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel. This chapter will examine a similar destabilizing effect that time and the eternal may have on Kierkegaard's own thought. Careful consideration of the potential implications of the absolutely eternal may help us to understand his work in a way that makes sense of the widely differing understandings of his work, including many problematic interpretations of his work. Such consideration may however *also* aid in interpreting Kierkegaard in a way that his work might at the same time become more relevant today. In this chapter, three main points of critique of Kierkegaard's own work will be considered. In each case, the ambiguity of the eternal will be brought to light, as both permitting such problematic interpretations, but also at the same time potentially opening up the space for interpretation that may allow Kierkegaard's thought to become more relevant in a globalized and pluralistic world, and able to be fluidly engaged in dialogue with certain strands of contemporary thought.

The first point of critique concerns the status of the individual in Kierkegaard's work. As will have become evident, Kierkegaard emphasizes the individual, reinstating its freedom and agency. Only the individual, as we have seen, can be in a relationship with the Absolute, not universal *Geist*, as Hegel suggests. In addition, the self is always already concrete before it may perceive itself to be abstracted, or conceived to be subsumed under a general System. However, as much as Kierkegaard makes the individual concrete again, his notion of the individual, in particular the religious individual, has been critiqued. Kierkegaard may be seen as possibly *over*emphasizing the individual, allowing the religious individual to slip back into isolated existence. While Kierkegaard's *ethical* individual recognizes the significance of openness, the religious individual is characterized by silence, inwardness, and a *suspension of the ethical*. Thus Kierkegaard's individual has been critiqued, in particular by earlier commentators, for

isolating the individual (Beabout & Frazier, 2000:77; Buben, 2013:318). This chapter will examine the extent and severity of this problematic possibility, whist keeping in mind the double role the eternal plays in this matter.

Secondly, Kierkegaard has been perceived as falling back into an irrational account of Christianity, as a result of his rejection of Reason. This is problematic, for, if Christianity is irrational, question of relativism arises. However, as we have already seen, Kierkegaard's rejection of reason is a matter of complexity. We have also seen that reason is 'sublated' by Kierkegaard's appropriation of Hegel's dialectic. These points will be further elaborated in this chapter. It will come to the fore that faith is not simply irrational, but rather that it carries its own kind of 'sense' or *gnosis* (religious knowing). This question will be addressed this time by specifically bringing the aspect of temporality into focus, again highlighting the ambivalent status of the eternal. The nature of faith will come to light in this section, as a tension between objective knowledge and the Unknown, which does not necessarily imply a rejection of reason, but rather shows the exact role of the universal within Kierkegaard's thought.

Our third concern has to do with the epistemological status of Kierkegaard's understanding of Christianity. Building on the second critique, the problem of relativism is here given specific attention. Given that Kierkegaard rejects an understanding that Christianity may be known objectively, either logically or historically, and instead embraces Christianity as a subjective experience, one may wonder whether Kierkegaard falls back into relativism, where any truth may be believed so long as it is held with subjective passion. There is another concern, however, that lies in antithesis to the problem of relativism, that is, Kierkegaard seems to privilege Christianity to the possible exclusion of other religions or potentially equally 'authentic' modes of existing. Although Kierkegaard's 'subjectivity is truth' tends to undermine any claim to absolutism, any such privileging of Christianity is still problematic. His dictum 'subjectivity is truth' is a complex one, but, as I shall argue, light may be shed on this matter if we carefully consider the role of time and eternity in Kierkegaard's work.

Within Kierkegaard's work as a whole, the concepts of irony, repetition, and the paradox play a dynamic role. Furthermore, Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works may be viewed as intrinsically allowing the space for (re)interpretation, and to a large extent Kierkegaard undermines the privileged status of the objective interpreter (Spanos, 1993:75). Of course, attention will be paid in particular to the destabilizing effect of Kierkegaard's absolute eternal, and the absolute paradox. As it will be explained below, the absolute paradox plays a double role, and as such tends to imply a curious ambivalence, which may well explain the many

varied interpretations of Kierkegaard's philosophy. Finally, it will be argued that this dynamism may indeed be successful in granting Kierkegaard's philosophy the potential flexibility necessary to be relevant in an increasingly globalised world. It may be noted that this chapter brings to light that which Kierkegaard does not explicitly express but which is a possibility that his writing allows. It must be kept in mind that Kierkegaard was situated within a particular historical context as a thinker, and that it is thus possible that this potentiality remained hidden from Kierkegaard himself. Again, in line with a hermeneutic approach to Kierkegaard, Kierkegaard's original intentions matter less than a responsible and relevant interpretation for today.

5.1 A 'Double Reflection'

The Paradox has already been discussed throughout this dissertation, as well as the status of the eternal *qua* absolutely eternal. This, as we saw in Chapter 4, lies at the heart of Kierkegaard's move away from the Hegelian dialectic such that, ironically, Hegel's thought may indeed be interpreted as being not atemporal enough. Some further implications of the absolute paradox as consisting of the perfect synthesis of the contradicting elements of time and the eternal will now be drawn out. As Kierkegaard expresses in the voice of both Climacus (*PF*, 39-43) and Anti-Climacus (*TC*, 79-144), the intellect is *offended* by the idea of the absolute paradox. Christianity requires one to "believe against understanding" (*CUP*, 384) and is indeed incomprehensible to Reason: "The supreme paradox of all thought is the attempt to discover something that thought cannot think" (*PF*, 29). Anti-Climacus (*TC*, 85) asserts: "The God-Man is the paradox, absolutely the paradox; hence it is quite clear that the understanding must come to a standstill before it," and as de Silentio (*FT*, 74) says, with the paradox that is faith, "faith begins where thought leaves off". Climacus (*PF*, 35) writes:

> What then is the Unknown? It is the limit to which the Reason repeatedly comes, and in so far, substituting a static form of conception for the dynamic, it is the different, the absolutely different. But because it is absolutely different, there is no mark by which it could be distinguished. When qualified as absolutely different it seems on the verge of disclosure, but this is not the case; for the Reason cannot even conceive an absolute unlikeness.

Thus the Paradox presents a challenge to the human mind; it does not fit into any logical categories. As Garelick (1965:28) explains: "This Paradox is the ultimate challenge to the

intellect, for all attempts to understand it must conform to the laws of judgment and discourse: identity, contradiction, and excluded middle." The Paradox implies that it is both human and not-human (God) at the same time, violating these laws of logic. The God-Man does not make sense in terms of the (Aristotelian) logic of A=A, where A≠B. One thing cannot be both itself and something else at the same time. For Kierkegaard, *only God* can fully comprehend the Paradox that is the perfect synthesis of time and the eternal. The God-Man also defies Hegelian reason whereby the Absolute stands always in relation to the temporal, and which reflect and co-establish each another. As it has been established, Kierkegaard's individual stands in a radically non-reciprocal relation to God, or the Eternal.

Kierkegaard's portrayal of the eternal *qua* absolutely eternal thus in a sense makes the Paradox *ineffable*, and the leap of faith seems to be *without sense or reason*. Crites (1993:227) notes that, "We futilely grasp at the eternal with metaphors, but these too are dependent upon spatiotemporal conditions which the eternal negates." God can only be pointed towards in a symbolic or metaphorical way; we see but 'through a glass, darkly'.[44] Kierkegaard furthermore emphasises the *transcendence* – a term which many postmodern thinkers tend to view with suspicion – of repetition, remarking that "modern philosophy makes no movement, generally it only makes a fuss, and what movement it makes is always within immanence, whereas repetition is always a transcendence" (*R*, 93). Christianity "breaks with immanence and makes the fact of existing the absolute contradiction, not within immanence but against immanence" (*CUP*, 507). Compared to Kierkegaard's ethical sphere which is characterised by obligatory openness and universality, the religious sphere is marked by silence, isolation, and what Anti-Climacus in *Fear and Trembling* calls a 'suspension of the ethical.'

Regarding the religious individual, Johannes de Silentio (*FT*, 110) says, "Humanly speaking he is mad, and cannot make himself understood by any one." It is thus tempting and in part correct to think that, since only the individual can be in a relationship with the Paradox and is explicitly higher than the universal, the leap of faith radically isolates the individual from society/community. It is furthermore *all too easy* to understand Kierkegaard's religious individual as abstracted from being in the world and being with others. It is also all too easy to read Kierkegaard thought as espousing an irrational view of Christianity, with the corollary that any nonsensical belief may be held, so long as it is held with subjective passion.

[44] "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." I Corinthians 13:12

I propose, however, that the Paradox is what may, ironically, at the same time *permit* such interpretations to be circumnavigated. Mirroring Kierkegaard's thematic, I borrow and appropriate his concept of 'double reflection' to develop my thesis. Kierkegaard's 'double reflection' refers to the paradoxical task whereby through the act of thinking, one partakes of the universal, but in appropriating this thought, one becomes more inward, and more concrete (*CUP*, 68). In our case, through reflecting on Kierkegaard's thought, we at the same time actively allow his thought to be dismantled, allowing it to become (even) more concrete. Kierkegaard's absolutely eternal may thus be observed to play a double role. Where on the one hand Kierkegaard notes that the Paradox is indeed incomprehensible to Reason, emphasising the transcendence of the religious individual above the universal, on the other hand, given his emphasis of the eternal, or perhaps *because* of this emphasis, Kierkegaard's individual is *thrown back on itself* as an imperfect synthesis of time and the eternal. Anti-Climacus (*TC*, 126) asserts the value of confronting the self with contradiction:

> A contradiction placed directly in front of a man – if only one can get him to look upon it – is a mirror; while he is judging, what dwells within him must be revealed. It is a riddle, but while he is guessing, what dwells within him is revealed by how he guesses. The contradiction puts before him a choice, and while he is choosing, he himself is revealed.

This may be seen to correspond with Kierkegaard's indirect communication, which works to reflect the self back to itself as honestly as the self will allow. The self, confronted with the contradiction of time and the eternal, is thus further reflected towards itself as ultimately *finite and temporal* in relation to the absolute paradox. As Grøn (2013:281) notes, "To be situated '*in time*' is to be 'lodged in existence' in such a way that it is impossible to take oneself back into eternity... But this means that transcendence as a *human* movement beyond time is broken off." It is the radical nature of the Paradox that has the effect of allowing the individual to be thrown back upon itself as ultimately temporal, *without*, however, implying that Kierkegaard's thought falls back into immanence. I propose that an irrational *element* of the Paradox cannot be denied, and furthermore plays an important role in opening up Kierkegaard's dialectic. However, the self is, in the final analysis, temporal and finite, able to 'transcend' itself, but only to a limited, degree, in relation to the absolutely transcendent, eternal.

