The Concept of Eternity in Kierkegaard's Philosophical Anthropology

By

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This book first published 2024

Ethics International Press Ltd, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Print Book ISBN: 978-1-80441-968-7

eBook ISBN: 978-1-80441-969-4

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List of Abbreviations

BA Kierkegaard, Søren. *The Book on Adler*. Edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.

CA Kierkegaard, Søren. *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin.* Edited by Reidar Thomte and Albert Anderson. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980.

CD Kierkegaard, Søren. *Christian Discourses.* Edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997.

CUP Kierkegaard, Søren. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments.* Edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.

ED Kierkegaard, Søren. *Edifying Discourses.* Minneapolis, MD: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943.

EO Kierkegaard, Søren. *Either/Or.* Edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987.

FT Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear and Trembling.* Edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983.

GA Kierkegaard, Søren. "Of the Difference between a Genius and an Apostle." In *The Present Age.* Edited by Anonymous New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962, 108.

JP Kierkegaard, Søren. *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers.* Edited by Howard V. Hong, Edna H. Hong and Gregor Malantschuk. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1967-1978.

PC Kierkegaard, Søren. *Practice in Christianity.* Edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991.

PF Kierkegaard, Søren. *Philosophical Fragments, Johannes Climacus.* Edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985.

PV Kierkegaard, Søren. *The Point of View.* Edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.

REP Kierkegaard, Søren. *Repetition.* Edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983.

SUD Kierkegaard, Søren. *The Sickness Unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening.* Edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983.

UDV Kierkegaard, Søren. *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits.* Edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.

WL Kierkegaard, Søren. *Works of Love.* Edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Acknowledgments

This project would not have been possible without the guidance and expertise of C. Stephen Evans. I must also thank other professors and colleagues, including Robert Kruschwitz, Robert Roberts, Paul Martens, Phillip Donnelly, David Gouwens, David Naugle, Richard Colledge, and the Baylor graduate student community, for their conversations, feedback and constructive criticism. I am grateful to Baylor University for providing the resources I needed, and to my students at Trinity Classical School for their enthusiasm and earnest support for this project. Most importantly, I would like to thank my family—my daughters, Claire and Annalise, and my parents—for their love, patience, and passionate encouragement of me in my study of Kierkegaard.

Chapter 1

Introducing the Problem

Introduction

The problem of human existence is for Søren Kierkegaard the problem of coming to understand and properly orient the human self in relation to time and eternity. Drawing on a Platonic metaphor from the *Phaedrus*, Johannes Climacus explains,

> Eternity is infinitely quick like that winged steed, temporality is an old nag, and the existing person is the driver, that is, if existing is not to be what people usually call existing, because then the existing person is no driver but a drunken peasant who lies in the wagon and sleeps and lets the horses shift for themselves.[1]

Few would contest that human life is temporal; eternity, on the other hand, is a more contested category and its significance for persons in time remains unclear. Although Kierkegaard does not offer a clear and unambiguous explanation of the concept and its significance, the notion of eternity is undoubtedly an essential element of his philosophy. In fact, one could say that the majority of Kierkegaard's work is an attempt to show the impact a person's relation to the eternal has on his temporal life: "To satisfy eternity—with this task man was sent out into the world, and later the order was unconditionally enjoined by Christianity."[2] The aim of this book is to provide a critical analysis of the meaning of eternity as it relates to the human being in Kierkegaard's psychological work, *The Concept of Anxiety*. I focus on this work not only because it contains many of Kierkegaard's most illuminating discussions about

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[1] Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 1.311-312. Henceforth CUP. Originally published in 1846.

[2] Søren Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, ed. Howard V. Hong, Edna H. Hong and Gregor Malantschuk (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1967-1978), 3.2565. For all references to Kierkegaard's *Journals and Papers*, I cite the volume number and entry number of the Hong edition.

eternity's role in the human being, but also because the scholarship on this theme in *Concept of Anxiety* is sparse and undeveloped.

In this chapter I introduce the project by looking at the importance of eternity in Kierkegaard's work, especially in relation to the virtue of hope. I explain my methodology and defend the decision to limit the analysis predominantly to *Concept of Anxiety*. After describing the difficulties that this investigation entails, I preview how I will overcome these issues in subsequent chapters. I conclude this chapter by articulating the basic aspects of Kierkegaard's *concept* of eternity.[3]

Importance of Eternity in Kierkegaard's Thought: The Virtue of Hope

In the popular understanding of Christianity, "eternity" often refers to life after death; in more philosophically informed versions, it usually means a realm or status of existence outside of time. Although the goal of eternal blessedness for human beings is certainly important to him, Kierkegaard is also concerned to remind his reader about the implications that a person's decision about his eternal destiny has in the present: "But now eternity, surely this is the greatest task ever assigned to a human being" in this temporal life.[4] As Kierkegaard argues most explicitly in *Works of Love*, a proper relation to eternal happiness involves the virtue of hope, in which one always recognizes both the *possibility* and *difficulty* of attaining the thing hoped for.[5]

Thomas Aquinas points out that even though "hope has no mean or extremes, as regards its principal object, since it is impossible to trust too much in the Divine assistance," it still has "a mean and extremes, as

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[3] This includes reviewing the findings and shortcomings in secondary literature, and suggesting the merit my own investigation may have in this conversation.

[4] Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 252. Henceforth, WL. Originally published in 1847.

