FAITH AND HEROIC DESPAIR:

A COMPARISON OF KIERKEGAARD AND SARTRE

THE LEAP OF FAITH AND HEROIC DESPAIR

A Comparison of

The Philosophies of Authentic Existence,

According to S. Kierkegaard and J. P. Sartre

by

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Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Sacred Theology

McGill University

1966

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PREFACE

The rise of Existentialism in the 20th century has engendered mixed reactions in the minds of most critical observers of the philosophical scene. Some have tended to dismiss it lightly as a passing phase, comparing it, for example, to the post-World War I cult of dadaism. They regarded it as a mere product of the times which was bound to pass away as times changed. However, increasingly, we see a growing serious interest in this philosophy.[1] Now, not only intellectual Europe - which has long been grappling with existentialist philosophy - but North America too is facing the challenge presented by this "new" philosophy. The coffee bar now no longer preempts the right to discuss such thinkers as Kierkegaard and Sartre.

These are, without doubt, two of the most important names in Existentialism.[2] Like a delayed-action timebomb, Kierkegaard's philosophy exploded on the Anglo-American scene at about the same time that Sartre's star was beginning to rise. The latter achieved fame

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[1] Existentialism's philosophical status has been impugned on the ground that its concern with such matters as guilt, anxiety, decision, death - in a word, Grenzsituationen (Jaspers) - is hardly a concern of philosophy. This charge, of course, comes primarily from those in the Positivist tradition who maintain that philosophy is really a question of rational analysis. We might however challenge this in the light of, for example, the maxim: "To philosophize is to learn how to die." (Jaspers 53) If this is what philosophy means, then existentialism is more truly philosophy than is Analysis. However, instead of taking a dogmatic stand on either side of this issue, it seems best to regard Existentialism and Analysis as two edges of the sword of philosophy.

[2] Their unanimous emphasis on man's condition in the world and the possibilities open to human freedom, i.e. on Existenz, makes it legitimate to retain the term "existentialist" in reference to them. Sartre's definition of Existentialism as the doctrine which proclaims existence prior to essence need not be taken as definitive. What he means by this is that there is no God, but Jaspers, rightly, has criticized him, arguing that existential thinking is under no internal compulsion to arrive at a godless outlook.

rapidly owing to the success of his literary works, and through him the magic - sounding word, "Existentialism," came forcefully to the attention of the world. It was not long before Kierkegaard came to be regarded as the "father" of Existentialism. Others too - such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Jaspers, Marcel, Berdyaev, Unamuno - were pressed into service, until finally Existentialism became a full-fledged movement. The names of Kierkegaard and Sartre, however, stand out prominently as the two most responsible for introducing Existentialism to our time.

What makes them of special interest is the fact that they represent two opposite poles of existentialist thought. Kierkegaard believes in God, Sartre does not. Now the basic question of this thesis is: How important is this opposition? Is this a peripheral matter, or does it create an antagonism which resists mediation in a higher synthesis? Before I discuss the way in which I have approached this question, I must refer to several important issues which occur in this study of Kierkegaard and Sartre.

Any attempt to explicate a doctrine of Kierkegaard brings one inevitably face to face with the problem of the pseudonymous writings. I have, to a certain extent, overcome this problem by relying heavily on such non-pseudonymous works as: The Point of View, The Present Age, Attack on Christendom, and, to a lesser degree, the Journals. The Postscript and Sickness unto Death have also proved important sources and, since Kierkegaard said that he saw himself as

existing somewhere between the non-Christian Johannes Climacus and the Christian par excellence, Anti-Climacus, perhaps a consideration of the views in both books - their synthesis - may lead us toward the true Kierkegaardian position. Of course, I have used other pseudonymous works, quoting from them as though they were the opinions of Kierkegaard himself. However, I have felt justified in doing so, as long as these views were consistent with the general outlook of his non-pseudonymous literature. Yet, despite these precautions, in view of his philosophy of communication which insists that men must be beguiled into the truth, we are ultimately forced to say what Climacus said of Lessing: I refer to Kierkegaard although uncertain whether he would acknowledge it. (Postscript, 67)

It is well-known that Kierkegaard's works are an amazing potpourri of theology, philosophy, sociology, psychology, satire, etc. Kierkegaard certainly produced no equivalent to Being and Nothingness. This has complicated the problem of comparing him with Sartre; however, I have not complicated it further by making use of such strictly religious works as Edifying Discourses, Christian Discourses, Works of Love, etc. Throughout, the attempt is made to focus upon those aspects of their philosophies which make comparison feasible.

In developing Sartre's doctrine of authenticity, I have made extensive use of his creative writings. Sartre himself has made this a necessity for not only does he use the ordinary ratiocinative method of philosophical exegesis, but he has also chosen to express his ideas through the medium of fiction. We see this most clearly in his novel,

Nausea, in which, according to Barrett, "the intellectual and the creative artist come closest to being joined."[1] Besides, the nature of existentialist philosophy makes the short story, the novel, the play, perfect media for the communication of its fundamental themes.

The aim of the thesis has been to compare the Kierkegaardian and Sartrian "prescriptions" for authentic existence, to determine the exact nature of their fundamental attitudes toward life. Some have considered them opposite in nature, heroic despair implying courageous acceptance of a grim reality, the leap of faith implying self-deceptive flight to comforting illusion; but others have tended to identify them, explaining the apparent difference as simply a problem of semantics. The general appellation, "existentialist", has itself tended to suggest that their views are basically the same. The conclusion of this thesis, however, is that the predicates, "theist" and "atheist", need to be stressed more than "existentialist." We find that it makes all the difference in the world whether one is a theistic existentialist or an atheistic existentialist.

Now my approach to the development of this thesis has been to deal first with Sartre and then Kierkegaard, and then to make the critical comparison in the final chapter. This separate treatment in the first two chapters seems the most practicable since it allows the full development of those facets of their philosophy which bear on their doctrines of authenticity; it allows their respective views to stand out sharply. If I had attempted to make the comparison while

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[1]Barrett, P.251

developing their thought, we might not have seen the forest for the trees. Besides, their approaches to their subject are so different. To name just one example: Sartre's chief interest is ontology, so that he deals with the impersonal consciousness of man as it relates to other consciousnesses and the world; Kierkegaard, meanwhile, focusses on the personal individual ("my own petty self") as he confronts a society, ruled by the spirit of the "crowd." Furthermore, the Sitz-im-Leben of each is so vastly different; in many respects, the world of the 19th century is a million light years away from our world today. For these reasons it appears that the method followed is the most suitable. Thus, while permitting greater clarity, it does, nevertheless, mean that the real force of the comparison and criticism is felt only at the end. However, there is value in this, I feel, for if we first fully assimilate each point of view, then we can truly appreciate, existentially, the battle to the death of these opposing Weltanschauungen.

How relevant is this discussion of the leap of faith and heroic despair? Is this just another philosophical issue, of interest only to the savant or the one with a penchant for solving knotty problems? Existentialism has been described as "a concealed way of salvation." There is truth in this. Therefore in answer to the question of relevance, it must be affirmed that this question of authenticity is one of the most vital facing the world today. Perhaps the future of mankind depends on the response we make to the challenge of these existentialists.

I am grateful to Prof. J. McLelland for his invaluable assistance and encouragement in the writing of this thesis. Also, I am indebted to Daphne Belbin and her sister Evelyn for working long hours to get this work in on time.

CHAPTER I

SARTRE'S DOCTRINE OF AUTHENTICITY

I AN ABSURD WORLD

A. DEATH OF GOD[1]

When Nietzsche wrote just before the turn of the century, "God is dead" and the world is consequently plunging into a gloom that makes it necessary for lanterns to be lit in the morning, he was describing with prophetic insight a changed Weltanschauung that most failed to, or rather refused to, recognize. Thus centuries earlier when some were "far-sighted enough to realize that the twilight of the gods was at hand, and foolish enough to shout it from the tree-tops - like that enfant terrible, Giordano Bruno"[2] - they exposed themselves to the fury of a world, frightened and clinging desperately to the past.

Men are not burned alive today, as was Bruno, for denying God's existence. On the contrary, it has become quite fashionable to chant that new slogan, "God is dead", a phenomenon suggesting that men have failed to grasp the real implication of "the death of God"; it shows that for the majority this is merely an abstract problem, without existential significance. There is hardly any suggestion of the anguish of a Hölderlin seeing in the setting sun the withdrawal of

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[1] I don't use "death of God" in the sense that William Hamilton, for example, uses it. He sees God as having once existed but as having subsequently historicized himself, taking on mortality, in the coming of Jesus. God has thus, as it were, become immanent in history. I use the phrase in the sense that there is no transcendent being, now, nor has there ever been one. God is literally absent.

[2] A. Koestler, The Trail of the Dinosaur in Encounters, (Simon & Schuster, N.Y. 1965) P.210

the god and the arrival of "the night of the world."

Sartre has been accused of dismissing God in an equally facile manner, but this is hard to reconcile with his recent statement that, "Atheism is a cruel, long-term business."[1] It is likewise hard to reconcile with a view of the world expounded by him nearly thirty years ago: "Nausea," he said, "spreads at the bottom of the viscous puddle, at the bottom of our time - the time of purple suspenders and broken chair seats."[2] He deliberately uses such language not, as some suggest, out of some perverse predilection for the nasty, obscene elements of life, but because he is attempting to show what the proposition "God is dead" really signifies. It is with this proposition in fact that, Sartre says, existentialism begins; and his whole endeavour is to draw from this every logical conclusion, come what may.

B. CONTINGENT BEING

First we must see what Sartre's postulatory atheism means in terms of a philosophy of the material world. The mode of being of the world Sartre calls being-in-itself (l'etre-en-soi). Unlike the world in the "creationist" view which appears "tainted with a certain passivity"[3] since it receives its being from God, being for Sartre is neither passivity nor activity: it simply is. Furthermore there can be no question

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1 J. P. Sartre, Words, Trans. I. Clephane, (Hamish Hamilton, Britain 1964) P. 171

2 J. P. Sartre, Nausea, Trans. L. Alexander, (New Directions 1964) P. 33

3 J. P. Sartre, Being & Nothingness, Trans. Hazel Barnes, (Citadel Press, N.Y. 1965) P. LXIV

of either its derivation from the possible or its reduction to the necessary. The phenomenon of being therefore is characterized by contingency (since, "An existing phenomenon can never be derived from another existent qua existent"[1]) and hence by superfluity (since, "Being-in-itself is never either possible or impossible. It is."[2]) "Uncreated, without reason for being, without any connection with another being, being-in-itself is de trop for eternity."[3]

This is precisely how the world appears to Roquentin in Nausea. The novel itself is essentially a description of the progressive disintegration of Roquentin's ordered, meaningful world. Gradually there emerges a world that appears gratuitous, contingent, absurd. A pebble, casually picked up on the shore, produces "a sort of nausea in the hands."[4] From there it spreads out into the surrounding world until finally he is driven to say: "I am the one who is within it."[5] In the park, where he experiences a prolonged attack of the nausea, suddenly it dawns on him that "the world of explanations and reasons is not the world of existence;" instead, existence is "this great wrinkled paw" (the root of the tree) in all its superfluity. In effect, what Sartre is saying is that things are entirely what they appear to be, and behind them there is....nothing.

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[1]Sartre, Being & Nothingness, P.LXVI

[2]Being & Nothingness, P.LXVI

[3]Being & Nothingness, P.LXVI

[4]Sartre, Nausea, P.20

[5]Nausea, P.31

Man, like his world, is simply gratuitous being. "I, too, was In the way," Roquentin notes in his diary: "....even my death would have been In the way....I was In the way (de trop) for eternity."[1] The reason for this lies in man's facticity, i.e. the For-itself's necessary connection with the In-itself.[2] "Facticity," Sartre writes, "....simply resides in the for-itself as a memory of being, as its unjustifiable presence in the world"; or, put another way, "contingency ....is what remains of the in-itself in the for-itself as facticity and what causes the for-itself to have only a factual necessity."[3] It is this then that leads the for-itself to apprehend itself "as being there for nothing, as being de trop."[4]

If man, therefore, is merely an unjustifiable fact in the world, then, as Hayden Carruth points out in his introduction to Nausea, the anthropocentric vision of reality that characterized rational humanism from the Renaissance to the 19th century is clearly untenable. Man, formerly regarded as the rational creature for whom the nonrational world exists, "is actually an accident, a late and adventitious newcomer whose life is governed by contingency."[5] This includes all men, even those

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[1]Nausea, P.173

[2]The For-itself (le pour-soi) is Sartre's term for conscious being, while the In-itself (l'en-soi) describes unconscious being. The latter is the being "which is what it is"; the former is the being "which is what it is not and which is not what it is." These concepts are developed as we proceed.

[3]Being & Nothingness, P.60

[4]Being & Nothingness, P.60

[5]Nausea, P.XI

who regard themselves as possessors of eternally valid privileges, whom Sartre calls "men of divine right." Such men, he says in Nausea, "cannot really succeed in not feeling superfluous. And in themselves, secretly, they are superfluous."[1] Man's life thus resembles that of Sisyphus who earned "that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted toward accomplishing nothing."[2] And this is precisely what Sartre says, viz. that all human actions, no matter how meaningful within the horizons of the world, are ultimately....for nothing. Thus, observing a young couple in a restaurant, Roquentin reflects: "Once they have slept together they will have to find something else to veil the enormous absurdity of their existence."[3]

C. DEATH[4]

The event that "guarantees" as it were the absurdity of existence is death. The first step in Sartre's analysis is the rejection of such attempts as those of Andre Malraux to "recover" death by asserting that it becomes the meaning of life as the resolved chord is the meaning of the melody. He also therefore challenges the philosophic formulation of this view by Heidegger who "humanizes" death by asserting that it is

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1 Nausea, P. 177

2 A. Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus in Existentialism from Dostoievsky to Sartre, ed. by W. Kaufmann, (Meridian, N.Y. 1956) P. 313

3 Nausea, P. 150

4 Here I deal with death in so far as it is a fact of the human condition. Later, under Section IV of this chapter, I look at it from the point of view of the Subject; i.e. we see how it presents itself to consciousness as a fact to be faced or avoided, alternative modes of behaviour which depend on the degree to which the individual has achieved existential authenticity.

the preeminent possibility of the Dasein since the being of human reality is its destiny unto death (Sein-zum-Tode). No! Sartre objects, death is the cancellation of all my possibilities[1] and the triumph of l'en-soi! Death extinguishes my subjectivity and I become an object. He makes this quite explicit in Iron in the Soul. France has been crushed by the tremendous onslaught of the German juggernaut, but Pinette, a companion of Mathieu, decides to make a suicidal stand against the enemy: "Pinette," Mathieu reflects, "was far out of his reach, marching blindly through the darkness of his last night, marching but not advancing: for whither he was going he had already come: his birth and death had swung full circle, and met....Over and done with was Pinette's pursuit of Pinette, for now he was wholly himself...."[2] Perhaps more dramatically the same point is made at the close of the same novel. The Germans had just killed a man trying to escape from a train transporting French captives to Germany: "Above the dead body, above the inert freight-van, the darkness wheeled....Tomorrow's dawn would cover all of them with the same dew. Dead flesh and rusted steel would run with the same sweat. Tomorrow the black birds would come."[3]

Death also has the effect, Sartre says, of removing all meaning from life.[4] He arrives at this conclusion by arguing that

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1 Being & Nothingness, P. 512

2 J. P. Sartre, Iron in the Soul, Trans. G. Hopkins, (Penguin 1963) P. 177

3 Iron P. 349

4 Being & Nothingness, P. 515

meaning can come only from subjectivity and that since "death does not appear on the foundation of our freedom," it therefore renders life meaningless: life falls into the category of the absurd. Sartre dramatizes this view in The Age of Reason. Lola, an aging nightclub singer, is believed dead: "Her life had been no more than a time of waiting ....the fullest, the most loaded moments, the nights of love that had seemed the most eternal, were but periods of waiting.

"There had been nothing to wait for: death had moved backwards into all those period of waiting and brought them to a halt, they remained motionless and mute, aimless and absurd."[1]

Thus, in Sartre's view, there is no salvation from absurdity. There is no divine Creator to make the material world anything other than superfluous plenitude; neither is there any extraterrestrial realm to guarantee to man any significance other than that which he gives himself; and finally, neither is there any philosophy of death which can divest life of its character of unmitigated absurdity. This is the harsh universe of Sartrean existentialism, but if it is the true picture then we are indebted to Sartre for there can be no advantage in postponing our disillusion.