Kierkegaard's notion of absurdity further allows us to bring the temporality of human beings to light. The Paradox and the absurd are intimately related concepts, and must be carefully delineated. Like the Paradox, absurdity is a complex notion that is easily misunderstood. The

Paradox is ultimately unknowable and incomprehensible, yet the Christian constantly strives towards it. Consequently, one is *absurdly* in a personal relationship with God. This is to say that *despite* the supposedly irrationality of the finite human being in a relation to the Paradox, the individual is paradoxically able to exist in a relationship with the absolute paradox. Christianity makes practical sense to the Christian, although Reason, particularly Hegelian Reason, struggles to comprehend or account for this absolute divide. The individual is also able to rise absurdly higher than society. In this case it is not that the individual is logically higher than the universal, but that *despite* the universal status of society, the individual is able to rise above the universal. As discussed in Chapter 3, Abraham was commanded to do something that was *ethically* (universally) wrong. However, God stands above all humanly constructed morals and commands, and the individual stands in a direct relation to God. Thus Abraham believed by virtue of the absurd. The absurd elevation of the individual is possible by virtue of the miracle of the Incarnation. The suspension of the individual above the universal does not imply a sound and stable abstraction of the individual from its community, but rather an unstable and *tremulous* elevation; every moment, as Malesic (2007:217) astutely notes, "potentially contains Abraham's guilt at least as much as his redemption."

It is furthermore potentially problematic that Kierkegaard's religious stage seems like a stable mode of being. This is quite possibly due to the portrayal of Christianity by the very religious pseudonymous author Anti-Climacus, who describes the leap of faith as, almost effortless, at least by the knight of faith. To repeat a fragment quoted in Chapter 3,

> The knights of infinite resignation are dancers and have elevation. They make the upward movement and fall down again… To be able to fall in such a way as to appear at once standing and walking, to be able to transform the leap into a normal gait, to be able to express perfectly the sublime in terms of the pedestrian – only the knight can do this – and this is the single miracle (*FT*, 53).

However, as we know, such views cannot be contributed to Kierkegaard himself given his pseudonymous authorship, and moreover, Kierkegaard himself never described himself as a Christian, but rather always "becoming a Christian" (Lowrie, 1965:125). Indeed, Kierkegaard critiques what Christendom had become, saying in the persona of Anti-Climacus himself that "*established* Christendom simply *is*, does not become" (*TC*, 206). Kierkegaard himself wrestled with Christianity for most of his life, struggling to ascertain what God really wanted of him, and it was only later in his life that he wrote *The Point of View* which clarified his own intentions behind the pseudonymous works. The personal dialectic has *no end*, or at least, there

is always the *possibility* of becoming more, and a human being must strive to become ever higher – *semper excelsius*. It is in this sense that Kierkegaard's individual does not fall back into immanence. The transcendence that the individual experiences is not a static, atemporal, transcendence, and the transcendence that an individual may achieve is only relatively, and not absolutely, transcendent. Though the individual might strive to attain a proper "equilibrium" (Taylor, 1975a:7), it is the nature of life to exhibit peaks and dips in its characterisation as temporal. The development of the individual in inwardness is unambiguously qualitative and experiential, and the relationship of the finite human being with the infinite, absolutely eternal God always contains the possibility of being deepened and strengthened. To enter into a relationship with God is surely the task of a lifetime.

5.2 The Problem of Kierkegaard's Individual

As it has been noted, Kierkegaard's individual, particularly the religious individual, has been critiqued as being isolated from its social context. More contemporary philosophers have recognized the ethical implications of the isolated self; that ethical interaction should imply the possibility of openness and communication between two or more selves. Heidegger was the first to specifically expound the idea of '*Mitsein*,' ('being-with'), and more relevant to our discussion, *Mitda-sein* (the being-with of more than one *Da-sein*), suggesting that *Da-sein* shares a primordial and ontological relationship with others whom he or she encounters in their shared experience of being-in-the-world. Heidegger's phenomenological existentialism implies that we are always already directed towards others, and thus his ontology of the self resists solipsism or abstraction of the self. Heidegger has indeed critiqued Kierkegaard's notion of subjectivity, suggesting that Kierkegaard's philosophy was confined to the '*existentiell*' rather than being 'existential,' suggesting that Kierkegaard never managed to go beyond the purely subjective. [45] Accordingly, Kierkegaard's analysis is limited to one mode of being, that of subjective existence, not yet addressing the ontological question of Being as such (West, 1996:99). For Heidegger, it is part of the very nature of human existence to be in relation to the other.

[45] Heidegger writes in *Being and Time*: "Kierkegaard saw the *existentiell* phenomenon of the Moment in the most penetrating way, which does not mean that he was also as successful in the existential interpretation of it. He gets stuck in the vulgar concept of time and defines the Moment with the help of the now and eternity" (Heidegger, 1996:412 n. 3). Significantly, we may observe that the question of the individual in its relation to the world and to others is intrinsically linked to the notion of time.

Emmanuel Levinas and especially Jean-Luc Nancy radically extend Heidegger's understanding of *Mitda-sein*, taking further the notion that one is always already with the other (or Other, in the case of Levinas). This call for radical responsibility towards the Other for Levinas, and the crucial responsibility to think *Mitda-sein* further, for Nancy, have little doubt arisen from the imperative to think about matters concerning plurality on a globalized plane. With this in mind, we may see that Kierkegaard's neglect, or at the very least lack of emphasis, of the individual's relation to the other is a matter of no trivial import. Certainly, one must consider that it is not very surprising that Kierkegaard did not take, or could not have taken, his thought to such a radical extent in light of the inevitable limits of his own historical horizons. However, regardless of whether he could have or should have taken the notion of the other into more serious consideration, his thought could surely benefit by being supplemented by an analysis which supports a stronger inclusion of the other.

Although more contemporary readings of Kierkegaard tend to emphasise his isolation of the individual from others as merely *part* of becoming more of a self, many earlier commentators see Kierkegaard as proposing a tenuous isolation of the individual. Mark C. Taylor (1975a) sees Kierkegaard as espousing a radical individualism, and Martin Buber (1947) and Levinas (1979) see Kierkegaard as bestowing insufficient weight upon the other. There are indeed passages in Kierkegaard's texts themselves that support the view of an isolated self. For instance, Climacus asserts, "To be a particular individual is world-historically absolutely nothing, infinitely nothing – and yet, this is the only true and highest significance of a human being, so much higher as to make every other significance illusory" (*CUP*, 134). In his *Journals* Kierkegaard himself says, "As soon as men become indolent and seek indulgence, they promptly escape into sociality... there is only one ideal, and it is intended for the single individual, not for companies and fraternities. We think that by attaching ourselves to society we develop a higher perfection – that is a nice idea, but no, it is retrogression!" (in Beabout & Frazier, 2000:77). Another passage written by Climacus evidences that not *all* others are excluded: "Religiousness B is discriminative, selective, and polemical: only upon a definite condition do I become blessed, and as I absolutely bind myself this condition, so do I exclude every other man who does not thus bind himself" (ibid., 516). [46] However, even if the problem

[46] Both the Hong and Hong (Kierkegaard, 1992: 582) and the Hannay (Kierkegaard, 2009: 489) translations of the *Postscript* use the term 'isolating,' and we can see that Swenson uses the term 'discriminative' (*CUP*, 516). Further, Hong and Hong use the term 'separating,' Hannay uses 'singling out', and Swenson uses 'selective.' Whatever the translation, the message is similar: I become singular in relation to the absolute, and others are kept at a distance.

of radical isolation in Kierkegaard is mitigated by this observation, the task of the individual is still problematically *divisive*, if one thinks that anyone who is not Christian should be excluded.

As we have seen in Chapter 4, Kierkegaard arguably appropriates Hegel's speculative philosophy and takes it further. We may note with interest that whereas Hegel is well known for his assessment of the self's encounter of the other – where for Hegel the self becomes a self explicitly in *relation* to the other – in contrast, Kierkegaard seems to slip back into an isolated view of the self. Has Kierkegaard emphasized the individual to such an extent that it falls back into abstracted and isolated existence, only in a different sense? This would be puzzling, for Kierkegaard has critiqued Hegel for being abstract, so much so that according to Kierkegaard's philosophy Hegel does not, properly speaking, have an ethics. In Kierkegaard's defense, one might consider that the indirect works are intended to jolt the reader out of one's ease; thus Kierkegaard makes some deliberately exaggerated claims that the self must withdraw from others. Even so, any such zealous claims are not without potential risk of being misunderstood. It will become apparent that while I do think that Kierkegaard's emphasis of the individual is potentially problematic, I do not think it *necessarily* problematic. In this section I shall argue that the space for a more dynamic reading of Kierkegaard's thought is possible, owing to a consideration of the role of time and eternity in Kierkegaard's thought.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the human being is essentially temporal, the individual being an imperfect synthesis of successive time and eternity in time. In a revealing passage Climacus (*CUP*, 76) notes: "The existing subject is eternal, but qua existing temporal. The elusiveness of the infinite now expresses itself through the possibility of death at any moment. All positive security is thus rendered suspect." It is true that the individual rises above the ethical sphere in a transcendent movement of religious repetition, but it is problematic that Kierkegaard's emphasis on such transcendence potentially obscures the fact that the human being is ultimately rooted in temporal, *ethical* existence. Thus, this possibility must be actively brought to light, drawing on the 'double reflection' proposed in the above section.

Although human beings consist as a synthesis of time and eternity, this synthesis is clearly different to that of the absolute paradox. Human beings, as we know, can only *strive* to synthesise the elements of time and eternity. In relation to the Paradox, the individual is *thrown back upon itself in its temporal and imperfect existence*. Thus while Kierkegaard's eternal at first glance might appear to resemble Kant's noumenal realm which "makes room for faith" (Kant, 1998:Bxxx), Kierkegaard does not (re)turn to a Kantian metaphysics. Freedom relates, for Kierkegaard, to actuality, a synthesis of possibility and necessity, emphasising the self as

comprising *both* body and soul. Kierkegaard locates freedom not in the metaphysical *transcendence* of the physical as such but rather the *existential experience* of bringing the oppositions of body and soul, finite and infinite, temporal and eternal, into tension. Thus, Kierkegaard establishes this experience of subjectivity as the primary locus of freedom.