[5] For the most important discussion of hope and its relation to possibility and eternity, see the section in *Works of Love* entitled "Love Hopes All Things—and Yet Is Never Put to Shame." Ibid., 246-263.

regards those things a man trusts to obtain, in so far as he either *presumes* above his capability, or *despairs* of things of which he is capable."[6] In this regard, Kierkegaard warns against the two vices that signify an excess or deficiency of expectation and that lead one away from the eternal: presumption and despair. In presumption, a person sees the *possibility* of eternal happiness, but is blind to its *difficulty*. Kierkegaard points out such presumption in those who never recognize the rigorous nature of eternity's demand: "Christianity really presupposes that eternity engages a man absolutely, but in the ordinary course of living we never dream that eternity is supposed to have any significance for us: we are all going to be saved—no question about that."[7] In the culture of Christendom, where all citizens assume they are Christians by birth and thereby take salvation for granted, few would guess that they have not fulfilled all that Christianity asks of them. As a result, Christian faith becomes "accommodated within this life, as an aid in this life,"[8] a kind of utilitarian good that is only valuable insofar as it is a means to other temporal ends such as wealth, social status, or the appearance of moral character. "But this it simply cannot be," Kierkegaard insists. Faith "can only make this life as strenuous as possible." It is not that Christianity offers no reward to the believer—for it offers eternal happiness. It is just that

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[6] I do not mean to imply that it is possible to have an excess of hope in God, but rather that presumption occurs when one hopes too much in oneself or erroneously assumes one is already properly related to God (and will therefore attain eternal happiness) when one is not. As Aquinas explains, "a moral virtue is concerned with things ruled by reason, and these things are its proper object; wherefore it is proper to it to follow the mean as regards its proper object. On the other hand, a theological virtue is concerned with the First Rule not ruled by another rule, and that Rule is its proper object. Wherefore it is not proper for a theological virtue, with regard to its proper object, to follow the mean, *although this may happen to it accidentally with regard to something that is referred to its principal object.* Thus faith can have no mean or extremes in the point of trusting to the First Truth, in which it is impossible to trust too much; whereas on the part of the things believed, it may have a mean and extremes; for instance one truth is a mean between two falsehoods." Emphasis mine. "The Summa Theologia of St. Thomas Aquinas," in Kevin Knight [database online]. 6 October 2005 [cited 2005], II-II, 17, 5. Available from http://www.newadvent.org/summa/.

[7] JP, 1.844.

[8] Ibid.

> Christianity assumes the concern for everything to go well for one in eternity to be so great that in order to find peace in this respect one finds joy in—yes, gives thanks for, God's making this life somewhat more, yes, infinitely more strenuous than it is when a person does not get involved with Christianity.[9]

But if Kierkegaard is correct in claiming that believers must be willing to take joy in temporal suffering for the sake of eternity, then Christianity has lost its presumed utilitarian value in Christendom, and for many this is too much to ask. Indeed, "by itself, to have a genuine concern for one's eternal salvation (as Christianity requires), this alone is an enormous weight compared to the manner of living that leaves the eternal an open question."[10]

Even if a person does recognize the absolute nature of eternity's demand (and hence its difficulty), so that presumption is no longer a danger, the opposite vice of despair still poses a threat. In despair, one sees the *difficulty* of obtaining the object of hope, but cannot see its *possibility*; the one who despairs therefore ceases to hope for a share in eternal happiness. Such despair can especially arise in response to temporal suffering, but even though such "hardship can drown out every earthly voice," Kierkegaard suggests, "it cannot drown out this voice of eternity deep within."[11] Indeed, just as eternity's requirement teaches a person to see its difficulty, eternity also can teach a person its possibility. Kierkegaard explains,

> If eternity were to assign the human being the task all at once and in its own language, without regard for his capacities and limited powers, the human being would have to despair. But then this is the wondrous thing, that this the greatest of powers, eternity, can make itself so small that it is divisible in this way, this which is eternally one, so that, taking upon itself the form of the future, the possible, with the help of hope it brings up tempo-

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Søren Kierkegaard, *Christian Discourses*, ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 114. Henceforth CD. Originally published in 1848.

> rality's child (the human being), teaches him to hope (to hope is itself the instruction, is the relation to the eternal)…. By means of the possible, eternity is continually near enough to be available and yet distant enough to keep the human being in motion forward toward the eternal, to keep him going, going forward. This is how eternity lures and draws a person, in possibility, from the cradle to the grave—provided he chooses to hope.[12]

Eternity provides orientation and inspires movement toward future happiness by teaching a person to hope and showing him its own possibility. For Kierkegaard, eternity signifies not merely our own possibilities as spiritual creatures, but also (as the personification of eternity in this passage suggests, and as I will argue below) God, a perfect, non-temporal agent outside us who lovingly "lures and draws a person, in possibility, from the cradle to the grave."[13]

In this way, Kierkegaard argues that Christianity offers a unique orientation toward the future. As we shall see in chapter four, the Platonic view of eternity allows a person to enter eternity "backwards" through recollection, and thus admits of its *possibility*, but it provides this possibility by ignoring the *difficulty* of sin. Christianity, by contrast, makes the difficulty of sin explicit while also providing renewed possibility for hope of a future through Christ, so that eternity may be "entered forward" through what Kierkegaard calls "repetition."[14] In this way, while Christianity generally shares with Plato the sense that the achievement of eternal happiness is our ultimate good as human beings (it is our final cause), it differs with regard to the means by which that good is obtained (our efficient cause).[15] For Plato, the person is himself the efficient cause, eventually reaching eternal happiness as he grows in wisdom and recollects the knowledge

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[12] WL, 258-259.

[13] Ibid.

[14] I explain further what "entering eternity forwards" means in chapters four and five. Basically, it entails first coming into a right relationship with the eternal with the presupposition that one has first been cut off from it through sin, and second, to the eschatological hope of eternal life after death.