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[1]J. P. Sartre, The Age of Reason, Trans. E. Sutton, (Penguin 1961) P.207, 8

II MAN, UNE PASSION INUTILE

A. CONDEMNED TO BE FREE

Denying Engels' claim that nature proceeds dialectically and has a real history, Sartre insists that "the notion of natural history is absurd."[1] He goes on to argue that,"History cannot be characterized by change nor by the pure and simple action of the past. It is defined by the deliberate resumption of the past by the present; only human history is possible."[2] The aim of this differentiation between the processes of nature and so-called historical events, and real history is to show that man is free, that he freely constitutes himself,[3] and that his peculiar dignity and superiority to the natural world derives from the fact that he is in possession of his own destiny.[4] Jean Anouilh, in his tragedy,Antigone, says as much when he writes: "No is one of your man-made words. Can you imagine a world in which trees say No to the sap? In which beasts say No to hunger or to propagation?"[5] Sartre then presupposes that man is free.

A point that he constantly makes in his presentation of his

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[1] J. P. Sartre, Materialism and Revolution, ed. by W. Barrett & H. Aiken, in Philosophy in The Twentieth Century (New York, 1962) P. 393

[2] Materialism and Revolution, P. 393

[3] A problem that must arise in connection with Sartre's doctrine of freedom is the challenge presented to it by the theory of psychic determinism, or more specifically, Freud's theory of the unconscious. A full discussion of this problem is not really required in this thesis but from time to time where it becomes relevant we allude to it briefly.

[4] Materialism and Revolution, P.422

[5] Jean Anouilh, Antigone, in Five Plays, Trans. L. Galantiere, (Mermaid Dramabook, N.Y. 1964) P.37

doctrine of freedom is that man is abandoned. By this he means, first of all, that I find myself in the world, "suddenly alone and without help."[1] There are no "everlasting arms" to uphold me, neither can I have recourse to any other than myself "for from the instant of my upsurge into being, I carry the weight of the world by myself alone without anything or any person being able to lighten it."[2] I, alone, can bear my responsibilities and perform my task on earth. This is enough to plunge a man into hell. Hence, Eliot writes in The Cocktail Party:

> "....Hell is oneself
> Hell is alone, the other figures in it
> Merely projections. There is nothing to escape from
> And nothing to escape to. One is always alone."[3]

Joining collectives, or submitting to the discipline of an authoritarian organization cannot save a man from himself. In Dirty Hands the assassin Hugo comes to realize this. He is talking to Olga about the orders he had been given to kill Hoederer: "The orders? There was no order, not any more. Orders leave you all alone, after a certain point. The order stayed behind and I went on alone and killed alone."[4] Even a mystical belief in signs cannot save one ultimately from deciding, alone; one still bears the entire responsibility for the decipherment of

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1 Being & Nothingness, P.531

2 Being & Nothingness, P.531

3 T. S. Eliot, The Cocktail Party, (Faber & Faber, London 1950) P.99

4 J. P. Sartre, Dirty Hands, in No Exit & Three Other Plays. (Vintage Book, 1949) P.136

the sign. "That is what 'abandonment' implies, that we ourselves decide our being."[1]

Apart from meaning that man stands necessarily alone in accomplishing his task, abandonment also means that there is in fact no given task. By this I mean that although the form of his task is given, viz. self-creation, the content is not given. This is what is implied by that definition Sartre has given of existentialism, that existence precedes essence. There is no essence to guide man when he makes himself; there is no pattern and there are no values by which a man can mould himself.[2] That is why Sartre employs the word "invent" in relation to man's project of making himself. He has to "invent" his essence; he has to "invent" the content of his moral decisions; he has to "invent" reasons for living. Roquentin finds himself faced with such a necessity. "I am free," he says: "there is absolutely no more reason for living, all the ones I have tried have given way....I am alone....and free."[3] What this means for Roquentin is that he is "abandoned in the midst of indifference": There is no indication from anywhere what he should do. Alone, unaided, unorientated, like an artist facing an empty canvas, he must project himself toward his own possibilities and create himself. It is in this sense that Sartre must be understood when he defines human consciousness as nothingness.

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[1] J. P. Sartre, Existentialism is a Humanism, in Existentialism from Dostoievsky to Sartre, (Meridian Book, N.Y. 1956) P.298

[2] Sartre ridicules the attempt of some 19th Century liberal French professors to retain a priori values while denying God's existence. Either there is no God, and hence no possibility of finding values in an intelligible heaven, or there is a God and hence eternal values. The disjunction is absolute; any attempt to synthesize these views is eo ipso confusion.

[3] Nausea, P.209

A final connotation of abandonment that we must consider is that of limitless responsibility. Sartre insists: "I find myself.... engaged in a world for which I bear the whole responsibility without being able, whatsoever I do, to tear myself away from this responsibility for an instant."[1] In fact, man is responsible for everything even though he is not responsible for his responsibility; i.e., even though he is not the foundation of his being. This means, "I did not ask to be born," is an invalid argument against total responsibility. There is no escape from it whatsoever for I am even responsible, Sartre argues with typical dialectical skill, "for my very desire of fleeing responsibilities."[2] Now we can understand better why Sartre describes man as "condemned to be free," for though he may be free to do whatever he likes, he is not free to cease being free.[3] In short, he is abandoned.

This carte blanche freedom Sartre describes may at first sight appear exhilirating. When Orestes hurls his challenge at Zeus, declaring: "I must blaze my trail. For I, Zeus, am a man,"[4] man thrills at the prospect of a freedom upon which even the gods cannot intrude. But the intoxication is shortlived as the full import of this dawns upon him, and, like Mathieu in The Reprieve, his joy shrivels into horror.[5] This, Sartre

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1 Being & Nothingness, P.531

2 Being & Nothingness, P.532

3 Being & Nothingness, P.415

4 J. P. Sartre, The Flies, in No Exit and Three Other Plays, (Vintage Book, 1949) P.122

5 J. P. Sartre, The Reprieve, Trans. E. Sutton, (Penguin 1963) P.299

explains, is the experience of anguish (l'angoisse). As in vertigo where a man is afraid not so much of falling off the precipice but of throwing himself off, so in freedom man experiences anguish. Freedom, one might say, is vertiginous, since anguish is not accidentally but essentially related to freedom. Sartre therefore talks of anguish "in its essential structure as consciousness of freedom."[1]

This organic relation of freedom and anguish becomes clearer when we consider man's project to create values. His freedom is the unique foundation of values and "nothing, absolutely nothing" justifies him in adopting this or that particular value. Hence the anguish, for his "freedom is anguished at being the foundation of values while itself without foundation."[2] Anguish also results, Sartre adds, since as soon as these values are posited they are immediately "put into question," for "the possibility of overturning the scale of values appears complementarily as my possibility."[3] Anguish then, as Kierkegaard has already taught us, arises in the face of freedom.

Sartre however maintains that Heidegger is also right in viewing anguish as the apprehension of nothingness.[4] The two descriptions he says really imply each other. Thus when a man resolves to do something

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1 Being & Nothingness, P.33

2 Being & Nothingness, P.38

3 Being & Nothingness, P.38

4 Referring specifically to Heidegger, A.J. Ayer in his essay The Elimination of Metaphysics, denies that "nothingness" (das Nichts, le Néant) has conceptual character. It has no corresponding entity, he argues, in the empirical world and therefore must be removed from the philosophical scene. Tillich however considers this objection of little significance: "Certainly nonbeing (or nothingness) is not a concept like others. It is the negation of every concept; but as such it is an inescapable content of thought and, as the history of thought has shown, the most important one after being-itself." (The Courage to be, P. Tillich, P.34)

either one can say that, since freedom is the basis of this resolve and since this resolve must therefore be "put in question," he therefore experiences anguish; or one can understand it from the Heideggerian point of view: Man is aware that what he resolves now, at this moment, does not determine the future for between present and future there intervenes "nothing," le néant. Anguish thus accompanies the perception of this "nothing." Nothingness then is capable of concrete apprehension; in fact it lies coiled, Sartre maintains, "in the heart of being - like a worm."[1] And it is this nothingness, with its concomitant anguish, that causes man to flee in the direction of self-transcendence.

B. THE DESIRE TO BE GOD

In his approach to the idea of transcendence, or self-surpassing, Sartre begins with the experience of desire, asserting that, "The existence of desire as a human fact is sufficient to prove that human reality is a lack."[2] He argues that desire cannot be viewed as a psychic state, i.e. as a being whose nature is to be what it is, for then it would be complete in itself and would not need anything for its completion. Rather, in order to constitute it as hunger or thirst, "an external transcendence surpassing it toward the totality 'satisfied hunger' would be necessary, just as the crescent moon is surpassed toward the full moon."[3] Thus it is in lack, Sartre concludes, that we find the origin of transcendence.

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[1] Being & Nothingness, P.21

[2] Being & Nothingness, P.63

[3] Being & Nothingness, P.63

Now the goal of the For-itself in transcendence is coincidence with itself, for as we saw earlier, the For-itself, unlike the In-itself, is the being "which is what it is not and which is not what it is," it is separated from its essence by nothing. This means that human reality aims at the unification of the In-itself and the For-itself; i.e., it seeks to become the foundation of itself thereby overcoming its contingency. In a word, it aims at becoming God. "To be a man means to reach toward being God." [1]

We see something of this drive toward completion, toward unification with the In-itself, in Roquentin's self-analysis: "I find the desire in me to drive existence out of me, to rid the passing moments of their fat, to twist them, dry them, purify myself, harden myself, to give back at last the sharp, precise sound of a saxophone note."[2] Corroborative evidence for this transcendent aim comes also from other works of literature such as D.H. Lawrence's Kangaroo where the hero, sitting one day on the Pacific coast of Australia, expresses a longing for the "icy, self-sufficient vigour of the fish." Again, we find this striving toward the hardness and solidity of the In-itself in the ideals of the Nazis: hardness, Hitler told his S.S., is the supreme virtue.

Thus man seeks to overcome his nothingness by projecting himself toward the ideal of in-itself - for-itself. But this is an impossible end for consciousness means presence to oneself as distant from oneself, whereas being-in-itself means the absence of that fissure or rift which

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[1]Being & Nothingness, P.67 (Greene)

[2]Nausea, P.234

is essential to consciousness. Human reality therefore "could not attain the in-itself without losing itself as for-itself."[1] Sartre points out, in connection with this fundamental project of man, that it is not a transcendent God toward which human reality surpasses itself; rather, "it is at the heart of human reality; it is only human reality itself as totality."[2] Thus this being toward which consciousness aspires is "at once in its heart and outside it; it is absolute transcendence in absolute immanence."[3] Furthermore, man's project toward becoming this being is "constitutive of human reality."[4] It produces in man "a state of tension in relation to his transcendent and impossible goal, which expresses itself as a restlessness or dynamism."[5] Thus it is a project conferring meaning on man's existence. Yet, in spite of the pragmatic value in projecting oneself toward the absolute synthesis of Subject and Object, the truth remains that this is an unrealizable end. Sartre therefore describes the being of human reality as "suffering," since it is in the predicament of being "perpetually haunted by a totality which it is without being able to be it."[6] It is in this sense that man is une passion inutile or, we might say in the language of Shakespeare, his life "....is a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing." (Macbeth)

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[1]Being & Nothingness, P,66

[2]Being & Nothingness, P.65

[3]Being & Nothingness, P.67

[4]N. Greene, The Existentialist Ethic, (U. of Michigan 1963) P.66

[5]Greene, P.66

[6]Being & Nothingness, P.66

III INAUTHENTIC EXISTENCE

A. FLIGHT TO BAD FAITH

Bad faith, according to Sartre, is an ever-present possibility which exists by virtue of the structure of human reality with its poles of facticity and transcendence. Facticity, as we pointed out before, is man's inescapable connection with being-in-itself; it is the In-itself present in human reality; it is that in man which enables us to say that a man *is* this or that. But there is a difference between saying that a man is six feet tall and that he is a homosexual; and the difference, Sartre maintains, comes about because of transcendence. It is this which causes a man to recoil when he is described as "just a homosexual." To describe someone in such a way is to reduce him to In-itself, it is to give undue weight to his facticity. In transcendence, however, a man escapes such designations for it is the nature of the For-itself to project itself beyond the world to its own possibilities, thereby eluding any definitive classification.

Now the exercise of bad faith occurs in the flight toward transcendence on the one hand, or facticity on the other. Sartre illustrates this in his analysis of love. In its facticity, love is " 'the contact of two skins,' sensuality, egoism, Proust's mechanism of jealousy, Adler's battle of the sexes, etc"; whereas, as transcendence it is "Mauriac's 'river of fire,' the longing for the infinite, Plato's *eros*, Lawrence's deep cosmic intuition, etc."[1] Good faith is the coordination, or the surmounting in a synthesis, of both these aspects of love; bad faith,

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[1] J. P. Sartre, *Self Deception* in Existentialism from Dostoievsky to Sartre, ed. by, W. Kaufmann, (Meridian Book, N.Y. 1956) P.252

however, avoids this, affirming for example that, "Love is much more than love," thereby exalting transcendence at the expense of facticity. In the case of the homosexual (to return to our previous example) the reverse occurs when he affirms that he is a homosexual, through and through, for he is elevating facticity at the expense of transcendence. Thus he is in bad faith, exchanging his freedom, whereby he can change his goals, for a petrified character: he is a homosexual, he clings to himself, he is what he is.

A question that arises, logically, at this point, is: why do men surrender to bad faith, this continuing possibility of human reality?

To answer this question, we must make it clear first that attitudes of bad faith are widely prevalent. Such psycho-sociological studies as: The Present Age (Kierkegaard), The Crowd (Le Bon), Escape from Freedom (Fromm), The Organization Man (Whyte), The True Believer (Hoffer), show, convincingly, that mankind is travelling in the opposite direction from that which leads to freedom and individual responsibility. In typically apocalyptic language, Arthur Koestler writes of this as "a spiritual ice age" in which "the established churches can no longer provide more than Eskimo huts where their shivering flock huddles together, while the camp-fires of rival ideologies draw the masses in wild stampede across the ice."[1] This is the age of the mass-movement; ours is a world of "the true believer," that "homeless hitchhiker on the highways of the world thumbing a ride on any eternal cause that rolls by."[2] But, in

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[1]Koestler, P.214

[2]E. Hoffer, The True Believer, (Mentor, N.Y. 1951) P.82

spite of all these many incisive analyses of the malady of our times, bad faith persists as tenaciously as ever. It almost appears to be a permanent feature of human behaviour, and this is why Zeus, faced by an inconoclastic Orestes proclaiming a new era of freedom, declares: "My reign is not yet over - far from it!"[1]

We return then to the question why bad faith becomes for so many "a style of life." To explain this fully would be to explain away freedom, but we can nevertheless point to an aspect of human reality which makes flight a strong temptation. I refer of course to anguish, that integral element of man's awareness of his freedom and his nothingness. Bad faith is evoked as a defence against anguish but, as we will see later, this is chimerical protection, for a man can as easily escape anguish as he can escape his shadow.

B. FORMS OF BAD FAITH

The forms bad faith assumes are multifarious but they all have this in common: they are all attempts to conceal the truth that one is free and hence responsible for oneself. Thus in most cases, if not in all, there is the postulation of some form of external transcendence which is burdened with the responsibility for one's destiny. For Sartre all beliefs in supernatural beings, whether divine or demonic, are instances of bad faith; likewise all theories of psychic determinism, from Freudianism to Pavlovian behaviourism, betray attitudes of bad faith.

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[1] The Flies, P.123

So-called "dialectical materialism" too comes under Sartre's polemical fire for in it he sees a classic example of the kind of outlook which denies "that transcendence of human reality which makes it emerge in anguish beyond its own essence."[1] Let us then begin by looking briefly at his reasons for rejecting what he calls "Neo-Stalinist Marxism," and from there we can go on to examine some instances of bad faith in his fiction.

Sartre's chequered career as a leftist in politics[2] has brought him into intimate touch with the protean subtleties of Marxist dialectic. The outcome of this confrontation has been of a decidedly ambiguous nature: on the one hand he sees a necessity for collaborating with the Communists since only in this way, he feels, can the Left in France progress; but on the other hand he stands diametrically opposed to some of their basic principles - above all he repudiates the materialist myth which, in spite of its pragmatic value as an instrument in revolution, he sees as leading toward an attitude which, he says, "is quite patently a flight."[3] Truth is what men need and, even though the myth may serve oppressed men for the moment, in the long run it "crushes them and....hides them from themselves."[4] Acceptance of a materialist philosophy is a lapse into bad faith because it asserts the primacy of matter thereby reducing man to a product of his environment, a thing. Therefore even though such a

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[1] Being & Nothingness, P.40

[2] See Greene, especially the chapter, An Existentialist in Politics

[3] Materialism and Revolution, P.424

[4] Materialism and Revolution, P.406

view of himself may lead to liberation from his master's deadly freedom (who likewise is swept along into determinism's links) this actually becomes a pyrrhic victory for, as Sartre cogently argues: "If all men are things, there are no more slaves, there are only slaves de facto."[1]

Dialectical materialism then is a denial of man's freedom; it is the view of man which reduces him to being-in-itself, and as such it is a philosophy of bad faith.