It may presently aid us to discern the nature of the relationship between Kierkegaard's ethical and religious stages. Kierkegaard's 'suspension of the ethical' implies a peculiar relationship between the ethical and the religious spheres. This relationship is not explicitly clear, but there are hints that help to explain its nature. Kierkegaard notes a qualitative leap of the individual from the aesthetic to the ethical sphere, and a particularly prominent leap from the ethical to the religious sphere. Religiousness B is a *paradoxical* relationship of the individual with the absolute, and necessitates a break with immanence and reason. However, there is an implication that the religious self, in the transcendent movement of repetition, neither neglects nor forgets the ethical sphere; the ethical sphere is merely *suspended*, not abandoned. Climacus (*CUP*, 347) notes that: "As for the religious, it is an essential requirement that it should have passed through the ethical." By properly passing through the ethical one does not simply leap away from the ethical, but 'takes up' certain traits of the ethical sphere within the religious. The religious sphere does not discard the ethical but preserves it in suspending it, keeping it as a point of reference. The 'either/or' choice between the aesthetic and ethical spheres, and more prominently between the ethical and religious spheres, may *seem* to imply a logical dichotomy. However, it is rather a *qualitative distinction* between the ethical and religious spheres that requires a decision, existentially experienced and consciously reiterated through time, that expresses the 'either/or' choice. This relation is similar to that between the aesthetic and ethical sphere, since the ethical sphere also requires a constant renewal of decision, but at the religious stage, this is more pronounced, and ever more difficult, since one strives to maintain an absurd relationship with the absolute paradox.

In addition to the above proposed 'double reflection,' we may note in Kierkegaard's works that, again *indirectly implied*, the isolation of the individual is undermined by his or her engagement with others, i.e. even regarding the content of Kierkegaard's work, the isolation of the individual 'founders' on the interest of its concrete engagement with others. Kierkegaard, or rather Anti-Climacus (*FT*, 36), recognises that not everyone can achieve the level of faith that Abraham does, Abraham being the example *par excellence* of faith. "For only a man of this kind is submitted to such a test: but where is his like to be found?" (ibid.) With the case of Abraham, Kierkegaard is careful to stress Abraham's fierce love for Isaac. To be a religious

hero is difficult, and suffering is essential to becoming religious. As Johannes de Silentio (*FT*, 40) says: "I cannot perform the movement of faith, I cannot close my eyes and confidently plunge into the absurd," and names himself a *tragic hero* (ibid., 42). If he had been in the position of Abraham, he would have done it all, but would know that all joy would be lost. His resignation, he admits, would simply be the "surrogate of faith" (ibid., 43). "Resignation does not imply faith, for what I obtain in resignation is my eternal consciousness, and this is *a purely philosophical movement* which I have the courage to make whenever it is demanded of me" (*FT*, 65, my emphasis).

The sheer torment and dread Abraham experienced helps resist any fanatical or irresponsible appropriation of the suspension of the ethical. Abraham believes by virtue of the *absurd*. Dread arises as a result of the very tension between the ethical and the religious:

> The ethical expression of Abraham's action is that he wished to murder Isaac: the religious expression is that he wished to sacrifice him, and it is precisely here, in the contradiction of the two expressions of his desire, that lies dread, which may well rob one of one's sleep; and yet Abraham is not Abraham without his dread (ibid., 34).

Indeed, were Abraham to lose his dread, while still remaining silent, he might slip back into the aesthetic sphere, in the form of the demoniacal (for at the level of the aesthetic, silence characterises the demoniacal). If Kierkegaard meant to reassert the difficulty of Christianity, he has surely succeeded.[47] If Abraham has difficulty communicating with anyone else about his inner dilemma, he certainly does not show an *abstract* relation to others. It is *through* Abraham's 'repetition,' that he becomes a more concrete self. Paradoxically, the self must (*temporarily*) become isolated in order to establish a deeper ethical relation with others. The silence that the individual keeps is not a semantic impossibility of communication, but rather effects a pragmatic difficultly of conveying that which would compromise a higher *telos*, that of responsibility before God, compared to that of our fellow human beings. Still, it is again important to note that this does not mean that relative to God, our relation to human beings is unimportant, but paradoxically, one becomes *still more responsible* towards others through reasserting love as fundamental to both ethics and religion. There is risk in following the established Church or relevant authorities, which indeed constitutes a risk for the *eternal*

[47] As Kierkegaard (1946:168) himself expresses, "In the New Testament, according to Christ's own teaching, to be a Christian is, humanly speaking, sheer anguish, an anguish in comparison with which all other human sufferings are hardly more than child's-play."

dimension of the self. One is responsible, by extension, not to lead others astray, but instead the Christian is concerned for the eternal well-being of another.

5.3 Between Fideism and Rationalism: The Tension of Faith

Thinkers such as Hannay, Pojman, and Garelick, suggest that Kierkegaard supports an irrational account of Christianity, Kaufmann claiming that Kierkegaard's opposition to Hegelian metaphysics places him in a disposition of falling into the opposite trap, that of subscribing to fideism. Walter Kaufman (1975:18) states that: "Kierkegaard rashly renounced clear and distinct thinking altogether," and Robert C. Solomon (1988:90-91) notes that Kierkegaard "rejected the idea of any larger community, which he castigated as 'the public.' His ethics was wholly asocial, a matter only of one's inner integrity." Solomon writes further: "A person's true self... is an isolated individual human being, alone with his or her feelings, and with the awesome necessity of choosing, without rational guidance, what sort of being one is to be (ibid.)." As we have seen from some of the quotes from Kierkegaard himself presented in Section 5.2, there is enough evidence to support an interpretation of Kierkegaard that renders an isolated view of his (religious) self that rises above the universality of ethics and reason. Specifically, it is the nature of the transcendent that permits such interpretations to arise.

Although Hegel's reconciliation of faith and reason is problematic, as Kierkegaard argues, in the sense that faith cannot be adequately explained by reason, the opposite tendency, i.e. to radically separate faith and reason is problematic in its own way. To reassert the binary opposition between faith and reason implies that faith is *irrational*, with the problematic consequence of relativism. As long as faith is irrational, there is no reason to assume that the Christian belief may be justified over believing *any nonsense*, as long as it is held with passion and sincerity. Furthermore, to divorce faith and reason implies the incompatibility of logic and faith, impeding any potentially illuminating dialogue between faith and reason.

Other commentators, however, argue that Christianity is not irrational for Kierkegaard. Evans (1989:2008) has argued for a peaceful relation between reason and faith in Kierkegaard, contending that Kierkegaard does not support a destruction of reason, but rather that reason has its *limits*. Everhardt (1982) in addition argues that Kierkegaard's work reveals a "plea for a new method of communication rather than an argument for solipsism." It is my present aim to provide further reason to think that Kierkegaard does not jettison reason, by specifically engaging with the notions of time and the eternal. As we have already noted in Section 5.2, the

individual falls back onto itself, rendering the individual as *both* body and soul, being essentially finite in relation to the absolute paradox. As we saw, to rise above the universal does not imply a stable or static elevation, but is rather an unstable and tremulous one, possible by virtue of the absurd. The aspect of time in relation to reason shall be given further attention.

As we have noted before, Kierkegaard's rejection of reason is *complex*, being never a simple rejection of logic and reason. To recapitulate, Kierkegaard's *own* employment of critical and dialectical means to undermine Hegel's prominent role of Reason, implies that Kierkegaard engages with Hegel at a *philosophical* level. Kierkegaard does not simply reject Hegel's dialectic, but arguably, positively *appropriates* it. In light of some of these arguments, the possibility is opened up whereby it may be suggested that Kierkegaard's dialectic is neither unlike Hegel's *Aufhebung, nor* simply the opposite, i.e. a radical leap into the transcendent or unknown. As explained in Chapter 4, Hegel's dialectic itself is taken up and in a sense 'sublated.' Thought is thus arguably not made redundant by Kierkegaard's dialectic but is rather *incorporated and transformed* by it. I here wish to extend the argument that Kierkegaard is not to be understood as supporting a brand of fideism, but rather, that reason itself may be said to be (re)defined within a new context – not as absolute or metaphysical, but as an important aspect of deep reflection and decision-making. We might assert that a *renewed* kind of 'reason,' as opposed to 'Reason' is engendered, which is better suited to the everyday experience of the individual. My thinking is in line with Edwards (1971:89), who draws from Kierkegaard's *Journals*:

> Kierkegaard did indeed concede that theological claims cannot be justified by the kind of proof that is found in Aquinas and Descartes, but denied that 'reflection inevitably destroys Christianity and is its natural enemy'. There is such a thing as 'a god-fearing reflection' which, so far from destroying Christianity, 'once more brings the springs of Christianity into play.'

Thus, although Kierkegaard's view of Christianity is not logical in either the Aristotelian or Hegelian sense, I do not think he simply jettisons reason in favour of fideism. My thesis is in agreement with Westphal (1998:115) when she says that faith is not "inherently mad or absurd or paradoxical or contradictory, but only that it is at odds with this [Hegelian] version of human reason (and possibly others as well)." It may however be noted that Kierkegaard, in making God eternal and the distance between God and human beings absolute, comes *closer* to the Aristotelian logic than Hegelian logic. For contradictions may in fact, for Aristotle, be found in things themselves *but not in thought*, as Hegel supposes. Kierkegaard, as we saw with

McCumber, may be said to radicalise Hegel's dialectic, critiquing Hegel's logic as not *temporal enough*. Thus, the future becomes radically unknown. In moving Hegelian logic well out of the domain of human understanding, Kierkegaard does not fall back into Aristotelian logic, however, but rather goes beyond both in an affirmation of lived experience. Kierkegaard essentially overturns, inverts, and repeats but differs from Hegel's dialectic. Kierkegaard's radicalisation of logic causes reason to 'tremble' and collapse, and is raised up into a concrete dialectic of the self. Reason as such becomes *truly historical*, bound by the contingencies of temporality; although Reason 'strives'[48] to be atemporal, it is not atemporal *as such*. Again, Kierkegaard's absolute paradox assures that the eternal is absolutely eternal and atemporal, and the s*elf falls back on itself as bounded by temporality and finitude*. Reason as such plays an important role, but with the case of human beings, it has *limitations*. To move forward from out of the mire of indecision in which one may find oneself, one must pull oneself away from the lure of abstract speculation. Attempting to rationalise or analyse the process of becoming new, may only hinder the process. Christianity is not something to be understood at a *purely* intellectual level, but rather primarily to be experienced with a profound sense of awe. Reason and speculation can only take one so far; then decisiveness must come into play. Intellect is just *one aspect* of being a human being; it does not constitute the full potential experience of being human, but the experience that Kierkegaard alludes to occurs with the person's whole being. The point is precisely that reason, and the 'general' (the universal) had come to take priority to the detriment of the individual self, and thus the individual self must be (re)acquainted with a sense of freedom and agency.