[15] Aquinas, *Summa Theologia*, I-II, 40, 7. Kierkegaard does not use the terms "final cause" and "efficient cause" to describe the eternal. I use these terms because I believe they help to illuminate Kierkegaard's position.

he has within himself. Conversely, in Christianity, only God, by means of Christ, can be the efficient cause of a person's eternal happiness.[16]

Kierkegaard refers to eternity as both an ontological status and a normative guide that is woven into the essential fabric of human beings in time. As the pseudonym Anti-Climacus states, "Man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short it is a synthesis. A synthesis is a relation between two factors" (SUD 13).[17] Hence, in Kierkegaard's philosophical anthropology, the eternal is one of the "factors" that makes up a human being; for "next to God there is nothing so eternal as a self" (SUD 53). Eternity is not only an ontological factor in the self; it is also a normative guide. It is both gift and task. "What else, indeed," Kierkegaard asks, "is the accounting of eternity than that the voice of conscience is installed eternally in its eternal right to be the only voice!"[18] Hence, the eternal defines both what we are as human beings and what we ought to become. In fact, the eternal in persons is one thing that distinguishes them from other animals. Unlike the rest of the cosmos, the human being is "the place where the eternal and the temporal continually touch each other, where the eternal is refracted in the temporal."[19] Eternity is not merely reflected in the temporal, but "refracted," implying that eternity is bended or reshaped by being observed from a temporal, human perspective.[20] Hence, the bird never worries about making a living, for

[16] CUP, 1.570-586. In this section, I refer to the writings of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms only when they are in agreement with Kierkegaard's general view of eternity.

[17] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983). Henceforth SUD. Originally published in 1849. I will give internal citations only for references to *Sickness Unto Death* and *Concept of Anxiety* since these two texts are the main focus of my book.

[18] Søren Kierkegaard, *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 128. Henceforth UDV. Originally published in 1847.

[19] Ibid., 195-196.

[20] The word "refraction" also implies that one is looking through a lens, a lens that does not necessarily hinder one's sight, but works to focus and sharpen it. It evokes the image of eternity squeezing itself into the temporal, shifting itself so that they align, however imperfectly. This connotation is no doubt an expression of the perspectival and worldview implications of eternity that Kierkegaard often stresses. UDV, 128-138, 147-152.

> it lives only in the moment, because there is nothing eternal in the bird. But this is indeed a perfection! On the other hand, how does the possibility of worry about making a living arise—because the eternal and the temporal touch each other in a consciousness or, more correctly, because the human being has consciousness; … when eternity came into existence for him, so also did tomorrow…. he has the eternal in his consciousness and measures the moments with it.[21]

Eternity so transforms our consciousness that it is what enables us to recognize time as tensed, as separated into past, present, and future, and to relate these tenses to one another in understanding our identity. Such recognition has its advantages and disadvantages—it is both a divine gift and an existential weight. For the

> temporal and the eternal can in many ways touch each other painfully in the human consciousness…. Yet the ability to have worry about making a living is a perfection, … because just as high as God lifts up he also presses down just as low…. God lifted the human being high above the bird by means of the eternal in his consciousness; then in turn he pressed him down, so to speak, below the bird by his acquaintance with care, the lowly, earthly care of which the bird is ignorant.[22]

The eternal in a human being makes possible both the loftiness of a God-relationship and the lowliness of anxiety and despair.

But if human beings are finite creatures situated in time, how is it that we are eternal as well? This is one of the main questions my investigation seeks to answer. The struggle to maintain the tension between existing in time and recognizing the eternal nature of one's "spirit" and ultimate *telos* is one of the most difficult things about human existence. It may be that existence without a conscious relation to eternity is quite

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[21] Ibid., 195-196.

[22] Ibid.

easy, but for Kierkegaard, this is not existence in the highest sense. Climacus explains,

> To exist, one thinks, is nothing much, even less an art. Of course, we all exist, but to think abstractly—that is something. But truly to exist, that is, to permeate one's existence with consciousness, simultaneously to be eternal, far beyond it, as it were, and nevertheless present in it and nevertheless in a process of becoming—that is truly difficult.[23]

This difficulty of synthesizing the temporal and the eternal in the human self remains at the center of Kierkegaard's entire corpus, and my project seeks to shed light on the mystery of this temporal-eternal synthesis.

Structure and Context of Project

The present investigation is an endeavor to discern how Kierkegaard conceives of these ontological and normative roles of the eternal in temporal human beings. The structure of this project parallels the structure of Kierkegaard's development of the eternal in *Concept of Anxiety*. In chapter two, I investigate the predominantly ontological presence of the eternal in the self, specifically in a human being's original created structure (i.e., before the fall into sin). In chapter three I discuss the self's falling away from the eternal, a fall that reveals eternity's ontological *and* normative role, as well as what Kierkegaard calls the "demonic" relation to eternity. Chapter four offers a contrast between the Platonic and Christian ways of helping the self regain a proper relationship to eternity, both ontologically and normatively. In my last chapter, I further develop and analyze the normative implications of Christian repetition and how the qualities of inwardness, earnestness, and concretion characterize a proper conception and relationship to the eternal.