Since many characters in Sartre's fiction fall short of authenticity, surrendering to bad faith, it will be helpful for a clearer understanding of this concept to look at some of them, observing the diverse ways in which they execute their escape from freedom.

In The Reprieve,which tells the story of the dark days leading up to the Munich Conference, there are several characters who exhibit bad faith in their attitude to the impending war. Daladier, the French Prime Minister, Odette and Ivich,all, in their different ways, express their longing for war to break out. Ivich, for example, is brought the news by a smiling friend that an agreement has been reached at Munich. After thinking, "No war: No aeroplanes over Paris: No bomb-shattered ceilings: Life must now be lived," she sobbingly says: "No war - and you look pleased!"[2] This desire for war, "that tremendous holiday," can be attributed to man's attempt to find in external forces the cause of his "situation"; thus if "fate" is to blame, then I am an innocent

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[1]Materialism and Revolution, P.417

[2]The Reprieve, P.376

victim tossed about by the cruel vicissitudes of life. If any state of affairs is capable of producing this illusion of being manipulated by forces beyond one's control it is the holocaust of war. Therefore we see in this thirst for war a flight from responsibility into the arms of determinism.

Another character who is worth a closer look is Daniel, one of the major figures in the incomplete series of novels called Roads to Freedom. His case deserves a careful analysis because it touches on the question of religious faith which, according to Sartre, is one of the most insidious forms of bad faith.

Under "the look" (le regard) of others, Daniel is reduced to being what he is, a homosexual. Such fixing of character is an aspect of that fundamental mode of existence Sartre calls "being-for-others."[1] Daniel's reaction to being "looked at" is that he experiences shame and guilt. Unable to bear this torment, but unwilling to change, he longs simply to be that homosexual image, his reality for the other, as a rock is a rock, in the realm of being-in-itself. "To be stone, motionless, without feeling.....blind and deaf....To be myself, a pederast, wicked, a coward...To be a pederast, as the oak is oak. To be extinguished. To put out the inner eye."[2] Daniel wishes to become an object. He achieves this later in a leap of faith when he becomes an object of God's "look." He writes to Mathieu about his experience and tells him: "....what a relief....I know at last that I am....I am seen, therefore

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[1]We discuss this subject more fully in the next section (IV)

[2]Reprieve, P.115

I am. I need no longer bear the responsibility of my turbid and disintegrating self: he who sees me causes me to be."[1] Subsequently Daniel enters the church. Undoubtedly the character is to an extent artifically contrived and squeezed into a philosophical mould, but this analysis does illuminate Sartre's view of bad faith, especially as it finds expression in religious faith. We see how, by postulating a "look" that cannot be "looked at," man escapes responsibility, smothers his transcendence, and finds refuge in the view of himself as an object for God.

Many other individuals in bad faith can be found in Sartre's writings. To take just two examples: the penitents of Argos in The Flies (pp. 71, 77) who won't admit to themselves their freedom, and the preacher in Iron in the Soul who tells the captured French soldiers to confess themselves evil and submit to divine chastisement.[2] We might also profitably analyze other literary works to learn more about this phenomenon of bad faith,[3] but it has been adequately illustrated. One more point though needs to be developed; that is, the inevitable failure of the project of bad faith.

C. FAILURE OF BAD FAITH

This failure can be understood only in the light of Sartre's theory of the unity of consciousness. Unlike the Freudian structure

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1 Reprieve, P.345

2 Iron in the Soul, P.280

3 Such as, e.g., Celia's leap of faith described in The Cocktail Party. Unable to face a growing awareness that something may be wrong with the world (P.132) she decides to enter upon the way of faith. (pp.136,138,140)

of the mind with its conscious and unconscious levels, the Sartrian consciousness is nowhere unconscious. Instead it is split into two parts which he calls, the Cartesian Cogito and the prereflective Cogito.[1] Reflection takes place only on the level of the Cartesian Cogito, but the primary consciousness is the prereflective: it is this "which renders the reflection possible," and which is, in fact, "the condition of the Cartesian Cogito."[2] Thus he rejects the primacy of knowledge and concludes that "every positional consciousness of an object is at the same time a non-positional consciousness of itself."[3] That is to say, every act of reflection is simultaneously a nonreflective self-awareness. Thus there is no such thing as a man acting under the compulsion of unconscious drives; quite the contrary, there are only conscious acts. The For-itself always acts as a whole.

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[1]See Greene's criticism where he argues that the prereflective Cogito resembles Freud's "unconscious" in that both concepts allow for motives unknown to the ego. (Greene P.40) See too Barrett's argument, in regard to Sartre's biographical study of Baudelaire, that "the choice of himself that Baudelaire is supposed to have made at around the age of twelve hardly appears to have been a conscious and resolute project." (Barrett P.256) Allowing the plausibility of their criticisms, it seems nevertheless that Sartre is right in insisting that all our acts are voluntary for since man does not have prereflective consciousness but, rather, he is this consciousness, it follows that all his acts derive from him in his freedom; he is responsible for what he does. Freud's "unconscious", on the other hand, seems to allow for the possibility of protesting: "I am not responsible for this or that act."

[2]Being & Nothingness, P.liii

[3]Being & Nothingness, P.liii

It follows therefore that while there may be a possibility of bad faith, as we showed before, the unity of consciousness precludes the possibility of its success. Bad faith "is ruined from behind by the very consciousness of lying to myself which pitilessly constitutes itself well within my project as its very condition."[1] Bad faith is therefore an "evanescent phenomenon," vacillating continually between good faith and cynicism. In like manner the anguish man flees in bad faith can neither be hidden nor avoided, for "I flee in order not to know, but I can not avoid knowing that I am fleeing."[2] Flight from anguish, therefore, is in reality a mode of becoming conscious of anguish.

Bad faith then is actually a kind of "doublethink" (Orwell). While confessing a belief in some myth or another, at the same time I know this to be a lie; or, while protesting that I am not free I know the opposite to be true, that I am in fact free. Roquentin attests to this phenomenon of the coexistence of contradictory beliefs: "To exist is simply to be there....I believe there are people who have understood this. Only they tried to overcome this contingency by inventing a necessary, causal being."[3] Sartre's evaluation of such individuals is that they are "scum" (salauds). And those who hide from themselves the wholly voluntary nature of their existence he calls "cowards." (lâches) Such strongly judgmental views seem strange coming from one

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[1]Being & Nothingness, P.244 (Kaufmann)

[2]Being & Nothingness, P.43

[3]Nausea, P.176

who holds that a man makes himself according to ideals which he himself posits, but Sartre justifies his position, asserting that his judgement is directed against error. Therefore, "If anyone says to me, 'And what if I wish to deceive myself?' I answer, 'There is no reason why you should not, but I declare that you are doing so, and that the attitude of strict consistency alone is that of good faith.'"[1]

Let us then leave "bad faith" and go on to examine "good faith" - for atheistic existentialism, the virtue par excellence.

IV AUTHENTIC EXISTENCE

A. THE INSTANT

The first point for consideration is the transition from an inauthentic to an authentic existence. For the existentialist, who considers authenticity the best and most rational way to live, this is a matter of major concern, for his analysis shows him that most men lead inauthentic lives: "the serious attitude....", Sartre writes, "rules the world"[2] [3] He therefore makes it his concern, as far as he can, to illuminate the possibilities of man's being and to challenge him to acknowledge his freedom and project himself "away from self toward the self which (he) has to be."[4] That is, he challenges him to live authentically.

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[1]Being & Nothingness, P.307 (Kaufmann)

[2]Being & Nothingness, P.544

[3]"Seriousness" for Sartre is synonymous with "bad faith".

[4]Being & Nothingness, P.174

All men exist by pursuing transcendent goals. Now these goals cannot contradict one another for they are all part of what Sartre calls "the original project"; they represent the ultimate values of an individual. Conversion then would constitute a change of original project or, which is to say the same thing, a change in transcendent goals.

This choice of man's fundamental project takes place, not on the level of rational deliberation, but on that level of awareness which is prior to reflection; a man's original project is thus not immediately accessible to reflective inquiry.[1] How then, if a man's original choice of himself occurs at the prereflective level of consciousness, can conversion take place? Is it in fact a possibility?

Sartre says "yes!" He talks of the ontological possibility of a "radical conversion". He talks of "the instant."[2] Greene is puzzled by this in view of that fact that "Sartre has already said that all reasons and all motives come from the original project, and that consequently its abandonment could not be motivated."[3] The solution to this problem seems to lie in Sartre's concept of man's freedom. Since he is free, man does not come under the direction of his original project; quite the contrary, he gave initial impulse to and continues to reaffirm his original project. He sustains it in being and if he chooses he can replace it with an entirely new project. However, it must be noted that this is a profound change in being, not merely a change of mind.

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[1] In his essay in existential psychoanalysis where he deals with the playwright Jean Genet, Sartre argues that Genet's original project was to be the thief which he had become in the eyes of others. In other words, he chose to be as a subject what he had become as an object.

[2] Being & Nothingness, P.452, 456

[3] Greene, P.32

That is why when Sartre talks of conversion to authenticity he uses the phrase "self-recovery of being," a phrase which succinctly summarizes his entire view of conversion.

Why make this choice of authenticity, of good faith? This, Sartre maintains, is insoluble on any abstract, theoretical level, for this is a question about freedom itself, and any attempt to answer it would take us beyond the province of ontology. One can offer theories as to why a man acted in some certain way - e.g. one can say that disgust with existing conditions in the church led to Luther's conversion, or one can suggest some psycho-physiological explanation for its occurrence - but in the final analysis one can say no more about "the instant" than that it is an act of freedom. "Past motives, past causes, present motives and causes, future ends, all are organized in an indissoluble unity by the very upsurge of a freedom which is beyond causes, motives, and ends."[1]

B. HEROIC DESPAIR

It is clear, Sartre says, that "we cannot possibly derive imperatives from ontology's indicatives."[2] Besides, the very nature of freedom is such that one may even choose bad faith, thereby contravening these "indicatives." Nevertheless atheistic existentialism does develop a doctrine of authenticity and, though it may refrain from establishing this as a moral imperative, it does imply that men should strive toward this goal, if only for the sake of rationality and consistency.

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[1]Being & Nothingness, P.426

[2]Being & Nothingness, P.543

In a man's ascent to the plane of authenticity he spurns all reassuring myths and panaceas. That is to say, he rejects the questionable shelter of bad faith and aspires to good faith even though it, ultimately, must fail.[1] It is this project of aiming toward a goal which in principle cannot be reached (for it would mean the extinction of consciousness) that distinguishes Sartre's authentic man. This is the attitude of heroic despair.

Having turned his back on illusion, the man of good faith strives to accept himself; that is, he exercises what Tillich calls "the courage to be as oneself." Such an individual is Mathieu who, in his passionate desire to be himself, rejects every human commitment, refusing to allow anything to limit his freedom. "He represents," Tillich writes, "one of the most extreme forms of the courage to be as oneself, the courage to be a self which is free from any bond and which pays the price of complete emptiness."[2]

But in addition to accepting himself as free, the authentic individual also accepts his contingency. His attitude is something like that of Giacometti who, after being knocked down by a car, comes to realize: "So....I wasn't born to be a sculptor or even to live; I was born for nothing...."[3] If there is then no prevenient design to a man's life it follows that all his enterprises are dependent on him entirely; there is no guarantee that any of his projects will be realized, for

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[1] "The ideal of good faith (to believe what one believes) is, like that of sincerity (to be what one is), an ideal of being-in-itself....one (therefore) never wholly believes what one believes." (Kaufmann, 269 - From Being & Nothingness).

[2] P. Tillich, The Courage to Be, (Yale U.P. 1952) P.144)

[3] Words, P.158

between him and the future there is....nothing. Uncertainty then must characterize all men's activities. Only "the authoritarian personality," such as the antisemite described by Sartre in his Portrait of an Anti-semite, must be certain about all he does. What frightens him is "that thing of indefinite approximation." The rational man, in contrast, "never knows too well where he's going, he is 'open', he may even appear hesitant...."[1]

The authentic individual then accepts himself as free and contingent, and concomitantly he accepts that the world is absurd. It takes the courage of despair to hold fast to an image of a world that is not only evil and uninhabitable, but also irredeemable; a world that presents as bleak a picture as "a broken bottle in the corridor, cigarette-ends in a pool of wire, a stench of urine...."[2];a world where there are no victors, only victims. In his description of tragedy Anouilh is glimpsing such a world as he writes of that "silence inside you when the roaring crowd acclaims the winner....and you, the victor, already vanquished, alone in the desert of your silence."[3] This indeed is the world of atheistic existentialism, a world that promises no tomorrows: an absurd world.

If there is any consolation in such a world it comes from the knowledge that the life of the race goes on. Sartre often alludes to this[4] as a source of some comfort: "To reassure myself that the human race

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[1]J. P. Sartre, Portrait of an Antisemite, in Existentialism from Dostoievsky to Sartre, (Meridian Book, N.Y. 1956) Ed. by W. Kaufmann, P.274

[2]Reprieve, P.360

[3]Antigone, P.23

[4]e.g. Nausea, P.235; Reprieve P.231

would perpetuate me it was agreed in my mind that it would not come to an end"; but even such cold comfort is lost if one considers the possibility of the extinction of the race and the dawning of the kind of horrifying world described in Wells' Time Machine. Sartre therefore continues: "Today, in my disillusion, I still cannot envisage the cooling of the sun without fear....should humanity ever disappear, it will kill off its dead for good."[1]

If such be the case one might ask, quite reasonably: "Why go on living? What's the use?" Sartre's characters often ask this question: such as Odette in The Reprieve when "she looked at her husband's thin hair, and she no longer quite understood why it should be worth while saving men from death, and their homes from ruin."[2] If any word can express effectively the whole orientation of atheistic existentialism to life's absurdity it is "nevertheless." We see this attitude, for example, in Iron in the Soul where the Jewess Sarah is escaping Paris with her young son. Someone tells her Paris is burning, and she reflects: "Why go on living? Why protect the young life at her side? What future was there for him except to wander from country to country, bitterness and terror in his heart, chewing for fifty years the curse that lay upon his race, or machine-gunned at twenty on some stretch of road, lying with his guts in his hands." Despite these thoughts, however, she snatches up his hand saying: "Come along! It's time we were moving."[3]

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[1]Words, P.169

[2]Reprieve P.348

[3]Iron, P.22

Heroic despair then emerges as a decidedly positive orientation toward life's absurdity. It is more than passive resignation and it certainly has nothing in common with that "quiet desperation of the crowd" (Thoreau), an approach to life which Sartre so brilliantly illustrates in Nausea. Roquentin is describing Sunday in Bouville. The people are spending the day on the beach, but beneath the veneer of fun and frolic lurks a profound anxiety: "They felt the minutes flowing beneath their fingers; would they have time to store up enough youth to start anew on Monday morning?" As evening comes on Roquentin observes: "A gas lamp glowed....it was only the last ray of the setting sun....the earth was bathed in shadow. The crowd was dispersing, you could distinctly hear the death rattle of the sea."[1] Heroic despair is not like this. On the contrary, it is conscious, courageous awareness of the human condition or, in Heidegger's terminology, accepting and willing my thrownness in the world. It is Sisyphus leaving the heights to return to his futile endless task, thereby proving himself stronger than his rock. It is Oedipus, fully aware of the fate which awaits him, declaring: "All is well." It is the revolt against the absurd.