In addition to the above analysis that draws on the ambivalence or double reflection of the eternal in Kierkegaard's work, we may add that, indirectly, Kierkegaard may be observed to support a view of Christianity that is not simply irrational. Christianity makes *sense* to the believing Christian. As Kierkegaard (1946:219) says, "True worship of God consists quite simply in doing God's will." The acceptance of the Paradox, and the leap of faith, are to be existentially experienced. The Mysteries of Christianity are, perhaps ironically, not purely ineffable or abstract, but are concretely experienced. Christianity is not some obscure doctrine; in fact, Kierkegaard emphasises that Christianity may be adopted by anyone: "Faith is a miracle, yet no one is excluded from it; for passion is common to all men, and faith is a passion"

[48] The words 'strive' and 'tremble' are used loosely here, even ironically; only the human being is capable of striving to make oneself whole. If the word 'strive' is used to describe an abstract System, then it can only be a deliberately imposed anthropomorphic description. It is always useful to note that the System was developed, as Kierkegaard stresses, by a finite and temporal human being.

(*FT*, 96).[49] Further, as Anti-Climacus (*TC*, 125) notes, the Paradox is a contradiction, "Yet in order that this may not result in a contradiction which exists for no one or does not exist for everyone (as when a mystification succeeds to well that its effect is null), some factor must be present to draw attention to it," which he asserts is the miracle and direct communication regarding the Paradox (ibid.). As a concrete practice, Christianity is *difficult* but not impracticable. Faith may indeed be seen as the challenging *tension* between the relative objectivity of history and scripture, and the aspect of irrationality that Christianity implies – believing despite the fact that the existence of God cannot be proven. We may absurdly come to *better* 'know' God through an intimate relationship with him according to Christianity. Reason bulks at the contradictory nature of the God-Man, and the heart bulks at the possibility that an eternal God may take an interest in human beings, yet by virtue of the absurd, the human being may enter into a personal relationship with God. Kierkegaard is again possibly implying an inversion: ironically, from the perspective of the Christian, Hegel's prioritization of philosophy over the religious is 'absurd.' As we have seen, language is the medium most suited to the ethical sphere, yet it is not that Christianity cannot be communicated at all, it is just that the Paradox *resists* being directly communicated given its personal nature. Although the God-Man may be incomprehensible and resist being sublated by Reason, again Christianity is itself not irrational *per se*, but is a set of beliefs that one may hold with passion *despite* one not being able to comprehend the Paradox intellectually (for Christianity is not primarily an intellectual matter).

While reason and history may indeed give us grounds for belief, the most it can give is *probability*, which is *approximation* (Edwards, 1971:91). This kind of knowledge is empirical, indirect, and is the closest that human beings may come to a collective, agreed-upon knowledge of the world. The truth that science or logic aims for is as atemporal as possible. Yet even such truths, as we have seen, are produced within a particular historical context, by fallible human beings. But for the Christian, probability is not enough where it comes to my eternal happiness. The Christian wants certainty. However, this kind of certainty is again not empirical, but subjective (yet not non-sensical). For Kierkegaard, the truth of Christianity is best *appropriated* (in contrast to approximation) by the individual, that is, the evidence of Christianity considered and weighed, arguments about the truth of Christianity may either be accepted or rejected on a personal level, such that one becomes more inward through contemplation of the Paradox. Faith

[49] At least, any person possessing the basic condition of "a personal consciousness of sin and of oneself as a sinner" (Kierkegaard, 1946:213); thus one cannot become a Christian as a child. Accordingly, Kierkegaard contests the empty ritual of infant baptism (ibid., 217), and indeed even adolescent confirmation (ibid., 218).

again captures the tension between historical facts and subjective choice. And this is precisely the point: Christianity must be freely chosen by the individual, as constituting a personal relationship between the individual and God, integrated into one's own worldview. Yet, again, the individual, even whilst striving to come into a 'direct' or at least unmediated relationship with God, understands Christianity *from a particular point of view*. Although the experience of being, or rather becoming, a Christian, is highly subjective, we collectively understand the 'dogmatic' aspects of Christianity, the scriptures that inform our view of what it means to be a Christian, and the life of God incarnate.

Closely related to the above, Kierkegaard uses the vocabulary of the 'sacred' and the 'profane.' On the one hand, we have historical knowledge or objective knowledge, which refers to knowledge gained through reason. Such 'profane' knowledge may be verified or disputed among communities of individuals. On the other hand, 'sacred' knowledge is that which is true for the individual, and cannot be objectively proven or disproven. Christianity, for Kierkegaard, falls under the latter category. "To search for or demand merely objective knowledge of God is to miss the fact that God is a subject, a personal agent with definite redemptive purposes for humans" (Moser & McCreary, 2010:133). Objective knowledge of God eludes the understanding, but faith is the passionate embrace of that which cannot be known by purely objective means. But this kind of knowledge, in line with the above arguments, is again not necessarily *irrational* in contrast to rational knowledge, but may have its own kind of 'reason.' Although objective knowledge is unsuitable for Christianity, the individual may experience a different kind of certainty, a type of *gnosis*.

One of Kierkegaard's most well-known ideas is that 'truth is subjectivity,' and here we encounter one of Kierkegaard's most difficult concepts, "so paradoxically attractive and so dangerous, for it is open to the crudest misconstructions" (Haecker, 1937:23). It must be reaffirmed that Kierkegaard does not undermine the fact that truth in the sciences can be found objectively. That 'truth is subjectivity' means that *Christianity* is misunderstood if one understands it merely objectively. It does not matter who or at what time in history an objective truth is verified, but for the Christian, my decision matters *now* and (possibly) for all eternity. Even if one had to have the good fortune of witnessing Christ in person, this "does not make such an eye-witness a disciple; which is apparent from the fact that this knowledge has merely historical significance for him" (*PF*, 48). Even an original witness of the life of Christ must contend with the fact that a human being claimed to be God. In Kierkegaard's presentation of Christianity, contra Hegel and his Hegelian contemporaries, no collective salvation is possible;

God does not relate to human beings *en masse* but individually. The relationship between the individual and God is essentially unmediated and occurs privately between the individual and God.

Faith may be said to be the self-reflective tremulous stance between the certainty of eternal bliss, and uncertainty in terms of more tangible *a posteriori* knowledge. The term 'absurd certainty' aptly captures this tension. The absurd is an effect of God's ultimately unknowable nature in tension with the belief that God nevertheless manifested himself out of love in temporal and physical form. The Christian does not rest in the security that might be assured by reason or immediacy: "As soon as the religious suffering is eliminated, and the individual gains a sense of security so that he stands in relation only to fortune and misfortune, as is the case with the immediate consciousness, then this is a sign that he is an aesthetic personality who has by an error strayed into the religious sphere" (*CUP*, 406). Religious suffering is different to aesthetic pathos. For the aesthetic sphere, "by *the reality of the suffering is meant its persistence as essential for the pathetic relationship to an external happiness*" (ibid., 396). But religious suffering is an effect of the self becoming *inward*. Religious suffering is "precisely the consciousness of the contradiction" (ibid., 432), the discomfort of maintaining a 'tensed' self, one might say the 'growth pains' of a self that undertakes to develop itself. One must embrace the absurd in the movement of faith: "When Socrates believed that there was a God, he held fast to the objective uncertainty with the whole passion of his inwardness… Now it is otherwise. Instead of the objective uncertainty, there is here a certainty, namely, that objectively it is absurd; and this absurdity, held fast in the passion of inwardness, is faith" (ibid. 188).[50] In spite of suffering and despite the objective certainty that the doctrine of the God-Man is false, the Christian has faith (Garelick, 1965:31). Scripture and traditions also cannot be verified, nor do they justify faith in an absurdity. Nor can logic prove God's existence. The Paradox is an offense to both the heart and the head (ibid., 36). "Without risk, there is no faith. Faith is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncertainty" (*CUP*, 182). This is faith: "so as to remain out upon the deep, over seventy thousand fathoms of water, still preserving my faith" (ibid., 182); objective uncertainty lending itself to the cultivation of inwardness (ibid.). Climacus says: "If I take the uncertainty away – in order to get a still greater certainty – then I do not get a believer in his humility, in fear and trembling, but I get an aesthetic coxcomb, a devil of a fellow, who wishes,

[50] Miller (1997:437) in fact argues that this paragraph is the "pivot on which the whole *Postscript* turns." If Socratic faith is paradoxical, now it is *absolutely paradoxical*.

speaking loosely, to fraternize with God, but who, speaking precisely, stands in no relationship to God whatever" (ibid., 407).

It is necessary to remain in suffering, to penetrate even more deeply into his suffering (ibid., 397). But there is also joy: "The suffering has significance for an eternal happiness – *ergo*, I should be able to rejoice over my suffering… joy grounded in the consciousness that the suffering signifies the relationship" (ibid., 404). "If an existing individual, through knowing that this suffering means the relationship, were capable of elevating himself above the suffering, then he would also be able to transform his status from that of an existing individual to that of an eternal being; but this he will scarcely wish to attempt" (ibid., 405). Peace, or security, *can* be found in the *positive acknowledgement* of the tension of faith. This is joy in religious experience. But this takes courage, and does not annul the tension between uncertainty and the certainty of faith. As Lowrie (1965:206) shows, Kierkegaard himself only took an absolutely decisive leap at the age of thirty-nine, having given up any aesthetic projects and dedicated himself absolutely to God's service. Finally, Kierkegaard could accept that he could truly rest in God's forgiveness, and believed that God would finally help him triumph over his melancholy (ibid.). But dread and suffering are key to Christianity. One undergoes the process of suffering, negative tension, in the (positive) *process*, of *becoming* a Christian.

5.4 Between Relativism and Absolutism

The third and final concern I touch upon is closely related to the previous one. Because of the radical transcendence of God, the nature of God is ultimately unknown. How then, does one justify one's belief in the absolutely unknown? If Christianity is simply irrational, then surely one may believe in any kind of nonsense, if one believes it with sincerity. On the other hand, if we may say with some degree of objectivity that Christianity is the best way of existing, this potentially marks other ways of existing, including other religions, as inferior modes of existing. *Either* possibility is problematic. It will become clearer how Kierkegaard's philosophy may be relevant in a world of plural values and beliefs, *without succumbing to relativism*. Although Kierkegaard leans away from absolutism (one may just consider his dictum that truth is subjectivity), this does not mean that he necessarily falls back into relativism. On the other hand, nor does Kierkegaard claim any special objective status of Christianity, as it will become clear below.