The structure of chapters two through five mirrors the biblical metanarrative of creation, fall, and redemption: chapter two explains

[23] CUP, 1.208.

the proper relation to eternity within the self (creation), chapter three details what happens when this relation to eternity is lost (fall), and chapters four and five focus on how the self may be saved and restored to the eternal (redemption). I believe this structure is implicit in Kierkegaard's thought and I defend this conviction in the following chapters. Although Kierkegaard, presumably for rhetorical reasons, tends to communicate his Christian philosophy in a way that bypasses creation, beginning with the fall and transitioning to redemption—this is the structure of *Sickness Unto Death*, as well as the stages of existence and the general dialectical development of his authorship—he does not reject the original good creation of the biblical metanarrative. Rather, his intention is to address his readers where they begin *existentially*:[24] as fallen sinners. However, especially in *Concept of Anxiety*, he is careful to include the original innocence of creation in his account of man's development in order to make the Christian categories clear and develop the problem of original sin.

My project concentrates on *Concept of Anxiety* for a variety of reasons. As I explain below, *Concept of Anxiety* is one of the two texts in Kierkegaard's corpus dedicated principally to developing a philosophical anthropology, and as such, it contains some of the most complete accounts of the structure and development of the Kierkegaardian self. Further, unlike the other anthropological work, *Sickness Unto Death*, which has received a significant amount of scholarly attention, the scholarship on *Concept of Anxiety* (especially concerning the theme of eternity) remains sparse and underdeveloped. This is not surprising, since *Sickness Unto Death* has a lucid and transparent pseudonymous perspective of Christian ideality that *Concept of Anxiety* does not. However, *Concept of Anxiety* contains far more references to eternity and its role in the self, and these important passages have yet to receive their due attention.

My analysis of these passages is not undertaken in isolation from *Sickness Unto Death*, but rather, the insights, arguments, and conclusions of *Sickness Unto Death* often serve to illuminate what remains obscure

[24] By "existential," I mean that which has significance for a person's concrete experience.

in *Concept of Anxiety*; and since *Sickness Unto Death* clearly represents Kierkegaard's own views, the continuities and discontinuities between these two works cannot be ignored. I do not think this approach is antithetical to Kierkegaard's demand for distinct identity among the pseudonyms. Kierkegaard himself often uses one work to help explain another (as in Climacus's review of "Danish literature" in the *Postscript*), or reveals his thoughts through his journals, and most directly, gives his readers the literary, philosophical, and religious intentions behind all of his work in *The Point of View for My Work as an Author* and *On My Work as an Author*.[25] However, I do intend to take Kierkegaard's distancing of himself from the views of his pseudonyms seriously, and I further explain the particular implications of the pseudonymity of *Concept of Anxiety* and *Sickness Unto Death* below. Therefore, even though it is correct to say that this project is principally concerned with *Concept of Anxiety*, it must also be noted that *Sickness Unto Death* lies in the background as an interpretive guide. For this reason, it is important that we establish how these two works relate to each other in Kierkegaard's larger corpus.[26]

Concept of Anxiety and *Sickness Unto Death* span major developments within Kierkegaard's authorship, *Concept of Anxiety* being published during Kierkegaard's earlier, predominantly pseudonymous period (especially alongside works by the pseudonym, Johannes Climacus), and *Sickness Unto Death* being published during Kierkegaard's later, predominantly nonpseudonymous, religious authorship.[27] As a result, with the exception of his early aesthetic and latest religious works, these two texts provide insight into the continuities and discontinuities regarding eternity and the self through the course of Kierkegaard's

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[25] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View*, ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 351. Henceforth PV.

[26] My focus on *Concept of Anxiety* and *Sickness Unto Death* does not mean that I intend to exclude from my analysis those insights from Kierkegaard's other works that may shed light on important questions under consideration.

[27] Even though these texts were only published five years apart, this gap of time *is* significant in Kierkegaard's case. Indeed, the major texts of his entire corpus were published between 1843 and 1850, and *Concept of Anxiety* (1844) falls at the beginning of this period and *Sickness Unto Death* (1849) toward the end.

thought.[28] One could say that Kierkegaard's formal anthropological contemplation begins in *Concept of Anxiety* (1844)[29] and that this work is directly related in substance to *Sickness Unto Death* since, as we shall see, "despair is an advanced stage beyond anxiety."[30] Published the same year as *Concept of Anxiety*, *Philosophical Fragments* (1844) attempts in the form of a hypothesis to answer the question, "*If* an advance is to be made upon Socrates, *then* what follows?" *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846) is then published two years later and provides categories that show the "positive ascent" in anthropology from the "universally

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[28] My omission of Kierkegaard's early aesthetic works such as *Either/Or* and *Fear and Trembling* is an unfortunate aspect of the practical need to narrow my investigation in order to treat his texts with sufficient hermeneutical care and philosophical depth. Indeed, my investigation constitutes a necessary complement to existing secondary literature which has closely given attention to the concept of eternity in these earlier works. See, for instance, John W. Elrod, *Being and Existence in Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Works* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), Howard P. Kainz, "Ambiguities and Paradoxes in Kierkegaard's Existential Categories," *Philosophy Today* 13 (Summer 1969): 138-145, Edward D. Mooney, "*Repetition*: Getting the World Back," in *Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 282-307, Mark C. Taylor, *Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship: A Study of Time and the Self* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), Sylvia I. Walsh, *Living Poetically: Kierkegaard's Existential Aesthetics* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).

My omission of Kierkegaard's later religious works such as *Judge For Yourself* and *Attack on Christendom* is more unfortunate, because I believe there is a significant difference between the way Kierkegaard portrays eternity's role in the Christian life in these works and the earlier works. While in religious works such as *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, *Works of Love*, and *Sickness Unto Death*, eternity serves as a redemptive agent in temporal life, Kierkegaard heightens the opposition between time and eternity in his very latest works, sometimes to the extent that the task of redeeming our temporal world seems neither important nor commendable. It is my opinion that this progression reflects badly on Kierkegaard's later thought because it leads him to advocate a kind of otherworldly dualism (or denigration of material, earthly life) that is neither healthy nor Christian. In comparison, I believe *Works of Love* and *Sickness Unto Death* portray a more balanced and better reflection of the proper role of eternity in the Christian life.