C. AUTHENTIC ACTION

The demands of authenticity go beyond the acceptance of oneself and the world; they require the acceptance of oneself-in-the-world, i.e. "in situation." The background for man-in-situation is being-for-others, that mode of existence to which Sartre gives ontological status. He does

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[1]Nausea P.75

however make it clear that "being-for-others is not an ontological structure of the For-itself." This is so, he argues, since, "It would perhaps not be impossible to conceive of a For-itself which would be wholly free from all For-others and which would exist without even suspecting the possibility of being an object. But this For-itself simply would not be 'man'. What the Cogito reveals to us here is just factual necessity."[1] In other words, as he says elsewhere: "the man who discovers himself directly in the Cogito also discovers all the others."[2]

A basic experience that reveals to us our being-for-others is the phenomenon of "the look" (le regard). Unlike the eyes which are "a fact in the world", "the meaning of this look is not a fact in the world, and this is what makes me uncomfortable"[3] The reason for this uneasiness is that I become an object for the other. He presents this idea concretely in his account of Mathieu's experience of Irene's "look": "She sees me....behind those eyes there is a starless sky, and there is also a look. She sees me: as she sees the table and the ukulele. And for her, I am; a particle suspended in a look, a bourgeois."[4] The phrase "starless sky" which he uses here is a poetic expression of that other reason for the disconcerting nature of "the look"; it symbolizes a freedom, a subjectivity, beyond my reach. Sartre calls this "an element of disintegration" in my universe,[5] an "internal hemorrhage in the world."[6]

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[1]Being & Nothingness, P.258

[2]Exist. is a Hum. P.303

[3]Being & Nothingness, P.259 (Kaufmann)

[4]Reprieve P.321

[5]Being & Nothingness, P.231

[6]Being & Nothingness, P.268

Thus "the look" is a two-edged sword: it reduces me to an object; and it discloses another transcendence which, as Sartre says, steals my world from me.[1] - I experience myself as "transcendence-transcended."

The consequence of this experience is that I strive to preserve my transcendence, to protect it,as it were, against the Medusa stare of the Other. The manner in which I do this is determined largely by the extent to which I care to face courageously the ambiguity of existence-with-others; it depends on my willingness to recognize the Other both as an object and as a man.[2] Sartre's doctrine of being-for-others is thus characterized by conflict, "that battle to the death of consciousnesses which Hegel calls 'the relation of the master and the slave'."[3] Hence, even in his analysis of love, Sartre talks of the lover's desire to possess the Other's freedom.[4]

The danger however in all interpersonal relationships is that I may tend in the direction of bad faith, refusing to exist in the tension of ambiguity, and assume such escapist attitudes as indifference, sadism, masochism, hate, etc. The prevalence of these socially disruptive attitudes is proof how anguishing is this threat of being reduced to the level of an object. This justifies indeed the contention of Sartre that, "Hell is - other people."[5]

Is there any exit from this "hell"? Is there some concrete

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[1]Being & Nothingness, P.231

[2]Note Sartre's divergence here from the "I - Thou" relationship of Buber

[3]Being & Nothingness, P.263 (Kaufmann)

[4]Being & Nothingness, P.340 ff

[5]J. P. Sartre, No Exit and Three Other Plays, (Vintage Book 1949) P.47

way of alleviating the stress which results from the degradation of being "looked at" as a mere object? Sartre holds that there is, and the measures he proposes can be summed up in the words "authentic action".

Human reality, he says, is action.[1] But man doesn't act in the manner of a wound clock, automatically. Sartre's rejection of determinism is enough to discount this. Rather, it is purely on the basis of his freedom that he acts: he must decide from moment to moment whether it is worthwhile carrying on. He may commit suicide. He may decide to perservere, but in bad faith; or he may resolutely determine to live authentically, even though, in the end, all his acts are rendered meaningless when death supervenes. The authentic action therefore is that which is performed with the existential awareness that what one does is recorded in no heaven. So Hoederer, one of Sartre's authentic characters, asserts with characteristic stoicism: "There is no heaven. There's work to be done, that's all."[2] So too Sartre orients himself, judging by his comments in his authobiography: "For a long while I treated my pen as a sword: now I realize how helpless we are. It does not matter: I am writing, I shall write books; they are needed; they have a use all the same."[3]

Such is the nature of true heroic action. It appears a grim way of life, but this is not so necessarily, for, as Camus says: "The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy."[4]

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[1] Being & Nothingness, P.452

[2] Dirty Hands, P.234

[3] Words, P.172

[4] The Myth of Sisyphus, P.315

An integral part of our will to action is the awareness that our actions involve others. Nowhere does Sartre state that the For-itself lives locked up in its own little world. In this he differs from Descartes who "shut himself up inside the ego and required God to restore the real world to him."[1] Consciousness for Sartre is consciousness of something and with a man's discovery of himself in the cogito there is simultaneously discovery of Others. But we have seen how the Other poses a threat to us in that he constitutes us as an object in his world and his projects; therefore, while assuming responsibility for Others since we are with them in the world, at the same time we act, resolutely, to overcome objectification. Dostoievsky sums this up excellently when he writes: "the whole work of man really seems to consist in nothing but proving to himself every minute that he is a man and not a piano-key!"[2] A number of Frenchmen demonstrated this during the Occupation, Sartre maintains, when, in order to recover their future, they joined the Resistance.

When Sartre insists that, "Our responsibility....concerns mankind as a whole....my action is....a commitment on behalf of all mankind,"[3] he is stressing that fact of the relation of the For-itself with the Other where the Other is revealed as a fellow-transcendence, i.e. as a "Thou." But when the Other becomes an oppressor, in some social or political context, then the Other's objectness must be re-

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[1]Greene, P.19

[2]F. Dostoievsky, Notes from Underground, in Existentialism from Dostoievsky to Sartre, ed. by W. Kaufmann, (Meridian Book, N.Y. 1956) P.76

[3]Exist. is a Hum. P.292

cognized: i.e., he must be constituted as simply "a fact" in the world to be coerced in the interest of freedom. The aim of any morality, Sartre says, should be freedom; not the Stoic's abstract freedom of thought, but a concrete political freedom which liberates, not only the oppressed, but all men. In striving toward this goal, Sartre adds, there may arise the necessity for violence. Hence Orestes' decision to murder his mother and stepfather: "we shall never rest again until they both are lying on their backs, with faces like crushed mulberries. In a pool of blood."[1]

Sartre is then solidly in favour of commitment, or engagement. This is more than just a personal opinion on his part, for according to his ontological conclusions: "I never apprehend myself abstractly as the pure possibility of being myself, but I live my selfness as its concrete projection toward this or that particular end. I exist only as engaged (engagé)."[2]

Two important problems however arise in our project of concrete commitment. The one is the dilemma every man must face if he is to commit himself finally, the dilemma which comes from the inevitable inadequacy of any Weltanschauung or political philosophy. Mathieu experiences this dilemma and declares to the Communist Brunet: "My freedom....I simply long to exchange it for a good sound certainty.... I can't join, I haven't enough reasons for doing so....If I started marching past, lifting my fist and singing the International, and if I

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[1]Flies, P.95

[2]Being & Nothingness, P.267

proclaimed myself satisfied with all that, I should be telling myself a lie."[1] Sartre concludes however that a man must nevertheless commit himself even though the kind of world he succeeds in building must be imperfect: Sartre anyway rejects any utopian notion, any idea of an "immanentization of the eschaton;" the only kind of world that man must strive for is that which allows the possibility of transcending it toward something better. The second problem relating to commitment is one already discussed: that all we do is ultimately absurd. The problem this presents is that such a view may lead to quietism. Sartre however rejects this as a surrender to absurdity, and instead he advocates an activism which the following dialogue illustrates dramatically. Mathieu and Gomez, a Spanish General, are discussing the war in Spain: Gomez says: "All my soldiers are sure the war is lost."

"And they're fighting all the same?" said Mathieu.

"What would you have them do?"[2]

Heroic despair is fighting for a lost cause.

It is thus by authenticity, by an attitude of heroic despair, that a man remains true to himself. This means of course that man must experience his Gethsemane, his <u>via dolorosa</u>, but this is the way, Sartre maintains, to the conquest of despair itself. Thus Orestes replies to Electra's lament at the darkness of night: "It is not night; a new day is dawning...."[3] The "new day" however can only be revealed if man strides out upon the sunlit roads. This means acknowledging despair as his lot but at the same time, as Orestes tells Zeus, "human life begins on the far side of despair."[4]

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[1]Age of Reason, P.122

[2]Reprieve, P.235

[3]Flies, P.107

CHAPTER 2

KIERKEGAARD'S DOCTRINE OF AUTHENTICITY

I. THE POSSIBILITIES OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

A. THE EXISTING SUBJECT

With few precedents in the history of philosophy to guide him, Kierkegaard asserted the revolutionary thesis that "subjectivity is truth." This is not the "subjective idealism" of Kant or Berkeley which Hegel interprets as the illusion that "ideas exist only in our heads." What Kierkegaard means by subjectivity, fundamentally, is the concrete day to day existence of "my own little I."[1] The persistent neglect of subjectivity, according to John Wild, is "a basic failure of analysis which pervades the whole history of post-Cartesian philosophy."[2] Kierkegaard sees this neglect in a rather ironical light since, as he says, the sine qua non of all philosophizing is, after all....existence! Yet in spite of this, philosophy coldly continues on its speculative way forgetting that you and I and he are existing individuals.[3]

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[1] Later in this chapter, as we develop the doctrine of subjectivity, we will see that it culminates in what Cornelio Fabro calls, "the resolution or decision of freedom to break the circle of immanence by the very assent to transcendental truth, followed....by the decision to conform to it in temporal life." (C. Fabro, Faith & Reason in Kierkegaard's Dialectic in A. Kierkegaard Critique, ed. by H. Johnson & N. Thulstrup, N.Y. 1962, P.160) However, as a point of departure in the development of Kierkegaard's doctrine of authenticity we must begin with the existing subject. Hence, initially, the stress on this sense of subjectivity.

[2] J. Wild, Kierkegaard & Contemporary Existentialist Philosophy, in A Kierkegaard Critique, ed. by H. Johnson & N. Thulstrup, (Harper, N.Y. 1962,) P.22

[3] This may seem a very trite point to make but, when we ponder how some of the major political ideologies of our century have ridden roughshod over the individual and how relatively insignificant and expendable any single man has become in our technological and bureaucratic age, we must realize that the cause of the individual needs to be upheld, perennially.

In perfect consistency with this negligent attitude toward the existing subject, the mainstream of philosophy regards truth as something essentially objective, something one can know in an abstract, detached manner. In short, it looks on truth as a "thing." But against this view Kierkegaard asserts that truth can only be known existentially, in the sense intended by the Johannine text: "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (John Ch.8, vs.32) Therefore, even if one were to have a perfectly correct conception of God, but prayed in a false spirit, he would be far from the truth. Truth therefore is a matter of how rather than what. Truth is a way of life. Truth is subjectivity.

The philosophical system that Kierkegaard was particularly concerned to undermine was that in vogue in his day - Hegelianism. His first objection to Hegel's "System" was its indefensible neglect of the individual. Hegel therefore was in the predicament of a man who constructs a "high-vaulted palace" but lives beside it "in a barn....or in a dog kennel, or at the most in the porter's lodge."[1] Kierkegaard does nevertheless pay tribute to Hegel the thinker, remarking that if he had prefaced his whole Logic with the comment that it was merely an "experiment in thought," a jeu d'esprit as it were, then "he would certainly have been the greatest thinker who had ever lived."[2] But Kierkegaard cannot advance beyond an assertion of what Hegel might have been for he

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[1] S. Kierkegaard, Sickness Unto Death in Fear & Trembling and Sickness unto Death, trans. W. Lowrie, (Doubleday, N.Y. 1954) P.171

[2] S. Kierkegaard, The Journals of Kierkegaard, ed. & trans. A. Dru (Fontana 1958,) P.91

had, from Kierkegaard's point of view, committed the unpardonable sin: he had presumed by means of logic to incorporate into his system existence itself! This was a shocking imperialism of reason, the ultimate effrontery of rationalism. By way of reaction Kierkegaard delivered a tirade of polemical satire which undoubtedly helped precipitate the dethronement of this brilliant German philosopher.

The way in which Kierkegaard opposes Hegel and "protects" the subjectivity of the individual is by asserting the total heterogeneity between thought and existence: thought only can grasp that which is complete, that which has come to a stop, that which is dead; but existence "becomes" continuously and therefore eludes the power of thought. "Existence," Kierkegaard says simply, "cannot be thought." A man's personality, his inner life, is therefore beyond the reach of systematic thought so that when the thinker would attempt to squeeze him into the "paragraph uniform," he is acting "in the fashion of children who smash the watch to pieces in order to find out what makes it run."[1]

Kierkegaard removes subjectivity yet further from the domain of thought in his account of Abraham in Fear and Trembling where he shows the Individual[2] beyond even the category of the universal-ethical. In his analysis of Abraham's trial on Mount Moriah, Kierkegaard maintains that by acting "in virtue of the absurd"[3] his behaviour becomes paradoxical

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[1] S. Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Trans. D. Swenson & W. Lowrie, (Princeton 1941) P.131

[2] In section III of this chapter the attempt is made to draw out the full significance of Kierkegaard's category of the Individual (den Enkelte)

[3] We discuss this idea of "the absurd" in connection with "the leap of faith"

and as such places itself beyond all mediation. Hegel therefore misunderstands him when he acknowledges him as the father of faith, for Hegel's position is that the universal is higher than the particular so that the particular must become subordinate to the teleology of the ethical. Abraham, however, exalts the particular above the universal and thus becomes unintelligible. "Humanly speaking," Kierkegaard says, "he is crazy and cannot make himself intelligible to anyone."[1]

Thus by asserting the primacy of the existing subject, Kierkegaard overcomes the absolutism of Hegel; thus too he introduces new possibilities into human existence. As long as man remained subordinate to the objective mode of thinking, he was prevented from achieving the full flowering of personal existence. But now, hearing the good news that "subjectivity is truth," he can advance toward the realization of his preeminent possibility which is, for Kierkegaard,becoming the Individual.

B. THE SELF

The next subject for our consideration is Kierkegaard's doctrine of the self. It is here that we learn about the ontological possibilities of human existence; and more than this: we find implicit in the very structure of the self the direction a man's life should take,its telos.

"Man is spirit," says Kierkegaard.[2] In elaboration he adds: he is "a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and

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[1]S. Kierkegaard, Fear & Trembling, in Fear & Trembling and Sickness unto Death, trans. W. Lowrie, (Doubleday, N.Y. 1954) P.86

[2]Sickness, P.146

the eternal, of freedom and necessity."[1] But this synthesis, or relation, is not self-constituted but constituted by Another, therefore the self can only be itself "by relating itself to that Power which constituted the whole relation."[2] Thus - to use a different terminology - God is the ground of man's being and it is only by continuous dependence on this "ground" that a man can realize himself as spirit.

Another way of expressing this thought is to say that man is under an obligation to Eternity: "Eternity," Kierkegaard writes,".... requires that he shall be conscious of himself as spirit."[3] This is man's task, viz. to become himself, and this requires "the conscious synthesis of infinitude and finitude"[4] and the simultaneous preservation of a relation to God. In this way man is vitally different from the natural world. Here a seed becomes a plant, and a kitten becomes a cat - there is no question of choice. In Either/Or (Vol.II pp.229,230) Kierkegaard writes that aesthetic development is like that: it develops by necessity not by freedom. The self, on the other hand, does not develop "as a matter of course"; it must decide its development, it must choose itself. It is therefore correctly defined as possibility. Paradoxically, however, the self is also definable as necessity: "Inasmuch as it is itself, it is the necessary, and inasmuch as it has to become itself, it is a possibility."[5]

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[1] Sickness, P.146

[2] Sickness, P.147

[3] Sickness, P.236

[4] Sickness, P.162

[5] Sickness, P.168

This predication of necessity, Kierkegaard explains, derives from that sine qua non of selfhood, the presence in man of the eternal.

Now a possibility which presents itself in this ambiguous structure of the self is that of flight from the recognition of oneself as spirit, the refusal to grant the demands of Eternity. The form this flight takes, essentially, is "willing to be one's own self."[1] But this, Kierkegaard maintains, is an impossible venture, for when a man would "tear his self away from the Power which constituted it, he is unable to do so for that Power is the stronger, and it compels him to be the self he does not will to be."[2] The only self he can successfully will to be is the self he is. Thus if "the self does not become itself, it is in despair."[3] This despair may not, however, be consciously recognized. In fact a man may even be enjoying flights of youthful happiness, and yet, "in the hidden recesses of (this) happiness, there dwells also the anxious dread which is despair."[4] [5] Despair then is the inevitable concomitant of flight from a self that is constituted by God. This is what Augustine meant when he said that the heart was made for God and would

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[1]Sickness, P.147

[2]Sickness, P.153

[3]Sickness, P.163

[4]Sickness, P.158

[5]Notice that for Kierkegaard spirit is not characterized by happiness. (Sickness, P.158) Elsewhere he talks of the pain of being unlike others, and of coming to understand that "Spirit is precisely this: not to be like others." (Attack P.286) To be spirit therefore is to suffer. It is in this sense that he talks of crossing "the bridge of sighs to eternity." (Quoted by Hubben P.30)

not rest until it found rest in Him.