Garelick (1965) suggests that it is unclear whether Climacus is arguing for Christianity as such, or for subjectivity, where Christianity is a *means* to becoming more subjective. It appears that as long as one is related to a belief subjectively, one may become more inward. The difference between the 'what' and the 'how' of subjectivity here becomes relevant, i.e. the content of one's faith in contrast with the integrity of one's faith. The content of one's faith depends on objectively-known history, whereas the integrity of one's faith relates to a sacred, personal history. Reflection may be directed "objectively to the truth, as an object to which the knower is related," or "directed subjectively to the nature of the individual's relationship" (*CUP*, 178). Climacus notes that while the pagan may have passion, he/she is not necessarily related to the truth. He inquires:

> If one who lives in the midst of Christendom goes up to the house of God, the house of the true God, with the true conception of God in his knowledge, and prays, but prays in a false spirit; and one who lives in an idolatrous community prays with the entire passion of the infinite, although his eyes rest upon the image of an idol: where is there most truth? (ibid., 179-180)

The former, says Climacus, enters a "never-ending approximation," while the other "fights for his immortality" by struggling with the uncertainty (ibid., 180), implying that believing with passion even in a pagan belief is possibly more meaningful than believing in the Truth without passion. But this may problematically imply that whatever (nonsense) you believe becomes truth for you, as long as you believe with passion.

However, we may note that Kierkegaard does distinguishes Christian absurdity from 'nonsense,' which no human being (at least in their right mind) can accept.

> Nonsense therefore he cannot believe against the understanding, for precisely the understanding will discern that it is nonsense and will prevent him from believing it; but he makes so much use of the understanding that he becomes aware of the incomprehensible, and then he holds to this, believing against the understanding.

Kierkegaard is not saying that one can be related to any kind of 'nonsense' as long as we relate to it with subjective passion. There is a difference between nonsense and the absurdity of the contradiction of the Paradox. The Paradox is a contradiction, and the most profound contradiction. In the case of the Christian, Climacus asserts: "The thing of being a Christian is not determined by the *what* of Christianity but by the *how* of the Christian. This *how* can only correspond with one thing, the absolute paradox" (ibid., 540). Socrates likewise presents a

contradiction, albeit not an absolute contradiction. Still, neither Religiousness A nor Religiousness B are to be considered *nonsense*. As we have seen, although the contradiction of Christianity does not make sense according to logic, it does make sense to the Christian who has sincerely appropriated the Christian doctrine for him/herself. It is not that the 'what' of Christianity is unimportant or irrelevant, only that it is *secondary* to the unmediated experience of being related to God. Scripture is at the core of Christianity, and indeed indicates *how* one might become closer to God. As we have seen, faith is this tension between the objective uncertainty of God and one's inward, subjective certainty of the truth of God. The individual is temporally situated, and thus inescapably interprets the scripture according to its own historical context. Thus, Kierkegaard cannot simply be said to subscribe to relativism.

However, it appears that Christianity is nevertheless privileged for Kierkegaard. The Christian paradox is preferred above Socrates's relative paradoxicalness. Although Kierkegaard's assertion that 'subjectivity is truth' resists absolutism, it is problematic that Christianity is possibly more true than other religions, and that this may possibly be shown by objective means. While Socrates did indeed believe in an eternity, his belief could not be considered *truly* paradoxical. Socrates could believe in an 'uncertain objectivity,' but he could not believe with the 'absurd certainty' of the Christian. Socrates believed in an eternity and life after death, which may be argued *philosophically*. The Christian, however, possesses the 'blessed certainty' of faith, but the Christian doctrine of the Paradox is appropriated and held fast in absurdity. Thus, while the passion of the Socrates may indeed be estimable, infinite passion is what characterises Religiousness B, so we may venture to say that it is *still better* that one believes with passion in the Christian God. There is a decisive division point in the *Postscript* according to Johannes Climacus, between Socrates's objective uncertainty and the Christian absurd certainty. Again, the distinguishing factor is the *punctuation of the eternal in successive time*.

To continue, Christianity, or Religiousness B, seems to allow the greatest inwardness or tensions of the self. Climacus argues: "When a man existentially expresses and has expressed for a longer time that he gives up and has given up everything for the sake of the relationship to the absolute *telos,* the circumstance that there are conditions has an absolute influence to develop in his passion the *greatest possible tension*" (*CUP*, 345, my emphasis). Being in a relationship with the God, the 'absolute *telos*,' is the highest level of achievable existence. Climacus's argument that Christianity is the highest form of inwardness, and thus one could say the highest subjective truth, is indeed convincing. There is hardly a greater contradiction

than that of the Paradox of the God-Man, and one can hardly exist in a more paradoxical state than in relation to the eternal.

In addition, the absolutely eternal for Kierkegaard is sometimes used synonymously with God, by which he specifically means the Christian God. Being a Christian seems to be an intrinsic part of Kierkegaard's notion of becoming a higher self. Kierkegaard's prioritization of Christianity may be supported by the following: "Faith is the highest passion in mankind. There are perhaps many men in every generation who never reach it, but no one goes further" (*FT*, 185). Climacus (*CUP*, 505 n.) says: "And faith belongs essentially in the sphere of the paradox-religious, as has constantly been asserted…; all other faith is only an analogy, which is no faith, an analogy, which may serve to call attention, but nothing more, and the understanding of which therefore is revocation." The concern is that Kierkegaard might (inadvertently) exclude other possible authentic ways of existing in favour of the Christian faith. Frazier (2004:443) notes that, "Perhaps the most that we can say on Kierkegaard's behalf, then, is that most persons can live poetically up to a point, on his account. Those who can embrace an explicitly Christian way of life can move beyond this point to a higher kind of poetic existence, according to Kierkegaard." Given Kierkegaard's historical limitations it is again not unreasonable that he did not actively address other religions, but *Christianity*, which in his day was becoming an inauthentic practice. Whether Kierkegaard's blind spots may indeed be forgiven, is a question I will leave to the judgement of the reader.

Again, however, I think that the inherent dynamism of his texts at a structural and contextual level allow the space for Kierkegaard to be interpreted in a way that is more compatible with globalised world characterised by pluralism of beliefs and values. Again, however, the absolutely eternal comes into play. The Paradox indeed opens up the very possibility of Christianity,[51] as Garelick (1965:48) argues:

> Yet it is precisely this ambiguity that allows Climacus to postulate a Christian God. He can have the expectation that God is good and that He came into the world to relieve us of our suffering and to satisfy our desire for eternal happiness. If God's nature is incomprehensible to man, His nature *may be* exactly as Climacus describes it. We cannot know His nature; hence the Christian expectation is a legitimate possibility, which neither empirical nor *a priori* reason can deny.

[51] If the transcendent, the wholly Other, can never be grasped, we must be careful not to project our own nature onto God (Voltaire, Feuerbach). The arguments for the limits of what we may or may not prescribe to God may be found in the philosophy of Aquinas, Spinoza, and Anselm.

As we know, scientific or empirical objectivity is not relevant to Christian faith. There is *no 'God's eye' view for the existing human being*. *Neither* the eternity of Religiousness A *nor* Religiousness B may be known to exist ontologically, or indeed to have any caring connection with human beings. Again, the 'certainty' of faith is not objective certainty, but *absurd* certainty. The religious self falls back upon itself as temporal and *fallible*. Because of the absolute paradox, Religiousness A and Religiousness B may be said to stand in an *irreducible tension*, undermining Kierkegaard's preference for Christianity. The Paradox falls outside the bounds of both realism *and* anti-realism, perhaps constituting a pragmatic, or *ethical*, realism (one may see Shakespeare, 2001). The reality of the Paradox recedes infinitely, and one's relationship to the Absolute must be *continuously renewed*. With this interpretation, the emphasis can be said to shift from: for Kierkegaard, Christianity is the *highest truth,* to: *for Kierkegaard,* Christianity is the highest truth. Ironically, this position is *strengthened* by Kierkegaard's own Christian passion.

This also means that we do not necessarily fall back into relativism. In line with a hermeneutic stance, although one ultimate truth in an essentialist sense not tenable, there may be *better or worse* ways of existing. Christianity or indeed any other religious or non-religious personal view that is held in *inward appropriation* indeed presents a (good) *possibility* of becoming 'authentic.' Climacus indeed does not hold back on singing Socrates's praises, whose 'objective uncertainty' falls under Religiousness A. Kierkegaard's appropriation of the Socratic dialectic and Socratic irony indirectly bestows great esteem upon the pagan dialectic. Socrates would die for what he believed in even if it went against the ethical norms of his day, a passion which Kierkegaard could find unrivalled among his own 'Christian' contemporaries.

In addition to the dynamism that the absolute paradox effects, Johannes Climacus makes a *philosophical argument*, and so remains within the sphere of language and mediation, and the *immanent*. Via his method of using pseudonyms, Kierkegaard is able to write through Climacus from a philosophical perspective that is not yet Christian. We are told in *De Omnibus* the extent to which Climacus engages in meticulous thought. Climacus *trembles* upon the borders of the marvellous, but he has not yet taken the leap of faith. *Indirectly,* Kierkegaard can express his *own* perspective that Christianity is the highest truth, but by the means of a directly expressed communication, i.e. with some degree of objectivity, the most one can assert is that inwardness, seriousness, and subjectivity have value. We cannot know objectively whether Religiousness A or Religiousness B is better, but must be *experienced for oneself* and decided by the individual. Kierkegaard's thought is indeed not to be seen as being prescriptive, evident in his

insistence that every person must choose for oneself. It must be noted that Climacus (*CUP*, 353) affirms that: "All relative volition is marked by willing something for the sake of something else, but the highest end must be willed for its own sake." Kierkegaard admits that he can persuade the reader only so far, but having faith (any faith) is, ultimately, to be willed for its own sake. Choosing faith is again a qualitative *leap* that goes beyond the bounds of quantitative reason, and ultimately constitutes its own end.

I thus propose that there resides in Kierkegaard's work a kind of hermeneutic 'perspectivism,' which does nothing to weaken Kierkegaard's own faith, nor indeed does it undermine Kierkegaard's efforts to persuade the individual to become a Christian. Again, there are better and worse ways of being passionate, and the aesthetic sphere is still not the most authentic mode of existing. Furthermore, simply believing any nonsense with the subjective passion does not necessarily justify holding that belief. However, we reach an impasse when one cannot say whether one religion, or even one way of existing, is more objectively true than another.

When Kaufmann (1975:85) questions the superiority of religious passion which he assumes is Kierkegaard's position, inquiring as to whether the passion, for example of the fanatic, is better than that of the more "humble" and "mindful" attitude towards one's belief, Kaufmann neglects to think the difference between aesthetic and religious pathos. The religious passion of which Kierkegaard speaks is a deep, inward passion, whereas the 'passion' of the fanatic, directed outwardly, potentially falls back into the category of the aesthetic, perhaps even the category of the *demoniacal*. The fanatic lacks the quality of seriousness that Kierkegaard espouses, and the suffering that accompanies true religiousness. It is the tension of faith, or of any worldview that is held with passion, but which nevertheless makes sense to the believer, which decides that value of that belief. One must sincerely struggle with one's convictions, coming to one's own conclusions. This is never an easy task, and this task has no definitive end. Whatever one may passionately come to believe, it is an ongoing process, a continuous dialogue of the self with itself, the task of a lifetime.