[29] *Concept of Anxiety* and *Prefaces* were published on June 17, 1844, when Kierkegaard was thirty-one years old. Earlier that same month, Kierkegaard also published *Three Upbuilding Discourses* and *Philosophical Fragments* (only four days earlier). That same year he also published *Two Upbuilding Discourses* and *Four Upbuilding Discourses*.

[30] Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, introduction to *The Sickness Unto Death*, by Søren Kierkegaard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), xiii.

human" self (the Socratic, Religiousness A) to the "theological self" of Christianity (Religiousness B).[31] In other words, despite the predominant unity of purpose in *Fragments* and *Postscript*, *Fragments* emphasizes the *distinction* between the Socratic and Christian self, while *Postscript* also argues for the existential development of the Christian self beyond the Socratic. Finally, three years later, Kierkegaard published *Sickness Unto Death* (1849), arguably the fullest expression of Kierkegaard's philosophical anthropology, a work that shows "the Socratic and Christianity in a correlation of complementary discontinuity."[32] Kierkegaard's ultimate anthropological goal is to develop a Christian philosophy of the human being; according to Howard and Edna Hong, the idea is that "with dogmatics as a presupposition, a truly Christian view of life, anthropology, and psychology could be worked out, and on this foundation Kierkegaard structured his whole authorship."[33] But he recognized that in order to do this, he must first show what philosophy can offer us without the help of the transcendent revelation of Christ. For Kierkegaard, Socrates (and Religiousness A) represents the highest of what natural revelation can attain. More importantly, because of Socrates' greatness, the limitations in his concept of the self are even more illuminating. Kierkegaard argues that Socrates' immanent perspective of human nature falls short in a way that can only be rescued by what is offered through the transcendence of Christianity. This is why Kierkegaard regards the relation between the Socratic and Christianity as one of complementary *discontinuity*. As I show in chapter four, the Socratic is the philosophical foil to Christianity; Socrates' position can seem similar enough but actually illuminates the significance of Christianity precisely where the two are radically discontinuous.

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[31] I am not assuming that Religiousness B and Christianity are identical in all regards. Indeed, there may be important differences between the way Climacus, the unbelieving pseudonym, characterizes Religiousness B as Christianity, and the way Kierkegaard or Anti-Climacus, the ideal believer, characterize Christianity in works written from a distinctly Christian perspective. I only use the terms synonymously when I believe Religiousness B and Christianity do agree in the subject under discussion.

[32] Ibid. xiii-xiv.

[33] JP, 4.737-738.

Returning to the place of *Concept of Anxiety* and *Sickness Unto Death* in the Kierkegaardian corpus, while "Kierkegaard's entire authorship may in a sense be regarded as the result of his having undertaken [the] task" of "genuine anthropological contemplation," *Concept of Anxiety* might be regarded as its formal beginning and *Sickness Unto Death* as its "consummation."[34] In 1841, three years before *Concept of Anxiety* was written, Kierkegaard gave a sermon containing prophetic ruminations on human existence that "may be regarded as an epitomization of Kierkegaard's anthropological contemplation to that date," a contemplation of which *Concept of Anxiety* and *Sickness Unto Death* "may be regarded as a two-stage explication:"[35] In this sermon, he asks,

> Was there not a time also in your consciousness, my listener, … when the thought of God blended irrelevantly with your other conceptions, blended with your happiness but did not sanctify it, blended with your grief but did not comfort it? And later was there not a time when this in some sense guiltless life, which never called itself to account, vanished? Did there not come a time when your mind was unfruitful and sterile, your will incapable of all good, your emotions cold and weak, when hope was dead in your breast, and memory painfully clutched at a few solitary recollections of happiness and soon these also became loathsome, when everything was of no consequence to you, …? Was there not a time when you found no one to whom you could turn, when the *darkness of quiet despair* brooded over your soul, and you did not have the courage to let it go but would rather hang on to it and you even *brooded once more over your despair*? When heaven was shut for you, and the prayer died on your lips, or it became a *shriek of anxiety* which demanded an accounting from heaven, and yet you sometimes found within you a longing, an intimation to which you might ascribe meaning, but this was soon crushed by the thought that you were a nothing and your soul lost in infinite space?... Alas, it seemed

[34] Hong and Hong, intro. to *Sickness Unto Death*, x.

[35] Ibid.

> to you that the distance between heaven and earth was infinite? And in spite of all this was there not a defiance in you which forbade you to humble yourself under God's mighty hand? Was this not so? And what would you call this condition if you did not call it death?[36]

Kierkegaard poignantly describes the existential transition from a kind of dreaming innocence or ignorance of one's own guilt to the awakening of guilt-consciousness.[37] He also speaks of the inner turmoil one undergoes when cut off from the eternal, separated by an "infinite" distance, when no temporal comfort satisfies. He suggests that such alienation from eternity transforms the *whole* person – mind, will, emotions, memory, and even one's capacity for hope. Even more, he speaks of anxiety and despair as central characteristics of this diseased consciousness, both of which he aims to identify by pointing out their origin and varieties of expression.[38] He wants to help his readers recognize these dispositions within themselves and understand them in terms of spiritual and anthropological categories. When this is accomplished, he can point to the eternal healing power of Christ that is available through faith (CA 162, SUD 113). This is the joint task of *Concept of Anxiety* and *Sickness Unto Death*.