In summation then we might say that for Kierkegaard man is determined, essentially, as spirit and cannot therefore "sink down into the vegetative life."[1] Thus any effort to escape this determination is necessarily a despairing effort. Now the forms of this despair are threefold: despair at not being conscious of having a self, despair at not willing to be oneself, despair at willing to be oneself. However, as we observed above, the last of these - despair at willing to be oneself - is really the essential form of despair, for it describes the fundamental motive of escape from self: the will to be oneself apart from the Eternal or, in other words, denial of the Eternal. Such denial, according to Kirkegaard is demoniacal.[2] This is the final impasse of despair, the extremity of the inauthentic life. The only way out - the "last exit" to oneself - is for the individual to face himself with complete honesty. It finally depends on him for, as Kierkegaard says, "the spirit posits itself."[3]

Thus, by emphasizing the concrete existence of "my own petty self" and by defining the self as a relation (constituted by God) which relates itself to itself and which also relates itself to God, Kierkegaard makes clear the possibilities (and impossibilities) of human existence. On the one hand there are the possibilities of inauthentic existence, all of which must fail, however, because a man cannot escape his essence.

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[1] S. Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, trans. W. Lowrie, (Princeton 1944) P.40

[2] Concept, P.135

[3] Concept, P.57

Thus he may exalt objectivity at the expense of subjectivity, and veer away from the self, away from God, to a mode of existence which hides him from himself. Kierkegaard sums this up with the concept "crowd": the inauthentic life is capitulation to the Crowd. But, on the other hand, a man may choose the authentic possibilities (for which Kierkegaard prefers the word "task": possibility, he says is too "aesthetical" a word. E/O Vol. II, P.256) Thus he may lead a life of passionate inwardness while resisting, with unremitting vigilance, the blighting influences of objectivity and speculation. But above all he may choose to become the self God intended him to be, "the self that remains if a person has lost the whole world and yet not lost himself."[1]

We turn now to an examination of the inauthentic life as it appeared in the experience of Kierkegaard. Once this is done, once the negative is clarified, then we can confidently proceed to an examination of his concept of authentic existence.

II THE INAUTHENTIC LIFE

In his analysis of his age, Kierkegaard is driven to the conclusion that its characteristic depravity is "a dissolute pantheistic contempt for the individual man."[2] But behind this contempt, which is really only a façade, festers "a sense of despair over being human."[3] The age simply does not have what it takes to meet the demands of individuality, so it cravenly retreats from that "solitary path, narrow and

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[1] Quoted by M. Grene in An Introduction to Existentialism from Kierkegaard's Papers IVC 77

[2] Postscript P.317

[3] Postscript P.317

steep." But since men are men there is no other way but this, therefore in their flight from it they fall prey to that "sickness unto death," despair. Nevertheless, the Crowd does seem to offer a genuine refuge from the self and even though its embrace is lethal men flee to it demanding above all that it hide them from themselves.

The self "before God" (for Gud), i.e. the Individual, therefore is Kierkegaard's criterion for determining authenticity. Any activity which is antithetical to the cause of the Individual is eo ipso inauthentic. This is the light in which we must understand Kierkegaard's category of the Crowd, and the three phenomena we are about to study - speculation, conformity, Christendom - are concrete ways in which man has chosen to flee this demand of Eternity: that he become the Individual.

A. SPECULATION

A recurring theme in Kierkegaard's writings (especially Postscript) is that the ascendancy of the Crowd in his day is largely the fault of speculative philosophy.[1] To begin with, the philosopher becomes his own victim when he attempts to explain existence for not only does he annihilate existence but he himself becomes "fantastic" and ludicrous. Kierkegaard describes him as an anomalous creature who, while wanting to be an existing individual, at the same time wants to exist, not

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[1]Kierkegaard's primary object of attack in his anti-philosophy tirade is not "abstract" thinking so much as the Hegelian doctrine of "pure thought," a realm in which being and thought become one. (Postscript, P.292) This "fantastic hypothesis," he says, is at the farthest possible extremity from existence; it "has nothing, nothing to do with existence." (Postscript p.295) Therefore, as Collins points out, Kierkegaard's position is more properly called "nonidealist" than "irrationalist." (Collins,P.12)

subjectively, not passionately, but sub specie aeterni![1] He thus becomes a victim of "the prating madness." One dares not look at a madman of this type, Kierkegaard says, "from fear of discovering that he has eyes of glass and hair made from carpet-rages; that he is, in short, an artificial product....you listen to what he says in a cold and awful dread, scarcely knowing whether it is a human being who speaks...."[2] This, Kierkegaard declares, is the Colossus of the age, the paragon of 19th century culture and sophistication, the embodiment of the Goetheo-Hegelian Weltanschauung!

Kierkegaard was genuinely alarmed by what he saw in Hegel, for he found, implicit in his philosophy, justification for the rise of the mass society. And in it too he saw the theoretical basis for a state "which, since it was the incarnation of Absolute Reason, must bend all individuals to its will - and break those who would not be bent."[3] But apart from the fearsome social and political implications he saw in Hegelianism, Kierkegaard was also disturbed about the enervating effects of endless philosophical reflection. His age had become an Age of Reflection, an age in which

"....the native hue of resolution

Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." (Hamlet)

Thus, while strongly advocating the need for "subjective" reflection,[4]

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[1] Postscript, P.203

[2] Postscript, P.175

[3] H. Johnson, Kierkegaard & Politics, in A Kierkegaard Critique, ed. H. Johnson & N. Thulstrup. (Harper N.Y. 1962) P.80

[4] "....the development of the subject consists precisely in his active interpenetration of himself by reflection concerning his own existence." (Postscript, P.151) See also Postscript P.68

he condemns "objective" reflection - not when it keeps to its legitimate place[1] - but when it becomes a means whereby men shirk decision and action.

But this is precisely the use his age had made of reflection, Kierkegaard contends,and the outcome has been the upsurge of the Crowd, and as in Frankenstein, where the monster arises to destroy his creator, so the crowd turns upon its creator. Kierkegaard tries to convey the enormity of this phenomenon using such terms as "the levelling process," which he calls "the victory of abstraction over the individual,"[2] and "the public" which, he says, is "the real Levelling-Master."[3] But it is only when we learn that "the public" has no referent in the empirical world, that it is in fact "a monstrous nothing," that we comprehend fully the true extent of the malaise of the age. This Kierkegaard says, is the ultimate anomaly, but to be expected in an age which thinks existence.

B. CONFORMITY

As shown above, Kierkegaard was fully aware of the adverse influence of Idealism. Furthermore, he was not unaware of the unique pressures impinging on man in a world rapidly changing under the impact of technology, industrialization and urban concentration. Contemporary German sociology of religion describes this novel situation aptly as the Unheilssituationen des Einzelnen[4]. In spite of these pressures, how-

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[1]Postscript, P.70 n2

[2]S. Kierkegaard, The Present Age, trans. A. Dru. (Oxford 1940) P.27

[3]Present Age, P.38

[4]See Richter, P.72 n5

ever, Kierkegaard contends that men are not relieved of responsibility for, in the last resort, they are responsible for allowing these forces to overcome them. In spite of their reservations they cling to Hegel, and, instead of resisting the depersonalizing pressures of their environment, they do all in their power to merge themselves in "the divinized power of the Anonymous." (Denis de Rougemont) And this quest for anonymity, Kierkegaard maintains, is unimpeachable evidence of their guilt.

Kierkegaard was greatly disturbed by this will to anonymity for he saw in it "the most absolute expression for the impersonal, the irresponsible, the unrepentant"; it was, he felt, "a fundamental source of the modern demoralization."[1] Supporting and spreading this evil of anonymity was the press. Men, lacking the courage to stand up and be counted, use it to express views, influencing thousands, who in turn cause these anonymous view to proliferate: "and with all this nobody has any responsibility, so that it is not as in ancient times the relatively unrepentant crowd which possesses omnipotence, but the absolutely unrepentant thing, a nobody, an anonymity, who is the producer, and another anonymity, the public, sometimes even anonymous subscribers, and with all this, nobody, nobody! Good God!"[2] In such an age, Kierkegaard laments, one looks in vain for real individuals: "ah, there is no individual, every individual is the public."[3] In place of individuals there looms a vast anonymous abstraction, "the public," and when one talks with anyone, "the conversation leaves one with the impression of having talked

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[1] S. Kierkegaard, The Point of View, trans. W. Lowrie, (Harper, N.Y. 1962) P.44

[2] Point of View, P.116

[3] S. Kierkegaard, Attack upon Christendom, Trans, W. Lowrie, (Princeton 1944) P.186

to an anonymity."[1]

A secondary structure in the drive for anonymity is the will to conform. It seems logical to assert the primacy of the desire for anonymity since the urge to conform the society[2] and be like others is really governed by the longing for anonymity. When all are alike then the individual is lost; no longer a self, he becomes merely a unit in the crowd, and chooses as his fundamental category, the quantitative. He has become like others and lost his soul. "Eternal perdition," Kierkegaard writes, awaits "those who are tranquillized by being like the others."[3] His age therefore stands under the sentence of eternal death. Its crime?....Conformity!

C. CHRISTENDOM

In the closing years of his life Kierkegaard delivered against Christendom a polemic of such severity that many commentators have found it necessary to explain this away as the ravings of a man in the throes of a nervous collapse. Lowrie, however, argues that his attack against the Church "was the consistent conclusion of his life and thought," not the product of a mind gone over the edge.[4] Besides, his entire tirade against Christendom is quite consistent with his own understanding of satire. In his Journal he wrote: "He who must apply a 'corrective' must study accurately and profoundly the weak side of the Establishment,

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[1] S. Kierkegaard, The Present Age, trans, A. Dru (Oxford, 1940) P.59

[2] See R. Lindner's Must You Conform where he attacks the implicit notion in most modern psychology that conformity is the solution to man's psychic ills.

[3] Attack, P.263

[4] Attack, P.XIII

and then vigorously and one-sidedly present the opposite."[1] Notice the word "corrective" for it implies that Kierkegaard was consciously attempting to "correct" the situation; his motives were essentially constructive. He therefore launched his attack but, since he knew the dangers of satire, he did so "in fear and trembling."

The reason for this vicious work of satire was that "the public" had permeated the church to such an extent that it had driven out all vestiges of New Testament Christianity. This is no a priori judgment, Kierkegaard insists, for an honest appraisal would show that the Established Church is clearly "an apostasy from the Christianity of the New Testament."[2] Thus, in spite of the orthodoxy flourishing throughout the land, untroubled by heresy or schism, Kierkegaard bluntly asserts: "The religious situation in our country is: Christianity....does not exist - as almost anyone must be able to see as well as I."[3]

Kierkegaard puts much of the blame for the situation on Bishop Mynster and Professor Martensen, who later succeeded Mynster as Bishop of Zeeland. In fact the event that triggered the explosion was Martensen's sermon, eulogizing the late Bishop, in which he had represented Mynster as "a witness to the truth," one link in the holy chain of witnesses going back to the Apostles. This, Kierkegaard violently objects, is "disgusting rubbish."[4] Mynster's life and preaching both proclaimed a Christianity which implied a perfect homogeneity with the world, whereas,

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[1]Attack, P.90

[2]Attack, P.19

[3]Attack, P.29

[4]Attack, P.85

in truth, Christianity in the New Testament is "a breach, the very deepest and most incurable breach with this world."[1] Thus Mynster, and his imitative successor Martensen, stand absolutely condemned.

But these two men are not the only culpable ones: the priests too are guilty. Therefore, with equal vigour, he assails them, accusing them of seeking "pecuniary advantage" and "material power," rather than fulfilling their ordination vows to act as servants of God. Consequently they are "perjurers," and even "cannibals" for feeding on and exploiting the sufferings of "the glorious ones." In fact the clerical order itself is "of the Evil....a demoralization, a human egoism, which inverts Christianity to exactly the opposite of that which Christ had made it."[2]

Having laid the axe to the root of the church hierarchy, Kierkegaard then turns his attention to the laity. They too are guilty for continuing to support a corrupt Church. So, for their benefit, he issued his famous declaration, "This has to be said, so be it now said," in which he wrote: "Whoever thou art, whatever in other respects thy life may be, my friend, by ceasing to take part....in the public worship of God, as it now is....thou hast constantly one guilt less, and that a great one: thou dost not take part in treating God as a fool by calling that the Christianity of the New Testament which is not the Christianity of the New Testament."[3]

Thus, for Kierkegaard, the spirit of God had departed from the

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[1]Attack, P.17

[2]Attack, P.175

[3]Attack, P.59

church only to be replaced by the spirit of the Crowd. This has come about through the diabolical principle of expansion. One must not think however that this state of affairs is of recent origin or even that it began with the conversion of Constantine; it is of much older origin: "in three and a half years He (Christ, the Pattern) won only eleven - whereas one Apostle in one day, maybe in one hour, wins three thousand." He then goes on to suggest that the Apostle was "a little too hasty in striking a bargain, a little too hasty in the direction of extension, so that the trouble already begins here."[1]

The contemporary state of Christendom therefore has become one of people, all perfectly orthodox, but "playing the game of Christianity" as a "child plays soldier" or as soldiers simulate all the action of battle during a mock manoeuvre while not exposed to any danger. Such "Christianity," unlike the unpalatable Christianity of the New Testament, cannot possibly offend an age living in aesthetic categories. Thus we have the unprecedented, not to mention fantastic, phenomenon of "Christian states, Christian lands, a Christian people, and (how marvelous!) a Christian world." "....everything this world has hitherto seen in the way of criminal affairs," Kierkegaard asserts grimly, "is a mere bagatelle in comparison with this crime."[2]

Thus, in documenting the surrender of that last stronghold of the Individual, the Church, to the category of the quantitative, Kierkegaard completes his description of the proliferation of the inauthentic attitude

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[1]Attack, P.160

[2]Attack, P.31

throughout every stratum of society: the professor, the clergyman, the layman, all have become absorbed into das Man (Heidegger), the One. To Kierkegaard, a frightful spectacle, but one nevertheless that has a negative religious importance in that it sharpens the distinction between the Evil and the Good: "See," Kierkegaard says, "how the cruelty of abstraction makes the true form of worldliness only too evident,"[1] therefore one cannot but perceive that "there is salvation only in one thing, in becoming a single individual."[2] In former times, in contrast, when confused, the individual could turn to the great for help, but: "That is past"; in times like these, "he is either lost in the dizziness of unending abstraction or saved for ever in the reality of religion. Perhaps very many will cry out in despair, but it will not help them - already it is too late."[3]

Thus in reaction against a deleterious philosophy, a demoralized society, and a spiritless church, Kierkegaard opposes the Individual. And that, he says, "is the category through which....this age, all history, the human race as a whole, must pass."[4]

III THE AUTHENTIC LIFE

A. THE LEAP OF FAITH

The best approach to an understanding of Kierkegaard's conception of the transition to an authentic way of life is to consider the two "instants," or "moments," which occur in the Paradox of Christianity. Fabro summarizes them in the following manner: "'the moment of the Incarnation', in which God becomes man (descending moment), and 'the moment of the Imitation of Christ' (ascending moment), to which the believer

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[1] Present Age, P.65

[2] Point of View, P.61

[3] Present Age, P.64

[4] Point of View, P.128

is bidden under pain of losing 'eternal life'.[1] [2]

First we deal with the Instant which describes the Deity's incursion into time. He talks of this variously as "the new thing," as "heaven's gift....to the believer,"[3] as "the breaking through of eternity." The emphasis is clearly on the initiative of eternity: the Instant is God's condescension to man.

We can better understand the import of the Instant if we consider, briefly, Kierkegaard's category of the Paradox.[4] The main characteristic of the Paradox is that it combines "qualitatively heterogeneous categories." We see this, for example, in Kierkegaard's description of original sin. Heredity is a natural category, guilt an ethico-spiritual category. "How then - reason will ask - is it possible to think of juxtaposing these two categories in such a way as to permit us to say that one inherits what, by its very nature, cannot be the object of heredity?"[5]

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[1] C. Fabro, Faith & Reason in Kierkegaard's Dialectric, ed. H. Johnson & N. Thulstrup, (Harper, N.Y. 1962) P.168

[2] It must be borne in mind that, for Kierkegaard, authenticity is possible outside of Christianity. "Religiousness A," which he calls "the dialectic of inward transformation" (Postscript P.494) or "the individual's own pathetic transformation of existence" (Postscript, P.515), is the high-point of "pagan" authenticity. It was the religiousness Socrates attained. His criticism however of this form of religiousness is that it never can survive Feuerbach's claim that "all theology is anthropology," for ultimately its point of departure is "what comes from man." Thus the way to complete authenticity must lead beyond "Religiousness A" to Religiousness B" (paradoxical religiousness), where the point of departure is "what comes from God." Only here does inwardness in existing, i.e. authenticity, achieve its fullest expression, for "Christianity," Kierkegaard contends, "is the only power which is able truly to arouse offense." (Postscript, P.518)

[3] Attack, P.281

[4] A full discussion of the philosophical and theological significance of the Paradox is impossible here, but a few comments will serve to elucidate Kierkegaard's understanding of "the leap."