5.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has again aimed to 'disclose' the potentially destabilising effects of the absolutely eternal and the absolute paradox, thus mirroring Chapter 4. This time, however, it was in relation to Kierkegaard's own work, turning his thought back towards itself, so to speak. Just

as Kierkegaard's conceptions of time and the (absolutely) eternal are instrumental in opening up Hegel's dialectic, so they have proven vital in opening up Kierkegaard's own personal dialectic. By reaffirming the radical incomprehensibility of the absolute paradox, there is a dynamism within Kierkegaard's work that is revealed. In Chapter 4, we saw how bringing to light the precise nature of the eternal may aid in understanding various (mis)understandings of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel. In this chapter, we have seen how this same understanding of Kierkegaard's view of time and the eternal may help us to make sense of the many varied interpretations of Kierkegaard's own work.

This chapter has highlighted three prominent possible critiques of Kierkegaard's work, yet at the same time, it has become apparent that the Paradox may serve to open up new possibilities of interpretation. I have further supplemented such interpretation by providing additional, albeit yet indirect, evidence to support my interpretation. It is my argument that, in opening up Kierkegaard's work to new interpretation, it may become more relevant for today, and may be engaged in more contemporary strands of thought. The following concluding chapter will take this possibility further.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

What is it that really binds the temporal and the eternal? What is it other than love, which therefore is before everything else and remains when all else is past.

Kierkegaard

As timely as Kierkegaard's response was in his own day, as the founder of existentialism his work may continue even today to have special significance for any human being who takes up the challenge of living inwardly. Moreover, by bringing to light Kierkegaard's notions of time, as this dissertation has set out to do, we may potentially also be better able to address how Kierkegaard may yet be read in a more contemporarily relevant way. Contrary to some Enlightenment predictions, reason has not taken the place of religion. To the contrary, some radical branches of religion have developed in relation (or reaction) to secularizing trends. In contemporary times, we have need to question the tenability of the truth, or 'Truth,' of a single religion. Keeping this in mind, it becomes imperative to (re)think Christianity in a globalised context. What meaning does religion have today, after Nietzsche's proclamation that 'God is dead'? More pertinent to this dissertation, (what) can Kierkegaard contribute to contemporary discussions? A resurgence of religious debate in recent academic and popular discourse has taken place, and this research may add to the ongoing discourses concerning religion and secularization. A proliferation of writing has developed that deals with the matter of religious truth, including that of John D. Caputo (1987), Alain de Botton (2012), Don Cupitt (1988), and Richard Kearney (2004), to name but a few prominent voices. Habermas (2008:251-254) contends that, as a result of multiculturalism and globalisation, the forces of religion have become stronger over the past few decades, with the resultant need for increased tolerance. In such times, a revitalisation of Kierkegaard may be particularly valuable, and some of his insights may indeed be as timely now as ever before (given that certain provisions are kept in mind). In this concluding chapter, the potential feasibility of situating Kierkegaard's thought within more contemporary postmodern and specifically deconstructive thought will be shown.

The extent to which one may interpret Kierkegaard being a rather contentious matter, thus to what extent Kierkegaard himself may be held responsible for the possibility of new interpretation is open to debate. It must be acknowledged that Kierkegaard made clear the religious purpose of the pseudonymous works in *The Point of View*:

> The contents of this little book affirm, then, what I truly am as an author, that I am and was a religious author, that the whole of my work as an author is related to Christianity, to the problem 'of becoming a Christian', with a direct or indirect polemic against the monstrous illusion we call Christendom (*PV*, 5-6).

As noted in Chapter 4, however, there is a definite aesthetic character to the indirect works, and it is possible that an irreducible tension thus shows itself: that between Kierkegaard's Christian intenions as author, and his indirect authorship.[52] Perhaps my own interpretation has run the risk of being, in Kierkegaard's view, 'heretical,' and yet, I regard an interpretation of Kierkegaard that includes the social aspect more explicitly as essential to posing a responsible viewpoint. Fully acknowledging that I have read Kierkegaard according to *my own* historical horizons of possibility, how Kierkegaard himself might receive my reading remains a matter of conjecture.

6.1 Kierkegaard and Deconstruction

There are 'traces' throughout this study of Heidegger's notion of *Destruktion* and *alētheia*, as various possibilities of interpretation of both Hegel and Kierkegaard are brought to light. Even more so, the spectre of Derrida may be said to haunt this paper. While Heidegger's *Destruktion* denotes an increasingly accurate understanding of Being through the development of Western philosophy, Derrida's deconstruction implies a more purely negative, virtually infinite, process, given his emphasis on the constantly shifting nature of language. Traced throughout this work is the notion of dialectic, from Socrates, through Hegel and Kierkegaard, and finally towards possibilities beyond. At the heart of this analysis is an examination of the play of contradictions that foster the continuous development of thought. The very notion of deconstruction itself is yet in the stages of transformation, and one can only guess with limited precision as to its future trajectories, deconstruction itself depicting the future as never fully present, at least to human beings who are limited by their concrete and finite situatedness.

Important to note is that Derrida remains only at the *periphery* of the topic of religion, while Kierkegaard's work is overtly religious. Nevertheless, while it would be erroneous to conflate Kierkegaard's thought with Derrida's, there are certainly *similarities* that may be discerned. As shown in Chapter 5, Kierkegaard's philosophy has become increasingly recognised as

[52] See Westfall (2007:12), who proposes a similar view.

having deconstructive tendencies, and Kierkegaard's notions of irony and repetition have been likened to Derrida's deconstruction. It should come as no surprise that Derrida expresses his admiration for Kierkegaard, saying, "but it is Kierkegaard to whom I have been most faithful" (in Llewelyn, 2009:1). There is a sense of movement and dynamism which the Paradox engenders, not only for the individual but also for thought, and there is something reminiscent, if one may allow for an anachronism, of a poststructuralist play of opposites within Kierkegaard's works. Thus, one might say that the implicit potential lies within Kierkegaard's philosophy to effectively undermine various contradictions. It is the tension between such oppositions or dichotomies, that causes them to 'tremble,' and allows for the fluidity and 'movement' of thought. On this note, I propose that while Hegel was right in the sense that through the process of thinking through concepts, those concepts are developed and evolved, I believe it would be of Kierkegaardian persuasion to propose that the active individual *thinker* is the primary ground of the 'movement' of thought. Taking into consideration some of the implications of my thesis, one might be able to say that it is the *individual* who engages in deconstruction, albeit an individual always within a social and ethical context. The decisiveness of Kierkegaard's 'either/or' does not discredit Derrida's open posture towards undecidability, but rather, one may posit/uncover a *tension* that exists between active individual decisiveness and the more passive undecidability of interpreting texts. Such possibilities surely deserve further attention, but this is limited by the scope of this study. Nevertheless, if such possibilities are indeed opened up by virtue of this study, then this dissertation has achieved its (open-ended) objective.

As mentioned, more recent commentators have increasingly pointed out a deconstructive inclination in Kierkegaard's work itself. One may indeed discern a pattern of increasing readiness to situate Kierkegaard within postmodernism and laud him as a precursor to the philosophy of deconstruction.[53] "Kierkegaard's concept of irony, then," Schleifer (1979:44) writes, "is an early version of what Jacques Derrida has called 'deconstruction:' it calls into question traditional rhetorical and metaphysical assumptions – assumptions based on traditional notions of identity – and, in so doing, calls into question its own Christian

[53] J. Rée and J. Chamberlain (in Cruysberghs, Taels, & Verstrynge, 2005) open *Kierkegaard: A Critical Reader* (1998) with the following: "A rumour is gaining ground concerning Kierkegaard. A new Kierkegaard is coming forward, it seems, at the end of the twentieth century, comparable perhaps to the proto-deconstructionist 'new Nietzsche' who emerged from the shadows in the 1970s. [...]. The mask of the implacable preacher of doom is falling away, and he is presenting himself not only as a rigorous fundamental theorist, but also as an effervescent wit, a captivating story-teller, and a mercurial ironist – a seductive philosophical artist, in short, to rival Plato himself." Cruysberghs, Taels, and Verstrynge (2005) in addition propose that "the untouchable authorities (Gr. Malantschuk, J. Sløk, M. Theunissen, N. Thulstrup, H.-B. Vergote...) would appear to have largely ended."

grounding." Schleifer notes that even the early *Concept of Irony* "problematizes repetition even as it asserts it. Irony, Kierkegaard writes in his *Journals*, 'seeks to see constantly a new side of repetition'" (ibid., 49). "Irony itself can be seen as a paradox, the playful expression of the desperate fact that there is nothing to express, 'a standpoint which continually cancels itself,' continually 'erases' itself'" (ibid., 46).

In my own work, repetition has also been used as a kind of literary device, extending the original existential meaning of the term. In Chapter 4, it was shown that Kierkegaard repeats and differs from Hegel, appropriating Hegel's concept of mediation, and allowing it to become more concrete. In a similar way, I have appropriated Kierkegaard's thought in turn, viewing it through a postmodern and deconstructive lens. My thinking could thus be said to resonate with Melberg's when he writes:

> The reason why Kierkegaard may have modern relevance – even when he insists that 'repetition' is a 'transcendental' category giving privilege to the presence of the *now*; and even to thinkers who elsewhere seem immune to the transcendental and critical of all ideas of 'presence' – must be that his 'repetition' is an 'existential' as well as a *textual* category (Melberg, 1990:75).

However, as much as Kierkegaard aimed to overcome traditional metaphysics, restoring movement and freedom to the individual, and indeed largely achieves this aim, I find that we may find that there are 'traces' of metaphysics (of presence) within Kierkegaard's own work. Such a reading is surely not very surprising, given that the nature of the task of overcoming metaphysics is such that it is *without end*, aiming continuously to bring to light subtle but problematic contradictions, dichotomies, or tensions. Again, Derrida's deconstruction of the 'metaphysics of presence,' is a continuous process, so that the 'end' of metaphysics is not the final dissimulation of metaphysics but the ceaseless undermining of metaphysics. The development of the task of destabilising metaphysics has indeed gone beyond what Kierkegaard could have anticipated, and such a task may in turn question certain remnants of the very metaphysics which he sought to oppose, within his own work. What I wish to show in a sense is that Kierkegaard's work contains the seeds of its own deconstruction, and what I wish to uncover is to what extent Kierkegaard's philosophy closes itself off, or remains open to, more forgiving interpretation. It is my contention that such metaphysical traces, whether accountable by genuine neglect of thought on the part of Kierkegaard, or the natural limitations of Kierkegaard's historical situatedness, which seems the more likely explanation, may be observed to 'tremble' upon the inherent tensions within Kierkegaard's thought that create a

'restlessness' in his work, and which may in turn cause some traces of metaphysics, in Kierkegaard's own writings to 'founder.'