Concept of Anxiety and Sickness Unto Death

As we have already seen in part, *Concept of Anxiety* and *Sickness Unto Death* are naturally paired together in Kierkegaard's corpus in their

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[36] Emphasis mine. JP, 4.3915.

[37] In chapters two and three, I describe the nature of this transition from innocence to guilt and how it relates to eternity, drawing especially on insights provided by Kresten Nordentoft's study of Kierkegaard's psychology. See Kresten Nordentoft, *Kierkegaard's Psychology* (Pittsburg, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1978).

[38] Despite the striking similarities between anxiety and despair, there is an important difference. Despair is always an expression of sin and is therefore a sickness to be cured. Anxiety, by contrast, is not sinful in itself – Adam and Eve are said by Haufniensis to have experienced anxiety *before* the fall – and therefore the goal is not to rid oneself of anxiety entirely, but to learn how to be anxious in the right way and for the right reasons. It is true that in a dialectical sense, despair is the cure for despair, but this still does not make despair, like anxiety, a reality in human beings prior to the fall.

common concern for anthropological contemplation and the continuity and discontinuity between Socratic and Christian accounts of selfhood. Both works explore the interconnection among psychology, the problem of sin, and man's proper and improper relationship to God and the eternal in terms of particular dispositions (anxiety, despair, faith). Finally, both endeavor to situate man's relation to the eternal in terms of both human freedom and submissive reliance on God. Let us investigate in more detail these continuities as well as discontinuities between the two works.

Continuities

Concept of Anxiety and *Sickness Unto Death* aim to develop the relation between the origin and consequences of sin and man conceived as a synthesis, principally because sin shows most clearly how a person's loss of the eternal is also a loss of his own self. By sin, Kierkegaard essentially means disobedience against and separation from God, both in terms of a particular act that goes against God's law and in terms of a continuous state of fallenness in which a person refuses to be the self God created him to be (SUD 81-2). While the presence of sin does signify a person's loss of himself and the eternal, it also paradoxically heightens that person's individuality and awareness of the eternal by making him guilty and responsible for that sin before God. Kierkegaard's analysis of sin not only describes where man is ontologically and spiritually, but also points normatively to where he ought to be.

The anthropological concerns of *Concept of Anxiety* and *Sickness Unto Death* are connected intrinsically to their psychological orientation. In fact, Reinhold Niebuhr has praised Kierkegaard as "the profoundest interpreter of the psychology of the religious life, in my opinion, since St. Augustine."[39] Kierkegaard does not use the term "psychology" in the standard modern, objectivist or behaviorist sense.[40] That is, psychol-

[39] Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, introduction to *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, by Søren Kierkegaard (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1967-1978), I, xxviii.

[40] As Reidar Thomte points out, Kierkegaard's phenomenology "is based on an

ogy is not merely a study of the external, scientifically observable aspects of human beings, nor of the behavioral tendencies of particular human individuals (CA 75).[41] Rather, he aims to convey what it means to be a human being holistically and essentially, with priority placed on the inner, spiritual life—the eternal center of human beings. As a kind of "depth psychologist," Kierkegaard explores the deeper (and often hidden) motives and meanings behind human actions with the help of particular frames of reference or life-views that make sense of these actions.

What then is the role of the psychologist according to Kierkegaard? The psychologist offers a phenomenology of human possibilities that can be acknowledged and affirmed by any keen observer of human nature (SUD 173). Max Weber's conception of "ideal types" approximates Kierkegaard's psychological method, although Kierkegaard does not adopt Weber's Enlightenment presuppositions. According to Weber, an "ideal type" is formed imaginatively by one-sidedly accentuating all of the possible aspects of a kind of personae with a particular point of view and values into a unified thought-construct.[42] Similarly, Haufniensis describes his approach to psychology in terms of imagining distinct life-views or passions and then accentuating or purifying them in order to see what possibilities and limits these views of life entail:

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ontological view of man, the fundamental presupposition of which is the transcendent reality of the individual, whose intuitively discernible character reveals the existence of an eternal component. Such a psychology does not blend well with any purely empirical science and is best understood by regarding soma, psyche, and spirit as the principal determinants of the human structure, with the first two belonging to the temporal realm and the third to the eternal." Reidar Thomte, introduction to *The Concept of Anxiety*, by Søren Kierkegaard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), xiv.

41 Interestingly, Haufniensis is clear about the limitations of the science of psychology, particularly concerning its incapacity or lack of interest in seeking out "the eternal" in a human being: "The attention of psychology is fixed exclusively upon the particular phenomenon, but at the same time it does not have its eternal categories ready and does not lay adequate emphasis upon saving mankind, which can be done only by saving each particular individual into the race, whatever the cost may be" (CA, 75).

42 Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (New York: Free Press, 1997), 88.

> One who has properly occupied himself with psychology and psychological observation acquires a general human flexibility that enables him at once to construct his example which even though it lacks factual authority nevertheless has an authority of a different kind. The psychological observer ought to be more nimble than a tightrope dancer in order to incline and bend himself to other people and imitate their attitudes…. Hence he ought also to have a poetic originality in his soul so as *to be able at once to create both the totality and the invariable from what in the individual is always partially and variably present*. (CA 55)[43]

Haufniensis uses his insight into the "partially and variably present" characteristics in human lives around him to construct, with the help of his poetic imagination, archetypes or representative figures who embody the "totality and invariable" idealizations of one life story or another. Kierkegaard is not original among philosophers in deploying this method. In the *Republic*, Plato identifies different *types* of persons depending on which part of the soul (rational, spirited, or appetitive) is the ruling element, and Aristotle similarly distinguishes three types of lives in his *Nicomachean Ethics* depending on whether one's ultimate *telos* is pleasure, honor, or contemplation.[44] In this sense, "psychology" is for Haufniensis a discipline that makes judgments regarding different types or conditions of the soul (psyche).