[5] Fabro, P.166

The answer is simple: it must be believed. Similarly, all paradoxes[1] are constituted in such a way as to repel reason, demanding only to be believed. Now the basis of all these paradoxes is the coming of the Eternal into history. Thus Kierkegaard writes: man is born a sinner as a "consequence of the Deity's presence in time."[2] God in time, therefore, is the fundamental paradox, the power behind the other, derivative paradoxes, and thus he arrives at his category of the Absolute Paradox.[3] By a sort of via negativa he defines the Absolute Paradox as that which cannot be understood, the Absurd, and the significance for man of this unintelligibility is that he must suffer "the crucifixion of the understanding"; that is, he must make "the leap of faith." This Kierkegaard defines as "the instant" when the individual takes "the absolute risk" of believing the Absurd. There is no objective ground for committing oneself to the Paradox, except that it presents itself as the truth, or rather: He presents Himself as the Truth! This is the aspect of authority in Christianity which, unlike the Socratic position, stresses the indispensability of the Teacher. The summons to "leap" therefore comes, not from the logical cogency of the teaching, but from a particular Teacher, saying: "Come unto me." To respond to this call is to enter "the instant."

Kierkegaard's second "instant," or "leap of faith," demands a total breach with the world, with immanence, with natural reasoning:

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[1] i.e. Christian or "essential" paradoxes, not "relative" paradoxes, "which at the utmost present difficulty for thought."(Postscript, P.498)

[2] Postscript, P.517

[3] See Philosophical Fragments, pp 29-43, where Kierkegaard develops the category of the Paradox. Note especially p.37 where he refers to the "appalling" aspect of the Paradox (that which makes it the Absolute paradox) which is that "absolute unlikeness" is done away by "absolute likeness"; i.e., God (the wholly Other) becomes Man (the wholly Like).

"to believe is to....Venture out so decisively that thou breakest with all the temporal and the finite, with all a man commonly lives for and in."[1] Thus there can be no clinging to the goals and orientation of a past existence, for in the act of faith existence is "paradoxically accentuated" and the exister loses continuity with himself and becomes a new creature.[2] This means that a man must abandon all self-reliance, all trust in immanence, for he becomes totally indebted to God who gives "the condition." Faith, therefore, "is not an act of the will, for all human volition has its capacity within the scope of an underlying condition;"[3] rather it is commitment to Transcendence which makes possible the very act of commitment for, as we saw before, Eternity entered time, not time Eternity. To exercise faith, then, is to break all connection with immanence, allowing oneself to be "brought to the utmost verge of existence,"[4] the point where man lets go and God takes hold.

If faith is to last, Kierkegaard insists again and again, the rupture with immanence must be understood as incapable of being healed. The nature of the Paradox ensures this, for its intrinsic unintelligibility annihilates forever the possibility of comprehending it. However a problem arises at this juncture, viz. that Kierkegaard is believed by some scholars to have repudiated the idea of the irresolvable absurdity of the Paradox in the following Journal entry: "When the believer believes, the Absurd is not the Absurd - faith transforms it; but in every

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1 Attack, P.191

2 Postscript, P.510

3 S. Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, trans. D. Swenson, (Princeton 1936) P.50

4 Postscript, P.507

weak moment, to him it is again more or less the Absurd. The passion of faith is the only thing capable of mastering the Absurd."[1] Undoubtedly because of his Thomistic bias, Fabro leaps at this assertion of Kierkegaard and interprets it, perhaps not incorrectly, in the following way: "In an ontological sense it (the absurd of faith) is a meta-rational, that is, it is the object of faith, which, however, truly knows the truth of its object and is even able to convince reason itself."[2] Fabro then is saying that a rational knowledge of God is possible and that faith is transformed into certain knowledge. But this is to contradict, without hope of reconciliation, what Kierkegaard states emphatically again and again about the nature of faith, viz. that it entails a continuing risk and uncertainty.[3] A clue to the solution of this problem is perhaps to be found in a criticism that Johannes Climacus levels at the concept of "the knight of faith" in Fear and Trembling. Its deficiency, he says, is that "the knight" is presented "in a state of completeness, and hence in a false medium, instead of in the medium of existence."[4] Perhaps the faith Kierkegaard is talking of, in the aforementioned Journal entry, is a faith "in a state of completeness," a faith viewed sub specie aeterni.[5] Therefore, while granting that this "perfect" faith may be capable of resolving the Paradox, it must be affirmed, in the name of existence, from the

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[1]Quoted by Fabro, P.182

[2]Fabro, P.185

[3]See, especially, Postscript, P.182 ff.

[4]Postscript, P.447n

[5]Here then we find one instance of Kierkegaard falling victim to his perennial bête noire, the Hegelian dialectic

point of view of the existing believer, that the Paradox remains irrevocably absurd. Thus we see why inwardness must be at its highest for it must embrace "this objective uncertainty with the entire passion of the infinite."[1] Thus the objective uncertainty of the object of faith is an integral element in Kierkegaard's dialectic.[2] He therefore emphasizes the fact that the believer should be intent upon holding fast this incertitude, "so as to remain out upon the deep, over seventy thousand fathoms of water, still preserving....faith."[3] The inwardness of faith therefore demands objective uncertainty; without it faith would perish, but this, Kierkegaard argues, cannot happen since the Paradox must forever remain in the category of the Absurd. (i.e. until Eternity!) Therefore even though "those who have made the leap will suspect that it was victory....they can have no certainty."[4] This is what is meant by "the martyrdom of faith."

B. THE LIFE OF FAITH

Every positive act implies an act correspondingly negative: every choice implies a rejection, every decision a repudiation. It is in this sense that Kierkegaard writes: "everything creative is latently polemical, since it has to make room for the new which it is bringing

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[1] Postscript, P.182

[2] Kierkegaard makes an even more fundamental attack on objectivity for, as H. Niebuhr points out: "His whole work from one point of view can be regarded as an attack on the idea that appearance as such is any revelation of the reality of existence." (Niebuhr, P.30) This is why Christendom is a "monstrous illusion" for it presumes to incarnate eternal truth. Quite the contrary, Kierkegaard contends, Christianity cannot exist in an objective form nor can anything objective be Christianity. H.R. Niebuhr, Sören Kierkegaard, in Christianity and the Existentialists, ed. C. Michalson, (Scribner's Sons, N.Y. 1956) P.35

[3] Postscript, P. 182

[4] Age, P.67

into the world."[1] The life of faith is such a creative force; thus while there is the positive aspect of man's transcendent aspiration toward the Individual, there is, concomitantly, the negative side. Let us consider the latter first.

Kierkegaard asserts that being a disciple of Christ entails "the most unconditional heterogeneity to this world."[2] This means existing in a relation of opposition to other men, for God's thought in introducing Christianity was to "set 'individual' and 'race', the single person and the many, at odds, set them against one another"; it was to apply the determinant of dissension;"for to be a Christian was,according to His thought, precisely the definition of dissension, that of the 'individual' with the 'race', with the millions, with family, with father and mother, etc."[3]

Thus, while one strives to become the Individual, one must also be engaged in overcoming the world. Three occasions stand out prominently in Kierkegaard's own life in which he found it necessary to deliberately alienate others, even actual and potential supporters.[4] The first occasion was the publication of Either/Or. "He was in danger of getting a following, so he formed the polemical resolution to regard every eulogy as an attack and every attack as unworthy of notice."[5] It was not long before he was "set at naught." The second was the

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[1]Age, P.56

[2]Attack, P.19

[3]Attack, P.166

[4]It would be unthinkable to study Kierkegaard's thought apart from his life; this would mean forgetting that central affirmation of his philosophy: that he, Søren Kierkegaard, is an existing individual.

[5]Point of View, P.50

affair of the Corsair,[1] in which he might have circumvented a collision with that "despicable organ of vulgarity," but, for the sake of his category, he preferred to cast himself "as a sacrifice before the insurrection of vulgarity!"[2] The third occasion was the attack on Christendom. When some came out in support of his stand, he assailed them almost as violently as he did the Establishment. He resolutely had nothing to do with popular movements, keeping himself "pure in the separateness of 'the single individual', purer if possible than the purest virgin in Denmark."[3] Never did he abandon the position expressed in the Postscript that "the most terrible of falsehoods" is "having an adherent!"[4] Thus we see, concretely, the kind of relationship the Individual has with the world. It is essentially a relation of opposition. It is the negative component of becoming the Individual.

Now, emphasizing the positive side, we see that the life of faith is characterized by "becoming."[5] This is so because " 'the individual' in its highest measure is beyond man's power."[6] This is another way of saying that the self is possibility, that it "does not actually exist,

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[1]For details, see the appendix in Point of View

[2]Point of View, P.95

[3]Attack, P.63

[4]Postscript, P.233

[5]Some of what will follow has already been anticipated but it is necessary now to delineate, systematically, the main features of the category of the Individual. And, of course, it must not be forgotten that while for Kierkegaard there are outstanding individuals outside of Christianity (such as Socrates), the Individual in excelsis is the Christian.

[6]Point of View, P.128

it is only that which it is to become."[1] However, one does not become the Individual "as a matter of course"; the passing of years is no guarantee that one becomes a mature individual. If this were so then we would be in the medium of being, for becoming by necessity is simply a state of being.[2] Rather, one becomes the Individual by a decisive leap,[3] or more accurately: one enters upon the path leading to the Individual by a leap, and then one persists on this way, never actually "arriving," but constantly advancing in the direction of one's self.

Part of this process of becoming is the progessive narrowing of the gap between thought and life. Speculative philosophy was widening the gap by erecting magnificent systems that were irrelevant to the concrete life of the philosopher. Of what use is knowledge unless it is expressed in action! He therefore asserts: "truth exists for the particular individual only as he himself produces it in action."[4] [5] A man should therefore strive to bring his life into line with his thought, like Socrates, of whom Kierkegaard writes: he was "just

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[1] Sickness, P.163

[2] Concept, P.19

[3] See Either/Or V.II 252 ff. where he expresses this idea of a leap in terms of "choosing oneself." In the next chapter we compare Kierkegaard's choice of oneself with Sartre's but we might say here that Kierkegaard emphasizes that only when one chooses ethically does one choose in freedom. Thus, as in the leap of faith where the leap is grounded in an Object, the paradox of the God/Man, so in the ethical self-choice there is an objective ground, viz. God, the ground of all value.

[4] Concept, P.123

[5] Compare this with: "he can remain in his freedom only by constantly realizing it. He, therefore, who has chosen himself is eo ipso active." (E/O V.II, P.236)

as great qua character as qua thinker."[1] [2]

The attitude of detachment is therefore antithetical to the Individual. So, writing about himself, Kierkegaard says: "If I am to work in the instant, I must, alas, bid farewell to thee, beloved detachment."[3] The age he felt, was paralyzed by the attitude "to a certain degree"; this must give way to "either/or," which is "the key to heaven."[4] In this way he stresses the need to become engagé. Most men, he affirms, "live dejectedly in worldly sorrow and joy:; they "sit along the wall and do not join in the dance."[5] The dance however, Kierkegaard warns, may become the dance of death, since "the use of it (the category of the individual) is an art, a moral task, and an art the exercise of which is always dangerous and at times might even require the life of the artist."

A further qualification of the Individual is that his life is characterized by an ever-deepening inwardness. The phrase that succinctly expresses this is the Greek gnothi seautou. Unum noris omnes expresses the same thing, "if by unum one understands the thinker himself,

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[1] Attack, P.283

[2] There is an oversimplification of the problem of becoming in this paragraph which may create the impression that Kierkegaard is merely advocating a conformity of life with thought. The problem of course if "more dialectical" than this, for thought itself is eo ipso a camouflage of reality; this is why Kierkegaard practises the art of "indirect communication," for it is only in this way - through seduction, as if were - that truth and authenticity can emerge. "Inwardness," he writes, "cannot be directly communicated, for its direct expression is precisely externality, its direction being outward, not inward." (Postscript, P.232)

[3] Attack, P.79

[4] Attack, P.82

[5] Fear, P.51

[6] S. Kierkegaard, The Journals of Kierkegaard, trans & ed. A. Dru, (Fontana 1958) P.134

and then does not inquisitively go scouting after the omnes, but seriously holds fast to the one, which really is all."[1] By this he does not mean to advocate that a man should become indifferent to the rest of the world, playing "his own little history in his private theatre,"[2] but rather that the only way to knowledge about others, and about history, is via a deep self-knowledge. Furthermore, the one who truly lives is he who exists inwardly; experience comes to him from within rather than from without. Thus it is possible to experience life more richly on the Jutland heath where nothing happens except for the occasional partridge starting up noisily, than on the stage of universal history."[3]

This movement in the direction of inwardness must of necessity lead to the Individual's isolation. The extent to which he can endure this isolation is the criterion of his spirituality: "we men, "Kierkegaard says, "are constantly in need of 'the others', the herd....But the Christianity of the New Testament is precisely reckoned upon and related to this isolation of the spiritual man."[4] The ethical standpoint confirms this for: "The ethical is concerned with particular human beings, and with each and every one of them by himself."[5] Ethics is not concerned with the mass, with another, but with me....alone. As soon as I would merge with the crowd and begin to talk in terms of "we," or the "19th century," or"the age," then, Kierkegaard says, "the ethical is done for."

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[1] Concept, P.70n

[2] Concept, P.31

[3] Concept, P.143

[4] Attack, P.163

[5] Postscript, P.284

Therefore it would call me from the multitude to a solitary place. Sometimes this solitude can be terrible, as in the case of Abraham[1] or Kierkegaard himself,[2] but "Christian heroism....is to venture wholly to be oneself as an individual man, this definite individual man, alone before the face of God, alone in this tremendous responsibility."[3] Other, less gruelling, paths may be followed, but they will never lead to the highest; besides, they entail self-deception. The individual must learn that he stands....alone![4]

If the leap of faith and the life it entails appear infinitely scandalous, then Kierkegaard can congratulate himself, for this was precisely his aim: "My purpose is to make it difficult to become a Christian."[5] But he adds this qualification: "Faith is rightly made the most difficult thing of all, but with a qualitative dialectic, i.e. equally difficult for all."[6] Therefore, becoming a Christian, making the leap of faith, is not dependent on "differential talent"; it is not the privilege of the speculative aristocracy; it is open to all. While most

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[1] Fear & Trembling

[2] Dru, P.50; Point of View, P.71

[3] Sickness, Preface

[4] Kierkegaard has been criticized for lacking any real sense of community (by, e.g., David Roberts in Existentialism & Religious Belief, Oxford, 1957 and by M. Buber in Between Man & Man, trans. R. G. Smith, Kegan Paul, London, 1947) However, in the next chapter, I attempt to show that real community is possible in a world peopled by Kierkegaardian individuals.

[5] Postscript, P.495

[6] Postscript, P.527

can never achieve the intellectual acumen of a Hegel or the military genius of a Napoleon, all can become the Individual. Kierkegaard, however, is aware that in an "age of dissolution, where it is far easier and safer to be like the others,"[1] few will venture to be themselves; nevertheless, it is with the hope, born of despair, that some - or even one - will have their attention aroused, that he directs the whole force of his teaching toward becoming the Single One. "Leap, then," he cries, "into the arms of God."[2]

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[1] Sickness, P.167

[2] Age, P.65

CHAPTER 3

A CRITICAL COMPARISON OF KIERKEGAARD AND SARTRE

I EXISTENTIAL THEMES IN KIERKEGAARD AND SARTRE

A. OPTIMISM

Both Kierkegaard and Sartre have been reproached for presenting gloomy, depressing views of man and his world. Kierkegaard talks of the world as "a vale of tears and a penitentiary," insisting that a man ought to live according to a gospel which is essentially a "doctrine of cross and anguish and horror and shuddering before eternity."[1] Sartre meanwhile depicts a godless and absurd world which, when perceived as such, produces a sense of nausea or what James calls "a nameless Unheimlichkeit."[2] Both certainly follow Hegel in regarding consciousness as fundamentally "unhappy." However, contradictory as it may seem, both really avoid pessimism: in their different ways the two of them envisage the overcoming of the world. Karl Barth therefore has described Sartre's existentialism as "a genuine humanistic optimism."[3] Kierkegaard's existentialism too can be designated "optimistic" when we consider his belief in the possibility of becoming the Individual in face of dissolution on every side: his is the optimism of the Psalmist: "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee." (Psalm 91, vs. 7) Thus while there may be tragedy in their world views, there is not pessimism.