In Chapter 5, the case was made that one may analyse Kierkegaard's thought in such a way as to reveal the possibility of its being open to new interpretation given the double role of the Paradox. We may now identify this process as a (self-) deconstruction of Kierkegaard's thought which we shall further link more overtly to deconstruction below. Such deconstructive tendencies may be attributed to two major factors, each involving a particular tension that effects movement within Kierkegaard's thought: 1) his pseudonymous writing as being open to (re)interpretation; and 2) the eternal as being essentially defined as *absolutely* eternal. In the first case, the tension between Kierkegaard's pseudonymous and direct works, between his religious intentions as author and the possibility that the pseudonymous works stand independently, effects an internal dynamic within his authorship, opening up a space between Kierkegaard and his reader. His authorship is rendered significantly open to interpretation, and possibilities that are only implicit or indirect may efficaciously be brought to light. Kierkegaard's pseudonyms provide a means of distancing his own authorship, implying an effective *deferral* of meaning a century ahead of Derrida (Poole, 1993:2), and underscoring the essential *temporality and historicity of language*. In line with the focus of this paper, the aspect of the temporal/eternal has as such been given priority, i.e. the difference that Kierkegaard asserts lies between the temporal and the eternal. We have already observed the destabilising effect of the double role of the Paradox in Chapter 5.

It is important to note that while we may situate Kierkegaard within postmodern and deconstructive discourse, we should also actively bring some of the 'traces' of metaphysics within Kierkegaard's thought to light. In order to propose a genuinely responsible reading of Kierkegaard, acknowledgement of the possibility for *mis*interpretation must be granted, given some conspicuous tensions within his own work. I propose that one must actively and thoroughly think through some (at least potentially) problematic notions within Kierkegaard's work. For example, if Kierkegaard's work *does* allow for the problematic overemphasis of the individual, or for the possibility of a fanatical or fundamentalist stance in any sense, this must be considered with due seriousness. Chapter 5 has taken into consideration some major critiques that can be directed towards Kierkegaard's thought. On the other hand, the existence of such traces of metaphysics in Kierkegaard's work, weighty as they may be, do not necessarily exclude the (self-) deconstructive dynamic of Kierkegaard's thought.

Three major critiques have thus been brought to the fore, and here I decisively connect them to the discourse of deconstruction. The first critique, we may recall, concerns the problem of Kierkegaard's notion of the individual. This is one possible manifestation of metaphysics within Kierkegaard's work; that is, his (over)emphasis and isolation of the individual to the exclusion of the individual as understood as primordially amongst others. Although Kierkegaard was one of the first thinkers to oppose traditional metaphysics as abstracting the individual, and as limiting the existential movement of the individual, the possible and ironic 'abstraction' of the 'singular individual' from its particular social context is itself problematic. Although this may be accounted for by his strong response to Hegel's sublation of the individual under the sweeping teleological movement of History, this does not ameliorate the problematic nature of isolating the individual.

Keeping the Paradox in mind, however, and bringing to the fore its 'double role,' the deconstructive potential thereof is revealed. The individual is, indirectly, *not* shown as capable of transcendence in an overtly metaphysical sense, but rather as being essentially temporal, at least in relation to the absolute paradox, with the *absurd* possibility of rising above the aspect of the universal. The self is always a self which, in relation to the Absolute, falls back onto itself as finite, in relation to other human beings. Thus it could be said that a tension exists between the (relative) isolation of the individual and the concrete and social context in which the individual finds him/herself and ultimately cannot escape; the self reverberates between isolation and ethical openness. Picking up on Kierkegaard's subtle choice of terminology, the religious self does not transcend the ethical sphere, but rather *suspends* it. The generalising universality of the ethical sphere is never simply abandoned. This tension between the ethical and religious spheres creates a constant dynamic flux whereby the isolation or transcendence of the individual cannot be seen as stable or static. The ultimate irreconcilability between time and eternity for the individual emphasises the temporality of the individual, although one may still aim to 'transcend' oneself in *striving* towards the absolutely transcendent. Yet, the 'transcendence' of repetition still undermines Hegel's emphasis on immanence. The individual must strive to rise ever higher, and to develop ever more inwardly. The individual suspends the ethical, and holds it in tension with a self-imposed silence. Indeed, it may be said that such traces of metaphysics may 'founder' upon the very 'interest' of being with others. As Chapter 5 explains, Abraham's love for Isaac undermines his isolation from Isaac as other. Indeed, the aspect of the temporal is revealed as essentially inseparable from dread. Dread, as we have seen as early as Chapter 3, is linked to a sense of the future as radically unknown. The absurdity that

Abraham experiences may be seen as an irreconcilable tension between the objective uncertainty of God's command, and Abraham's unwavering belief that God would not actually allow him to kill his son.

We may expose a second trace of the metaphysics of presence in Kierkegaard's work; that is, Kierkegaard privileges Christianity at the risk of possibly excluding other religions or other authentic modes of existing.[54] It is surprising that this has not been addressed by many Kierkegaardian scholars, especially given the pluralistic nature of our present globalised milieu. Perhaps this is due to a tendency to confine Kierkegaard's thought to the arena of the religious, which this dissertation holds in question. Whatever the reason may be, this trace of 'presencing' Christianity may again founder on the deconstructive tendencies of the absolute paradox, and we may interpret Kierkegaard as, *indirectly*, permitting a tension between relativism and absolutism to exist. As a result of the ineffable aspect of the Paradox, two possibilities arise: the possibility of Christianity (possibly as the 'Truth'), and the possibility that nothing beyond the senses can be known, and thus any metaphysical speculation as pointless. The 'truth' of Christianity may thus seen to lie in between these two opposite possibilities. My reading suggests that Kierkegaard cannot be seen simply either as saying that Christianity is the Truth, *or* that Christianity is merely one belief among many. Christianity cannot be objectively justified as Truth, since God cannot objectively be known to temporal beings. The only thing we can say with any *objective* conviction is that inwardness allows one to be more authentically conscious, and that Christianity is a particularly good way to develop oneself inwardly. On the other hand, it is *absurdly* possible for the individual to be in a relationship with the absolute paradox. However, as we have seen, this does not imply that Christianity is simply nonsense, or that any nonsensical belief is in turn justifiable.

The tension between the rational and the irrational has furthermore been brought to light in Section 5.4. A problematic dichotomy between the rational and irrational is implied when Kierkegaard's interpreters suggest that because he opposes Hegel's inherent bias of reason, he must be irrational. However, taking the double role of the absolute paradox into consideration, the relation of reason to time becomes apparent, as discussed in Section 5.3. Thus instead of falling into the opposite trap of irrationalism, the tension between the rational, or objective, and the irrational, becomes an important tension the Christian must navigate, and faith was shown

[54] Surprisingly, this has not been addressed by many Kierkegaardian scholars, perhaps because of, ironically, the pervasive understanding that Kierkegaard is at heart a Christian thinker, and should be respected and appreciated as such. Even so, however, I do not think that acknowledging Kierkegaard primarily as a Christian thinker, and exploring various possibilities of interpretation, are mutually exclusive.

precisely as believing an absurdity while simultaneously acknowledging this absurdity *as* an absurdity. While even the contemporary disciple of Jesus could not with objective certainty affirm his or her faith, neither are the doctrine of Christianity, and Christ's teachings, arbitrary or inconsequential. While the Christian is required to make a decision which goes beyond the bounds of what rationality can offer, *neither* is the decision to become a Christian simply irrational. The Christian must weigh the consequences of accepting Christianity on a personal level, and decide for him/herself whether that is something he or she is capable of doing or willing to do.

It is in this way that the binary opposition between reason and the irrational may be shown to collapse. I do not think that the 'either/or' of faith that Kierkegaard asserts implies a simple reinstitution of a traditional metaphysics of irreconcilable dichotomies, but on the contrary highlights the existential role of human agency in the tension between the radically unknown, the epistemological uncertainty of faith, and human agency in the face of the unknown. In each case, in fact, metaphysics founders because of the ultimate, irreconcilable contradiction, that of the absolute paradox. The foundations of our knowledge tremble and founder upon the boundaries of the radically unknown future, the 'to come.'

Finally, we may note some further self-deconstructive tendencies that find their abode within Kierkegaardian dialogue, regarding secrets and deception. Caputo (1997:33) discloses the paradoxical nature of the secret: "The secret is divulged as soon as it is kept; it is divulged by being kept; the promise to keep the secret is broken as soon as it made, is broken in being made. For the secret is structurally constituted by its being divulged as a secret. As soon as I say 'I have a secret,' the secret of the secret has been divulged." Firstly, Kierkegaard's intended distancing of himself from his writings through the use of pseudonymous (partially) collapses when he publicly admitted his authorship of the pseudonymous works in the *Postscript*. We may note, further, that Kierkegaard's own deception of Regina Olsen could not be kept absolutely secret, and it is well known to his readers today. Lastly, even Kierkegaard's most famous 'secret,' although still somewhat of a mystery, is thought to be related to the inherited guilt of his father who had allegedly "stood upon a hummock and cursed God" (Lowrie, 1965:71). While one may aim to attain silence, isolation, or secrecy, the paradoxical nature of the secret ensures that its secrecy and potential divulgence are deferred indefinitely within the flux of time.

6.2 Final Reflections

Central to Kierkegaard's project was how to become a Christian, and to (re)assert the difficultly of Christianity, which, with the strong rational undercurrents of Hegel and the Danish Hegelians, not only in the realm of intellectual or scholarly company but also extended to the general public, had become increasingly mediocre, stale, and reduced to mere religious ritual.[55] "It has become so easy and light-hearted a thing to think contradictions – for *it is passion that gives tension to the contradiction*" (*CUP*, 345, my emphasis). Kierkegaard did not want to make Christianity more difficult intellectually, but rather "qualitatively difficult;" that is, "essentially difficult for all men equally" (ibid., 495). Christianity demands a decision that cannot be accomplished by thought alone. The leap of faith involves a qualitative movement which goes beyond the precincts of the quantitative. The path of becoming a Christian is a journey fraught with challenges and suffering, although the promise of the true joy of eternal happiness may be actualised through the sincere and self-conscious development of the self.