The sources of insight that Kierkegaard uses in his psychological analysis can be defined in terms of observation and introspection, the former being more "objective" and the latter being more "subjective."[45] The more objective method of observation involves what I have already described, that is, paying careful attention to the lives of people around oneself, recognizing certain patterns of personality, behavior, or worldview, and developing a kind of psychological anatomy or "descriptive

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[43] Emphasis mine.

[44] Plato, *The Republic*, 435c-444e; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.5.

[45] C. Stephen Evans, *Søren Kierkegaard's Christian Psychology: Insight for Counseling and Pastoral Care* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College, 1995), 37.

logic" of the self.[46] Its objectivity lies in its external focus and does not imply a detached or disinterested relation to one's subject of study.

Introspection, on the other hand, is more subjective in that its focus is inward, drawing on one's own memories, patterns of action, and existential participation in life. This method allows a kind of seeing that can only occur through involvement in human existence. According to Kresten Nordentoft, an introspective method was used by academic psychologists in the late nineteenth century, and its aim was to identify and describe "subjective emotional states in as objective and disinterested a mode as possible, and with the conscious abstraction from all possible accompanying circumstances and causes."[47] Kierkegaard's approach is different in important ways. Although he values self-honesty and is always seeking to expose his own evasions or efforts at self-deception, Kierkegaard is far from seeking a disinterested view of himself or others. Rather, he is attentive to the way in which his emotional states connect to his actions and general view of life. This is why Nordentoft rightly observes that Kierkegaard differs from the introspectionism of his day in that instead of passively registering and describing emotions, he seeks to actively analyze both emotional states and their existential *function* in his own life.[48] While his self-analyses are interested and personal, they are not intended to be merely private or idiosyncratic. On the contrary, his aim is to provide an interpretation of his private experiences that offers universally valid insights, an interpretation that reveals something about what it means to be human

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[46] Even though I have described this method as more "objective," it still requires a great deal of personal empathy, and thus a strongly developed subjectivity, in order to be carried out. This is obvious in the way that Haufniensis describes his strategy as a psychological observer: "Thus if someone wants to observe a passion, he must choose his individual. At that point, what counts is stillness, quietness, and obscurity, so that he may discover the individual's secret. Then he must practice what he has learned until he is able to delude the individual. Thereupon he fictionally invents the passion and appears before the individual in a preternatural magnitude of the passion. If it is done correctly, the individual will feel an indescribable relief and satisfaction, such as an insane person will feel when someone has uncovered and poetically grasped his fixation and then proceeds to develop it further" (CA, 55-56).

[47] Nordentoft, *Kierkegaard's Psychology*, 3.

[48] Ibid., 3-4.

more generally. Kierkegaard does this first with the Socratic belief that knowing oneself is the precondition for knowing others, and secondly with the assumption that "every person possesses in himself, when he looks carefully, a more complete expression for everything human" than the entirety of knowledge available through empirical studies.[49]

Ultimately, both methods of observation and introspection are important and are best used in tandem.[50] David Gouwens has noted the predominance of "observer" figures among Kierkegaard's pseudonyms, and suggests that one could rank them in terms of their participation or lack thereof in the kind of existence they describe.[51] If we were to rank Haufniensis and Anti-Climacus in this way, Haufniensis as "the watchman" is no doubt more an observer than a participant,[52] while Anti-Climacus as the ideal Christian more successfully integrates observation and participatory introspection, using them together in their greatest capacities.[53]

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[49] Quoted in Nordentoft, *Kierkegaard's Psychology*, 6.

[50] David Gouwens suggests that Kierkegaard also has a third way of understanding human beings that combines observation and participation into what Gouwens calls "passional antipathy." Unlike the "passional sympathy" of participatory knowing, "passional antipathy" deals with particular ways of life that one may believe to be destructive or in error. The assumption is that without literally participating in such practices or lifestyles, one can still understand and charitably critique them through an empathetic, imaginative, and critical insight. I agree with Gouwens that Kierkegaard often uses this approach, such as in the case of the demonic. David J. Gouwens, *Kierkegaard as Religious Thinker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 59.

[51] Ibid., 58.

[52] Kierkegaard notes this "observer" quality of Haufniensis and distances himself from it in the following journal entry: "Some people may be disturbed by my sketch of an observer in *The Concept of Concept of Anxiety*. It does, however, belong there and is like a watermark in the work. After all, I always have a poetic relationship to my works, and therefore I am pseudonymous. At the same time as the book develops some theme, the corresponding individuality is delineated. For example, Vigilius Haufniensis delineates several, but I have also made a sketch of him in the book." JP, 5.5732.

[53] My distinction between observation and participatory introspection is not meant to imply that these two methods are unrelated to one another. In fact, there are many cases in which being a good observer depends largely on being adept at introspection, where it is one's ability to imaginatively empathize with the person being observed that helps make sense of that person's actions.