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[1] Attack, P.158

[2] J. Collins, The Existentialists, (Gateway Edition, 1963), P.58

[3] K. Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol III, 3, (T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1960) P.341

B. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Kierkegaard and Sartre are also alike in their opposition to determinism. By this they aim to ensure that none escapes complete responsibility for his actions. Sartre leaves no doubt about this when he stolidly opposes the materialistic claims of Communism, and the Freudian hypothesis of the unconscious. His repudiation of God too is an attempt - though a misguided one - to close all exits from the condemned cell of total responsibility. Any attempt to posit any form of inner or outer determinism is evidence of bad faith. Likewise there is bad faith in disclaiming responsibility for any state of the world. Perplexed about the war that has broken over Europe engulfing and devastating his own country, Mathieu exclaims: "Good God! I didn't choose this war....by what trick of fortune have I got to take responsibility for (it)"[1] However, later, after a good deal of honest self-examination, he concludes: "I chose this war."[2] Sartre would affirm that both the positive and negative conclusions Mathieu comes to are correct, for the ambiguity of existence both exonerates and inculpates. However, notice that the final choice of Sartre's existential hero is that of personal responsibility. The authentic attitude, Sartre says in Being & Nothingness, is one which says: "Everything takes place as if I bore the entire responsibility for the war."[3]

With Kierkegaard too there is no mitigation of responsibility.

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[1] Iron, P.56

[2] Iron, P.78

[3] Being & Nothingness, P.530

If a man has knowledge, Kierkegaard says, and he fails to elevate himself by means of it, he is like the boy who lets his kite fly aloft: "to follow it with his eye he finds interesting, prodigiously interesting, but....it does not lift him up, he remains in the mud, more and more crazy about the interesting".[1] Kierkegaard's impassioned response to such a man is: "Shame upon thee, shame upon thee, shame upon thee."[2] This is one example of the persistent emphasis that Kierkegaard places on personal responsibility. Even in dread, when a man is reduced to impotence, he is guilty.[3]

Thus both existentialists admit the ambiguity of responsibility, but both are firm in their insistence that nothing whatever absolves man from guilt. Sartre is speaking for Kierkegaard as well when he says: "the peculiar character of human reality is that it is without excuse."[4]

C. DECISION & INTEGRITY

One of the marks of existentialism in general is the emphasis put on the kind of activity variously designated: decision, action, resolution, commitment. Sartre, with his peculiar emphasis on the will to action, exalts such personal engagement as the ethic of existentialism.[5] Kierkegaard too, as we have seen, urges the need for resolute decision and action. The disjunction "either/or" - a nickname applied to

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[1]Attack, P.232

[2]Attack, P.232

[3]Concept, P.65

[4]Being & Nothingness, P.531

[5]Later we consider the question whether Sartre can, consistently, talk of ethics at all.

Kierkegaard by his contemporaries - is sufficient evidence to show the great importance he attached to decision. This has led Kaufmann to assert that ethics for Kierkegaard is making a decision.[1] This does however oversimplify his position for Kierkegaard does make a distinction between right and wrong. "I should like to say that in making a choice it is not so much a question of choosing the right as of the energy, the earnestness, the pathos with which one chooses.... Therefore, even if a man were to choose the wrong, he will nevertheless discover, precisely by reason of the energy with which he chose, that he had chosen the wrong."[2] Kierkegaard does then have a conception of objective right and wrong (although not in the sense of a petrified system of ethics). Nevertheless by his inordinate stress on the importance of resolute decision, he places himself squarely within the tradition of modern existentialism.

It must be stressed that in calling for decision and resolute action, both philosophers maintain that the goal of such activity must be integrity, in the sense of Polonius' words to Laertes: "This above all to thine own self be true." (Hamlet) Thus Kierkegaard talks of the ultimate test of truth as its manifestation in action, while Sartre maintains that there should be no divorce between ontology and ethics or, to put this another way: "a man's moral attitude should coincide with his Weltanschauung."[3] Sartre illustrates what he means by

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[1]Kaufmann, P.17

[2]E/O, Vol. II, 171

[3]See Collins, 257 n23

integrity in several of his strictly literary works, but one of the better examples occurs in The Wall where Pablo Ibbieta, a revolutionary, is being held under sentence of death. He has before him the possibility of saving his life, but this would mean disclosing the whereabouts of Gris, a fellow-revolutionary. He chooses to die rather than give up his comrade. "Why?....his life had no more value than mine; no life had value....nothing was important. Yet I was there, I could save my skin and give up Gris and I refused to do it."[1] It is this kind of integrity which we find in Sartre's continuing attack on the bourgeoisie. There is nothing to be gained, materially speaking, from this attitude, and there is even the added spiritual loss in the fact that the Communists have spurned his help. We thus see an autobiographical note in his play Dirty Hands where the intellectual, Hugo, finds himself unwanted by the proletariat for whom he has committed his life. Kierkegaard's attack on the Church was an act of similar integrity. What he wanted was "honesty" and he was prepared to (and he did!) venture unto the end. Perhaps one day we might say the same of Sartre.

D. CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY AND COMMUNITY

We also find coincidence in Kierkegaard and Sartre in their avoidance of a narrow subjectivism. We have already seen how Sartre emphasizes this, asserting that in the cogito a man discovers not only his own self but those of others too. Thus he says: "Our responsibility

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[1] The Wall, P.238 (Kaufmann)

....concerns mankind as a whole"; "my action is....a commitment on behalf of all mankind."[1] This is not merely a reformulation of the ethical commonplace that man is a political animal. Its primary basis is ontological. Thus, at the very deepest levels, Sartre cuts the ground away from those who would advocate a kind of existential solipsism.

The same can be said for Kierkegaard, although superficially it may seem that his Individual resembles Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" who, in desolation, cries out: "Alone, alone, all, all alone,

Alone on a wide, wide sea."

However, on closer analysis, we see that Kierkegaard did envisage the possibility of real fellowship. The camaraderie of individuals who live essentially in aesthetic categories is pseudo-fellowship: "it is only after the individual has acquired an ethical outlook, in face of the whole world, that there can be any suggestion of really joining together."[2] However, the decisive determinant for authentic community is Christianity, "which makes every man an individual, an individual sinner."[3] Now since every man is a sinner, he is related, "not as a pure man to sinners, but as a sinner to sinners." This, Kierkegaard asserts, "is the solidarity of all mankind."[4] Thus he can say that the concept of "congregation" does not conflict with the Individual.[5] In fact, where from the point of view of Religiousness A the species is a lower category than the individual, from the point of view of para-

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[1] Humanism, P.292 (Kaufmann)

[2] Age, P.62

[3] Sickness, P.253

[4] Age, P.127

[5] Pt. of View, P.149n

doxical religiousness, the race is higher.[1] In Works of Love he summarizes this all by saying that love of neighbour is the Christian expression for true community.[2] This can only mean that Kierkegaard does indeed have a positive conception of community and that the way to the Individual, though "a solitary path, narrow and steep," is at the same time the way to real community. We must therefore reject Buber's contention that Kierkegaard's category of the Individual is "a category of exclusion."

In the case of Sartre, however, we can find no comparable ideal of fellowship. The principle of social intercourse is the Master Slave relationship of Hegel; man is continually experiencing the petrifying "look" of the Other and has therefore to strive ceaselessly to overcome this Medusa stare by an assertion of his transcendence. Such conditions would prevail, Sartre maintains, even in the classless society! Certainly there is much validity in Sartre's analysis of society, but the perspective of his ontology allows only for a relative amelioration of these conditions. True community does not exist for Sartre. The I-Thou encounter is not "dreamed of in (his) philosophy." (Hamlet). Kierkegaard alone, with his Christian orientation, has visualized a paradoxical transformation of this "squirrel cage." (Collins). Nevertheless it is to Sartre's credit that, like Kierkegaard, he has stressed the truth expressed movingly by John Donne: "No man is an Iland, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the Continent,

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[1]Postscript, P.492

[2]L. Richter, Kierkegaard's Position in His Religio-Sociological Situation in A Kierkegaard Critique, ed. H. Johnson & N. Thulstrup, (Harper, N.Y. 1962) P.56

a part of the maine....any mans death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde."[1]

Finally, to conclude our study of the views common to both Kierkegaard and Sartre, we can say that both quite explicitly assert that authenticity is within the grasp of all. This is not the prerogative of the speculative aristocracy or expert in phenomenological reduction, it is a mode of living possible for all. However, it is not a way of life to be followed casually, but one demanding a high degree of courage and a willingness to persevere. For both - to use biblical terminology - the gate is strait and the way narrow. All may enter, but each, individually, must make the decision to do so, and each must travel his road....alone.

II THE PROBLEM OF GOD

A problem that we must now face is that of atheism and theism in the respective philosophies. How important are these postulates? Do they exclude the possibility of reconciliation between their systems? Or are they ultimately irrelevant, so that we might transcend them both in a mediating synthesis? These are questions that will inevitably

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[1] Kierkegaard's "astonishing political myopia" (H. Johnson) might be called in question here and be compared, to his detriment, with Sartre's political activism and involvement. This however is too large an issue to go into here, although we might say - in an attempt to explain Kierkegaard's position - that Sartre has had the "advantage" of living through two world wars. Furthermore, as H. Johnson points out in his essay Kierkegaard & Politics, Kierkegaard was far from blind to the grave political dangers in an age of the Crowd. (The Nazi phenomenon would have come as no surprise to him!) Priests, he said, were therefore needed to break up the Crowd and make them into individual persons. (H. Johnson, P.80)

arise, but before we come to them we must discuss the postulates, beginning with Sartre.

A. SARTRE'S POSTULATORY ATHEISM

An examination of Sartre's writings reveals a deep, affective undercurrent which Collins terms a "will to atheism." And this, Collins asserts, must be seen as correlative to his other basic postulate, a self-sufficient phenomenology.

Following Husserl, Scheler and Heidegger, Sartre espoused the phenomenological method as a means of developing an ontology. Briefly, this method can be described as the reduction of every cognition of an entity to an immediate intuition - a Wesensschau, as Husserl called it - where the entity is able to reveal itself as it really is. No presuppositions are admitted. Sartre however felt that his forerunners did not adhere with sufficient fidelity and singlemindedness to the phenomenological standpoint; they did not base ontology squarely upon their methodological premisses but smuggled some doctrinal content in from alien sources.[1] With Sartre therefore we find a "radicalization" of the phenomenological reduction. Only the will to atheism, Collins avers, could have given rise to such a vigorous implementing of the phenomenological methodology: thus he refers to Sartre's atheism as "the emotional a priori corresponding to the theoretical absolutizing of the phenomenological reduction."[2]

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[1] Collins sees this, e.g., in Husserl who gave to the ego a privileged place as a transcendental sphere of reflection, thereby showing evidence of his dependence on the Cartesian & Kantian theories of being. For Sartre, in contrast, the ego is merely another object of the prereflective consciousness (Being & Nothingness, XXXVII)

[2] Collins, P.70

This "emotional a priori" has other significant consequences. In the first place it leads to his assertion of unconditional ontological generalizations on the basis of emotional experiences. For example, we have seen how the experience of nausea leads to his perception of being as de trop, absurd. But how does he effect this transition? Collins argues that there is justification in defending the contingency of existent things but that it is wrong to simply assume that the contingent means the underived and unintelligible.[1] The only pausible explanation for these conclusions, which Sartre reaches, is his "will to atheism" for, by asserting the phenomenological apprehension of the In-itself's absurdity and lack of causal origin, he helps to remove the arbitrary character from his radical postulates. In point of fact, all Sartre's descriptive essays constitute elaborate rationalizations of his a priori postulate of atheism.

A further consequence of his atheism is his cursory dismissal of such questions as the origin of consciousness. This is a metaphysical problem and as such cannot be answered conclusively. All metaphysics in fact is deficient in that it falls short of the apodictic certainty possible in ontology. Sartre therefore restricts his inquiries within the parentheses drawn around the actual world. Therefore, in regard to the problem of the origin of consciousness, he simply asserts that everything happens as if being did give rise to le néant (i.e. consciousness) as its fundamental project.[2] This is the extent to which Sartre

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[1]Collins, P.59

[2]Being & Nothingness, P.539

handles this difficulty and Collins has consequently reproached him for not facing up to "one of the most pressing issues of philosophy."[1] Why, Collins asks, can we not reason in an a posteriori way to the existence of an actual cause of human consciousness? Sartre however does not go beyond asserting that the For-itself, like the In-itself, is merely "there" (il y a). His repudiation of God prevents him from proceeding further.

From these considerations we can see why Barth has described Sartre's emphatic and forceful denial of the existence of God as his "decisive presupposition." With this we must concur in spite of Sartre's apparent nonchalance in dismissing the idea of God as contradictory. An objective reading of Sartre leaves no doubt that the vital consistency and persuasiveness of his philosophy are due to a passionate conviction that there is no God.

With God out of the way, we might ask, what remains? Barth answers this, succinctly: "The real conclusion of his case against the existence of God is that He is absolutely superfluous where He should matter most, i.e., prior to human existence. For every 'prior' can only be human existence itself. Hence God's place is already filled ....man is himself God."[2] Thus,in his deification of man, Sartre discloses the real import of his philosophy and the meaning of his phenomenological reduction: the shadow on the wall of the cave is truth; the appearance is reality; man is God! Far from being a detached descriptive phenomenology, Sartre's philosophy therefore emerges as an evangelical proclamation of the deity of man!

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[1]Collins, P.67

[2]Barth, P.342

B. KIERKEGAARD"S POSTULATORY THEISM.[1]

Just as atheism is integral to Sartre's philosophy so is theism integral to Kierkegaard's thought. However, before considering the full significance of this opposition of postulates, we must clarify what "theism" means when applied to Kierkegaard's philosophy.

The a priori nature of his theism is clear from his satirical stabs at those who, insultingly, set about proving God's existence.... in His very presence! Thus his attitude to the traditional proofs of God's existence is less than sympathetic. God, he insists, must exist in the premisses of the argument if He is to exist in the conclusions! In this regard he is a true Kantian. God then for him is simply incontrovertible Reality.

How does Kierkegaard conceive of this God whose presence is as obvious as the great vault of heaven? Is his God the God of "theological theism," as Tillich describes it, the God who is a being beside others and as such a part of the whole of reality? To this we must answer No, for Kierkegaard is quite emphatic about God's absolute transcendence: the Eternal, he says, is a qualitatively different category from that of time, God is wholly unlike man. This is what he means when he says God does not exist (in the manner of men), He is.[2] Of course this raises the problem of man's relationship with God. How, if man and God are qualitatively distinct, can there be any contact? Does not this absolute dichotomy between the human and the divine preclude the possibility of any relationship? Avoiding any Hegelian attempt

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[1]See Postscript, P.179n where Kierkegaard explicitly acknowledges the postulatory nature of his theism, although he describes it as a "life-necessity" rather than as something arbitrary.

[2]Postscript, P.296

at mediating qualitative opposites, Kierkegaard answers this with his concept of the Instant.[1] By coming into time in the Person of Christ, God becomes ontologically significant to man; by faith in the Incarnation man relates himself to God. These are essentially the terms in which Kierkegaard conceives the solution to the problem of man's relationship to God.

Theism then for Kierkegaard must be understood in the light cast from God's presence in time. It is precisely this God/Man phenomenon which brings about Kierkegaard's divergence from Sartre. Thus, whereas Sartre's doctrine of man culminates in a humanism which puts away "Salvation among the stage properties as impossible," leaving "A whole man made of all men, worth all of them, and any one of them worth him,"[2] Kierkegaard's doctrine of man, grounded on a Christocentric theism, crystallizes in the proposition: "Religion (i.e. Christian religion) is the true humanity."[3]

Having therefore examined the fundamental postulates of our two philosophers, we must now see, in more detail, the manner in which these positions lead them to clash, irreconcilably.

III FREEDOM AND NIHILISM

We have seen in Section I of this chapter the elements in Kierkegaard and Sartre which justify the use of the general term "existentialist" in reference to them. Now we come to those factors,

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[1] See Chapter 2

[2] Words, P.173

[3] Quoted by H. Johnson, P.81

logically developed from their postulates, which create the antithesis between their philosophical systems. We find a tension particularly in their doctrines of freedom, and, as we shall see in the next section, in their fundamental answers to the question of authentic existence: the leap of faith and heroic despair. But now we are concerned with their views on freedom.