Kierkegaard's relevance is arguably not confined to the authentic development of the Christian self, however. Perhaps, one could extend Kierkegaard's desire to re(assert) the difficulty of Christianity, to wanting to re(assert) the difficulty of *life* difficult. Beabout and Frazier (2000:24) would appear to be in tentative agreement with this sentiment: "Kierkegaard's authorship is intended not only as a corrective to Danish Christendom, but also to other basic institutions of modernity as well, which tend to neglect the individual and what Kierkegaard refers to as 'finite human existence.'" A human, all too human tendency of avoiding tensions or attempting to easily resolve contradictions is encouraged and perpetuated by an atmosphere that espouses, albeit intellectually, the reconciliation of oppositions. Kierkegaard's supplication is for the individual to stay with the tension, and with the flux of existence. It is the value of facing contradictions that allows one to become more of a self, as a self that is essentially a *tensed* self. In the case of Socrates, even though he could not believe in the Christian Paradox, the absolutely paradoxical, he could nonetheless be counted as one living a life truly worth living.

Kierkegaard's thought can also be viewed as adding weight to the already onerous burden of the future, for the eternal is connected with the future. For Kierkegaard the radically unknown future becomes laden with possibility, and the very way we consider potentiality and actuality

[55] It would not be unreasonable were this image of "mere religious ritual" to evoke an aesthetic understanding of Kierkegaardian 'repetition.'

gains new inflection. Potentiality, for Kierkegaard, exists not in any abstract or fatalistic way, but as a potentiality that underscores radical possibility in the fullness of the present, and the "decisive significance" (*PF*, 23) of the moment, since through God, anything is possible. The future is, admittedly, inseparable from the Christian notion of eternity/the eternal for Kierkegaard – but an emphasis on the future, as being radically unknown, is not necessarily limited to the Christian disposition. With Kierkegaard, the first existentialist, or at the very least the father of existentialism, the future gains in significance as opposed to Hegel's view of the future, and this attitude is apparent in many later existential and postmodern thinkers. Derrida for one, as the founder of deconstruction distinguishes two kinds of 'future,' that is, a future that is within bounds possible to predict, and in contrast the future he describes as the 'to come' which is distinguished by its radical unpredictability. The latter is a future that pragmatically and existentially weighs heavily upon us despite, or perhaps rather *precisely because*, it is radically unknown.

Kierkegaard's thought on time may find further relevance and value in a particularly philosophical sense: not only does it impact our view the individual (within history), but also history itself. If the individual is the driving force of history, then we can *unequivocally* say that history has no end. Collective *Geist* is shattered into a kaleidoscopic array of various potentialities, which is to be found in agreement with a pluralistic world. Furthermore, history as such does not proceed linearly. Again, Kierkegaard himself does not develop this idea, but such are the indirect implications of such an idea of time as Kierkegaard indicates. Such a view of time *is* however found within the radius of much postmodern thought. For example, Michel Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* puts forth an archaeology of discourse which opposes teleological and totalising ways of viewing history: "Archaeology is much more willing than the history of ideas to speak of discontinuities, ruptures, gaps, entirely new forms of positivity, and of sudden redistributions" (Foucault, 1969:187). Ideas do not arise linearly or logically through history, but rather occur sporadically and unevenly in accordance with a view of time that underscores the contingencies of history. The individual is thrown back upon itself as limited and fallible. Kierkegaard's rethinking of the relationship between the temporal and the eternal implies a radical opposition to the logic of the Hegelian System, implying that this has relevance not only for the Christian, but is a radical undermining of Hegelian logic itself.

As it has been noted, there is a general tendency for Kierkegaard's readers to consider him as a *Christian* existentialist. While this is not necessarily disputed here, again the value of

Kierkegaard's thought may be extended beyond such bounds. As it has been argued, whether one is Christian or holds another viewpoint passionately and resolutely, that truth cannot be justified as 'True' or absolute. Regarding Kierkegaard's (re)assessment of Christianity, one embraces the Christian belief with subjective *absurd certainty*. While a truth may be held that is true *for one*, at the same time, it can be paradoxically recognised that another's belief or worldview is true *for another*. No absolute value may be bestowed upon one particular faith, given the limitations of metaphysical speculation. While at first glance this appears to imply a straightforward relativism, considering some of the arguments put forth in Section 5.5, Kierkegaard's thought regarding truth as subjectivity guards against claims of relativism: to repeat, Kierkegaard's philosophy does not support the view that every belief held with passion necessarily has equal value. The most one may say with any objective validity is that Christianity is particularly beneficial for cultivating a sense of inwardness, among other contending religions and worldviews. We are faced with the paradox that while no belief may be said to have the status of being absolutely true, it is nevertheless, or precisely because of this reason, absurdly willed for its own sake. In a globalised world with a multiplicity of religions and worldviews, the point that a truth may be true for one, but at the same time paradoxically recognised that another's belief or worldview is true for another, is crucial. Passionately embracing a particular worldview does not necessitate or justify being *closed off* to other views. The notion of one essential Truth is not only untenable, but its possibility is also dangerous in a practical sense; it is all too easy to justify violence in the name of the Truth. Nevertheless, one would however be mistaken to say that one 'suspends' one's own belief to consider other potentially valuable worldviews. It is rather the absurd acceptance of a *well-considered* belief *despite* the fact that it contradicts a judgement that has universal or ethical validity; that is, it is the ethical that is properly speaking suspended, *not* the religious.

Given, however, the inevitable fractured status of a universal ethics, ethics comes to have a fluidity whose implications may be taken further than Kierkegaard could probably have anticipated. It may be fruitful to draw Hannah Arendt into our present dialogue. Arendt (2003:40-43) sees the period of the Holocaust as an *inversion* of morality, so that it becomes the universally and ethically 'right' to commit, or assist in committing, the murder of innocent human beings. Like Arendt, Kierkegaard witnessed that sometimes following the universal, the 'ethical' especially in the Hegelian sense, may in fact be (ironically) *irresponsible*, not because one historical period is yet undeveloped in the broader teleological consideration of History, but because *there is no logical progression of history*. For Kierkegaard, the religious sphere

suspends the very universality of Reason and the ethical laws that are set in place. For Hegel, "morality reaches its completion in a community" (Taylor, 1975:376-7), but Kierkegaard aims to go further than Hegel's *Sittlichkeit* in recognising that our very laws are constructed by temporal and fallible human beings.

Like Kierkegaard, Arendt draws on Socrates's dialectic, and she goes further by describing responsibility as relating to the dialogue the individual has with oneself (Arendt, 2003:82*ff*). The individual must decide how to act based on whether one can live with oneself after effecting such an action. While this view is not fool proof, it does provide possible guidelines for thinking ethics within a world where ethics has been stripped of its status of being universally true. Kierkegaard wanted to provoke his reader to think for him/herself, for the individual often finds that "it is much easier and safer to be like the others, to become a copy, a number, along with the crowd" (*SUD*, 36).[56] Like Kierkegaard, Arendt underscores the value of the singular human being thinking for him/herself. Her thought further serves to corroborate the point that, given the occurrence of World War II, the Hegelian idea of universal reason cannot be unproblematically or straightforwardly tied to ethics. Crucial to note is that for Kierkegaard, the same applies to *all crowds*, even, or especially, a group with which one feels affiliated. Thus Kierkegaard warns against thinking that the Church, as an establishment, is able to facilitate one's personal salvation, and against taking for granted claims of religious 'authorities' regarding one's eternal self. Earlier in this chapter, an undermining of the binary opposition between rationalism and fideism was noted. Perhaps, one could say to become inward is precisely to *think*, not in the sense of abstract speculation, but of truly responsible thought in line with a concrete consideration of the future.[57]

Mention has been made of Levinas's critique of Kierkegaard. For Levinas, one does not need to be Christian to recognise the transcendent alterity of the 'Other;' the Other is sufficiently unfathomable, which eliminates the need for the absolute paradox; more precisely, the self encounters the Other (God) through the other (other selves). For Buber, something similar is the case: "Creation is not a hurdle on the road to God, it is the road itself. We are created along with another and directed to a life with one another. Creatures are placed in my way so that I, their fellow-creature, by means of them and with them find the way to God" (Buber, 1947:73). However, I do not think that Kierkegaard's ethical relationship to the other selves is negated in

[56] We may compare this to Nietzsche's 'herd' mentality and Heidegger's notion of 'das Man.'

[57] What is achieved is similar to Aristotle's *phronēsis*, or practical rationality, which is all the more important in an increasingly globalised, complex, and technologised world. One may see Lillegard (2002:253) for a more in-depth analysis of the similarities between Kierkegaard's ethics and Aristotle's *phronesis*.

relation to the self's relation to the Absolute. As Buber correctly notes, for Kierkegaard, the relation of the singular individual to God is the ultimate relation. *However*, I do not agree with Buber when he writes:

> This relation is an exclusive one, the exclusive one, and this means, according to Kierkegaard, that it is the excluding relation, excluding all others; more precisely, that it is the relation which in virtue of its unique, essential life expels all other relations into the realm of the unessential (ibid., 71).

Although Kierkegaard's thought remains potentially problematic due to his stress on the relationship between human beings and God, I do not think that the relation between human beings necessarily becomes "unessential." Again, it may be said that *because* the individual in in a relation to the absolutely eternal, the self is thrown back upon itself as finite and temporal. The *implication* here is that the finite and temporal individual is found to exist amongst other finite and temporal individuals. While the individual may absurdly rise above the ethical, the ethical is yet kept at hand. In this way, Kierkegaard's philosophy gains relevance given the weight contemporary thought places on situating the individual decisively within a social and historical context. It is my own contention that such analysis moreover *also* keeps quite intact the subjective existential experience that is crucial for individual agency and the imperative to think for oneself. In my reading of Kierkegaard, I have chosen to lay stress upon the absurdity and paradoxicalness of his portrayal of Christianity, which emphasises the *irreducible tension* between one's relationship with God and one's relationship with others. It is the inescapability of the ethical sphere, of being with others, and standing before the other in respect of the law we give ourselves, while *at the same time* standing alone directly before God, that thrusts the aspect of dread upon him/her. Perhaps, responsibility could be said to entail a tension between pushing the limits of thought, while simultaneously acknowledging and embracing one's contingency. *Both* the value and the potential influence of the individual, the fallibility and flux of the law we give unto ourselves, as well as the interrelation of individuals, are highlighted in this reading of Kierkegaard, which confirms, in my view, that Kierkegaard's philosophy may claim a flexibility that is requisite for it to be relevant today, and may indeed prove to be truly valuable.

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