There is a subtle but important distinction that must be noted between Kierkegaard's conception of psychology and what we have called "philosophical anthropology." While anthropological contemplation is for Kierkegaard a broader category that can include all that is entailed in what it means to be human, psychology is more specific and limited as a science. Psychology can provide observations and insight into why people behave as they do, how they fail, how they succeed, and what fundamental human possibilities and limits follow from various perspectives of existence. More than anything it penetrates the *problem* of human existence. On the other hand, psychology is limited in that it cannot by means of its own resources provide the *solution* to human existence – *that* only the revelation of God in Christ can provide, according to Kierkegaard. But this does not negate the value of psychology. Even though Christianity is the solution to the problem of human existence, Kierkegaard suspects that many fail to understand Christianity because they fail to understand the problem of human existence. One cannot understand the solution without first understanding the problem, and this is what psychology provides.[54]

Discontinuities

As we have seen, there are continuities between *Concept of Anxiety* and *Sickness Unto Death*, the former preparing the way for the latter, but what of their discontinuities? The subtitles to these works already point to what they do and do not hold in common. The subtitle of *Concept of Anxiety*, "A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin," informs us first that this work is "simple," not meaning easy to understand—for it may be Kierkegaard's most difficult work—but that its form is direct, singular of purpose, and even "algebraic"[55] in a careful, compact unity. This simplicity of

[54] Evans, *Kierkegaard's Christian Psychology*, 21.

[55] The Hongs define "algebraic" as "compact, abstract, dialectical," and they consider the form of both *Concept of Anxiety* and *Sickness Unto Death* to possess this quality. I agree that *Sickness Unto Death* also has an "algebraic" character to it, but my point is that this is even more pronounced in *Concept of Anxiety*. Hong and Hong, intro. to *Sickness Unto Death*, xiii.

form correlates with the *kind* of work *Concept of Anxiety* is: a "deliberation." In his distinction between the roles of deliberations and upbuilding discourses, Kierkegaard explains why a simple "communication of knowledge" must often precede other texts that aim at transforming the reader inwardly:

> A deliberation does not presuppose the definitions as given and understood; therefore, it must not so much move, mollify, reassure, persuade, as *awaken* and provoke people and sharpen thought. The time for deliberation is indeed before action, and its purpose therefore is rightly to set all the elements into motion…. An upbuilding discourse about love presupposes that people know essentially what love is and seeks to win them to it, to move them. But … a "deliberation" must first fetch them up out of the cellar, call to them, turn their comfortable way of thinking topsy-turvy with the dialectic of truth.[56]

As the author of a "deliberation," Haufniensis's goal is more informative and preparatory than transformative and edifying[57]—he offers a

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[56] JP, 1.641.

[57] Still, Haufniensis's role as a "watchman" is somewhat tenuous. For example, in a journal of 1846, Kierkegaard speaks quite dismissively of the watchman's role: "Imagine, if you will, a devout woman singing a hymn with inward reverence, enunciating clearly every word, yet without raising her voice at all but rather with a humble, tremulous muffling and muting almost like the resignation of death--so that one has to be completely still to hear it. But sense impressions are like a bellowing watchman drowning out all the others without the slightest inwardness. Having a beautiful voice or not having a beautiful voice neither adds nor subtracts as far as inwardness is concerned." Ibid., 2.2294. In this way, direct instruction without the component of inwardness may fall on deaf ears, and one could say that that although *Concept of Anxiety* is more "direct" in its style of communication, its meaning is no less difficult to decipher.

In fact, Johannes Climacus notes the lack of appreciation for *Concept of Anxiety*'s directness among the reading public, since they have apparently been demanding a more "direct" work from a pseudonym: "The somewhat didactic form of the book was undoubtedly the reason it found a little favor in the eyes of the *docents* as compared with the other pseudonymous works. I cannot deny that I regard this favor as a misunderstanding, wherefore it pleased me that a merry little book was published simultaneously by Nicolaus Notabene. The pseudonymous books are generally ascribed to one writer, and now everyone who had hoped for a didactic author suddenly gave up hope upon seeing light literature from the same hand." CUP, 1.229.

direct, formal instruction to his readers regarding the possibility and actuality of hereditary sin—a vital concept he assumes his readers do not understand.

Sickness Unto Death, on the other hand, is more akin to an "upbuilding discourse" and may be the very text that *Concept of Anxiety* prepares us for—its subtitle is "A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening." Indeed, it does not seek merely to provide a necessary "communication of knowledge," but to transform its readers inwardly, to demand, "move, mollify, reassure, and persuade" them. On the other hand, although it is "for upbuilding and awakening,"[58] *Sickness Unto Death* is not strictly an "upbuilding discourse," but an "exposition," and in this sense it shares with *Concept of Anxiety* a strong concern for the clarification of concepts in terms of their existential implications. Kierkegaard notes this ambiguity in his "Report" on *Sickness Unto Death*:

> There is one difficulty with this book: it is too dialectical and stringent for the proper use of the rhetorical, the soul-stirring, the gripping. The title itself seems to indicate that it should be discourses—the title is lyrical….
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> … The point is that before I really can begin using the rhetorical I always must have the dialectical thoroughly fluent, must have gone through it many times. That was not the case here.[59]

Although its purpose is different, *Sickness Unto Death* is like *Concept of Anxiety* in its dialectical rigor, or what Kierkegaard elsewhere calls "dialectical algebra."[60] By "dialectical" or "dialectic," Kierkegaard

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[58] The Hongs point out in their introduction to *Sickness Unto Death* that the works labeled "for upbuilding" include *Two Ethical-Religious Essays*, by H. H., and Anti-Climacus's works, *Sickness Unto Death* and *Practice in Christianity*. And as for the label "for awakening," the entire authorship could be described this way "through the positing of a choice between esthetical and the religious." However, the expression "for awakening" is used explicitly for pseudonymous works by Anti-Climacus. Hong and Hong, intro. to *Sickness Unto Death*, xxii.

[59] JP, 6.6136.

[60] Ibid., 6.6137.