Freedom, as Kierkegaard develops it, shows itself as something which neither crushes the subjectivity of the individual (as Sartre's concept of bad faith implies) nor leads to nihilism. Ultimately it is anchored in objectivity, the objectivity of the Incarnation, and thus saves the individual from falling into nothingness. But in Sartre, freedom becomes something nihilistic, and in the end it must turn against the individual who lives in strict accordance with it. As Sartre himself declares, freedom has no foundation, being merely a flight from nothingness to nothingness. How then can it avoid coming to grief on the boundless desert of pure subjectivity?

First let us take a look at Kierkegaard's concept of freedom.

A. KIERKEGAARDIAN FREEDOM

The first point to note is that, for Kierkegaard, man does "have an essence; i.e. man is born with an inner teleology. This is not to say that man is a machine, created to perform a certain function - although this analogy is not entirely inappropriate - for man is an existential being who is able to choose whether or not he will conform to the directives of his nature. These directives are nothing other than the demands of Eternity which, as we saw before, exist by virtue of man's determination as spirit. Therefore, when Kierkegaard describes

man as spirit he is asserting that he "has" an essence.

Now freedom, for Kierkegaard,is choosing in accordance with this essence. Freedom for him is not simply the ability to choose whatever one likes; it is making a certain kind of choice, an ethical choice. Thus he says: "one can choose oneself with freedom only when one chooses oneself ethically."[1] Therefore, while he would agree with Sartre that a man is free to make any choice he pleases, he denies that a non-ethical choice is a free choice. Only when a man "chooses himself in his eternal validity," when he recognizes the absolute ethical antithesis between good and evil, does he exercise his freedom. Here we recognize the paradoxical nature of Christian freedom which asserts that man is most free when acting under the strongest complusion from above - the kind of freedom that Luther experienced when he declared: "I cannot do otherwise."

Kierkegaard's understanding of freedom then is that it means subordination to the absoluteness of the ethical demand, i.e. the eternal. This however is not to say that man must submit himself to some immutable system of ethics. Truth, according to Kierkegaard is not capable of expression in propositional form; an ethical code is therefore necessarily false. Kierkegaard was aware of the dangers of this position, but he saved his ethics from lapsing into pure subjectivity by orienting it toward an objectivity - not the false objectivity of science and philosophy against which he never ceased to declaim - but an objectivity whose source is at the intersection of Eternity and time. Christ is the object of Kierkegaardian ethics; He is "the historical, the

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[1]E/O Vol. II, P.252

existential" individual,[1] and as such is the goal of man's ethical striving; He is the "Pattern."

Thus we see in Kierkegaard a freedom which is ultimately assured by the objectivity of the Incarnation. This does not mean that man comes under determinative compulsion of omnipotent Deity, but it means that he has a goal, but one of a paradoxical nature: it empowers him to advance in the direction of this telos, but it does not act in a coercive fashion; ultimately, man has to orient himself toward this goal. Here we recognize the theology of grace whose paradoxical nature Paul so well expresses: "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you...." (Phil. 2, vs. 12) This is freedom for Kierkegaard and this is precisely the stumbling-block for philosophy, but more specifically, for atheistic existentialism. Thus Kierkegaard writes: "The fact that God could create free beings vis-à-vis of himself is the cross which philosophy could not carry, but remained hanging from."[2]

B. SARTRIAN FREEDOM

A fundamental emphasis in Sartre is his insistence on the total separation of man and God as a precondition of human freedom. Man cannot be free unless he stands tout-à-fait alone. Thus Sartre arrives at the absolute disjunction: either there is a God and man is not free; or there is no God and man is free. Collins challenges this position, arguing that Sartre has constructed an artificial antithesis between being dependent and being free, an antithesis based on the assumption -

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[1] Collins, P.17

[2] A. McKinnon, Kierkegaard's Critique of Rationalism, (Edinburgh Univ. thesis, 1950) P.24

as Marcel has noted - that "to receive is incompatible with being free."[1] If Collins's argument is valid - and it seems to be - then we see once again an example of the way in which Sartre's thinking is dominated by a will to atheism.

Sartre then postulates man's radical freedom. With the death of God, no choice is left but to create, with the surpassing creativity of the Creator, himself and his world. He has nothing to fall back on; he is abandoned "in the midst of indifference," with no tradition, no values, no God, to guide him; he is free to make of himself what he will. It is, to be sure, a "dreadful freedom" man possesses but it is an unavoidable part of his upsurge in the world: he is "condemned to be free."

A common indictment of Sartre's philosophy is that it must lead to a capricious libertinism. Sartre however denies this accusation: "Even if my choice is determined by no a priori value whatever it can have nothing to do with caprice."[2] This, he says, is due to the fact that my "choice involves mankind in its entirety."[3] Barth supports Sartre's position: "Sartre," he says, "wishes the freedom of his new man to be ethically understood. In his strictly subjective action man is responsible for all men."[4] Thus by laying down a condition of freedom, viz. that in choosing we bear in mind that our choice involves others, Sartre aims at heading off the charge of amoralism. However, while it is clear that Sartre does intend to establish an intelligible

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[1]Collins, P.79

[2]Humanism, P.305

[3]Humanism, P.305

[4]Barth, P.341

"oughtness," based on inner integrity and response to ontological indicatives, taken in itself, his doctrine of freedom remains fundamentally nihilistic. Sartre can only deny the charge of nihilism at the cost of self-contradiction. Furthermore, by developing a concept of authentic existence, Sartre has (in spite of his denials) implied that this is something valuable. As Copleston says: the terms authentic and inauthentic, "as used by Sartre, have....in fact a valuational connotation."[1] Here again we uncover inconsistency in Sartre for this cannot be reconciled with his claim that there are no objective values or, as he puts it, values inscribed in an intelligible heaven. Once again then Sartre is found implicitly denying some of the implications of his concept of freedom. With his strong sense of the solidarity of mankind, he is left little choice.

Our conclusion therefore is that while there is much of value in Sartre's concept of freedom - expecially his emphasis on man's entire responsibility for his actions - we must nevertheless reject it as fundamentally untenable for, in spite of his disclaimers, it must inevitably founder on the perilous reef of nihilism.

IV THE LEAP OF FAITH AND HEROIC DESPAIR

The pivotal nature of the problem of God is clearly exposed as we press forward our investigation into the real significance of the two doctrines of authentic existence. Ultimately they are driven apart into opposite camps, but, before we see why, we must give consideration to a view that would seem to bring faith and heroic despair together in sweet accord.

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[1] F. Copleston, Contemporary Philosophy, (Burns & Oates, London, 1956) P.146

A. THE COURAGE TO BE AND FAITH

Courage is undeniably an integral aspect of the "leap of faith," as well as "heroic despair." Some question this, asserting that the leap of faith is the very antithesis of courage. Kaufmann, for example, equates Kierkegaard's "leap" with "weariness", with a desire not to know the truth, in short, with bad faith.[1] Camus, in a similar vein, accuses Kierkegaard of escapism in postulating a leap to the affirmation of God. Do these criticisms stand up? Let us focus for a moment on Kierkegaard's exegesis of faith to see if it really must bear the charge of "escapism", or "weariness."

True inwardness, i.e. faith, according to Kierkegaard is: "To have everything against you, not to have a single direct expression for your inwardness and yet to stand by your words."[2] Now we see such faith, or extreme inwardness, in actual practice when we read, as did Kierkegaard, an inscription on a tombstone: "We shall meet again." Here, there is indeed no "single direct expression for your inwardness," yet by faith - the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11) - the one bereaved, despite the evidence of his eyes, anticipates a reunion. Is this an act of courage or is this a cowardly refusal to accept the grim reality of death? The former clearly must be maintained for such a leap of faith quite patently bears the marks of a positive self-affirmation against overwhelming odds, thus conforming to the definition of courage given by Tillich: "The courage to be is the ethical act in which man affirms his own being in spite of those elements of his existence which conflict with his essential self-affirmation."[3] The key phrase in this definition is, "in spite

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[1]Kaufmann, P.20

[2]Postscript, P.211

[3]Tillich, The Courage to Be (Yale U.P., 1952) P.3

of": courage affirms itself "in spite of"....; faith believes "in spite of"....Kierkegaard attests further to the courageous element in faith when he talks of the "passionate dialectical abhorrence for the leap,"[1] and when he compares faith to existing "out upon the deep, over seventy thousand fathoms of water."[2] Kierkegaard never suffered from the illusion that faith was easy, nor did he imagine that he could make it easier for anyone. On the contrary, he felt it incumbent on him to make it as difficult as possible. It is this realization which led to his becoming "a friend of difficulties": his mission, he felt, was "to create difficulties everywhere."[3] Therefore we must reject the attempts to designate the leap of faith an act of cowardice. Quite the contrary - as we shall see in more detail later - it is an act of supreme courage.

Similarly, "heroic despair" describes a way of life requiring great courage. Above, in Chapter 2, IV B, we defined heroic despair as the courageous acceptance of my thrownness in the world, as the revolt against the absurd. We might put this another way: it is courageous self-transcendence aimed at overcoming nothingness. This definition is clearly in accord with the definition of courage, given above, by Tillich. As Tillich (and Barth) have noted, Sartre's existentialism is characterized throughout by an attitude which says "nevertheless," one which says No, to apparent meaninglessness. Barrett captures the essence of the Sartrian courage to be in his picture of the last Resistant of the last Resistance. He sees him "saying No in a prison cell in the Lubianka; saying No without any motive of self-advantage and without

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[1]Postscript, P.90

[2]Postscript, P.182

[3]Postscript, P.166

hope that future humans will take up his cause, but saying No nonetheless simply because he is a man and his liberty cannot be taken from him."[1]

We must conclude therefore that both the leap of faith and heroic despair are characterized by courage. But we must go on from here to consider in more detail the exact nature of these forms of courage. This analysis is made in terms of Tillich's view of courage as an expression of faith.

Tillich argues that in every act of courage the power of being is effective. And faith, he says, is the experience of this power.[2] Thus, "The courage to be is an expression of faith."[3] He arrives at the same conclusion when he argues that faith bridges the gap between man and the infinitely transcendent God, "by accepting the fact that in spite of it the power of being is present, that he who is separated is accepted....and out of this 'in spite of' the 'in spite of' of courage is born."[4] Thus, he concludes: "Faith is the basis of the courage to be."[5] The inference that he draws from this is that, "In the act of the courage to be the power of being is effective in us, whether we recognize it or not,"[6] or, as he puts it in another place: "every courage to be has an open or hidden religious root."[7]

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[1]Barrett, P.263

[2]Tillich, P.172

[3]Tillich, P.172

[4]Tillich, P.172

[5]Tillich, P.173

[6]Tillich, P.181

[7]Tillich, P.156

Now if we apply this to Sartre's "heroic despair" we must conclude that it is grounded in a basic attitude of faith. The acceptance of meaninglessness and despair - elements so integral in Sartre's heroic atheism - are therefore, according to Tillich's analysis, basically acts of faith. So, even though he passionately denies any "religious root," Sartre has nevertheless been grasped by the power of "being itself." That is: his courage comes actually from dependence on God.

If we pursue the logic of Tillich's position we must arrive at this conclusion. The only difference between Kierkegaard's "leap of faith" and Sartre's "heroic despair" is that Kierkegaard is conscious of his dependence on God. Tillich leaves no doubt about the correctness of this conclusion when he states: "If we know it (the power of being), we accept acceptance consciously. If we do not know it, we nevertheless accept it and participate in it."[1] This means that Sartre's explicit repudiation of God is finally irrelevant, for, whether he acknowledges it or not, in his heroic despair he is a recipient of the power of the "God above God." He is in the truth.

From a different angle we might argue that Sartre is on the side of truth when we show that he is not attacking the God of Christianity. Copleston contends: "I have yet to learn that either Jews or Christians conceive God as a synthesis of conscious and material being, which is what l'en-soi really is for Sartre."[2] Sartre's conception of God, he therefore concludes, may be contradictory, but this does not follow of the God of Christianity. Exactly what, then, is Sartre opposing? Perhaps Tillich gives us the answer to this when he

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[1] Tillich, P.181

[2] Copleston, P.220

talks of the "deepest root of atheism" as the resistance to "being made into a mere object of absolute knowledge and absolute control."[1] The kind of God which Sartre is opposing seems to be precisely like this: he is the omniscient, omnipotent despot who makes it impossible for man to be free. He must therefore be killed![2] In this respect, Sartre is right; such a God must not be allowed to survive, especially in a "world come of age."[3] Therefore, in contending against the God of an unacceptable theism, Sartre seems to emerge as a champion of truth.

Hence, through an attitude of heroic despair which, according to Tillich, means that he has been grasped by the power of the "God above God," and through his passionate opposition to a God who is nothing more than an idol, Sartre might be said to be "in the truth."

Kierkegaard however would never go so far as to concede that someone like Sartre is "in the truth," although he might say that he was "near the truth."[4] His criterion for saying this would be the passion, the energy with which he holds his position. This emphasis on "passion" is a recurring theme in Kierkegaard: repeatedly he denounces his age for its lack of passion and lauds bygone days when men had vitality and spirit.

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[1] Tillich, P.185

[2] Hazel Barnes, in the introduction to Being & Nothingness, states that the God Sartre is rejecting "is specifically the God of the Scholastics or at least any idea of God as a specific, all-powerful, absolute, existing Creator." (XXVIII) Sartre thus finds himself in agreement with the predominant trend in contemporary theology. Protestants and Catholics agree now, essentially, that such a God is dead.

[3] D. Bonhoeffer, Letters & Papers from Prison, ed. E. Bethge, (Fontana, Sixth Impression 1964)

[4] Sickness, P.201 where Kierkegaard describes a kind of despair, defiance, which seems to coincide exactly with "heroic despair": Kierkegaard talks of such despair as "close to the true."

"Let others complain," he says, "that the age is wicked; my complaint is that it is paltry; for it lacks passion....The thoughts of their hearts are too paltry to be sinful....This is the reason my soul always turns back to the Old Testament and to Shakespeare. I feel that those who speak there are at least human beings: they hate, they love, they murder their enemies, and curse their descendants throughout all generations, they sin."[1] [2] Therefore, in view of the tremendous vitality, the esprit, in Sartre's inconoclastic and revolutionary philosophy, Kierkegaard would certainly pay tribute to him. Perhaps he would say of him, as Jesus said to a certain scribe: "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God." (Mark 12, vs.34)

B. EITHER/OR

This "near and yet so far" aspect of heroic despair leads us now directly to the crux of the matter. Why must it be asserted, against the Tillichian theory, that Sartre's atheistic existentialism cannot be happily synthesized with Kierkegaard's Christian existentialism? that in the final analysis, they are irreconcilable? There are two basic reasons, although the two really imply each other. However, for the sake of greater clarity we must consider them separately.

The first is Sartre's explicit postulation of atheism. As we have already seen, Sartre misses the mark in his attack on God. His revolt has been against a God of a bygone era, a God which good

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1 E/O, Vol I, P.27

2 The fact that this is the aesthete, "A", talking does not detract from the argument, for the view expressed here is essentially the same as that which Kierkegaard, speaking in his own person, expresses in The Present Age. See, e.g. p.16 et passim. Also note his approbation of the energetic existence of the Greek philosophers. (Postscript, P.229,315)

theology must repudiate. However, as so often happens, rejection of an authoritarian God has developed into a rejection of God Himself (i.e. the God who reveals Himself in Jesus Christ) and hence of all value and meaning. Disillusion, one might say, has itself become an illusion. Nietzsche provides some explanation for the rise of such an attitude of nihilism: commenting on the failure of Christendom, he writes: "The untenability of one interpretation of the world, upon which a tremendous amount of energy has been lavished, awakens the suspicion that all interpretations of the world are false."[1] For Sartre, suspicion has grown into dogmatic certainty. Thus, in contravention of his own contention that one cannot make final judgments about metaphysical questions, (See Greene, 62) he has asserted unequivocally, "There is no God." In the light of this, can we agree with the Tillichian standpoint which holds that courage such as Sartre's is really faith and that Sartre therefore is, in a sense, a believer whether he admits it or not? Some remarks by Bonhoeffer about Tillich seem very apropos at this point. "Tillich set out to interpret the evolution of the world itself - against its will - in a religious sense, to give it its whole shape through religion....he too sought to understand the world better than it understood itself, but it felt misunderstood and rejected the imputation."[2] The same can be said of Sartre.

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[1]Nietzsche, The Beginning of "The Will to Power." in Kaufmann, P.110

[2]D. Bonhoeffer, Letters & Papers from Prison, ed. E. Bethge, (Fontana, Sixth Impression, 1964), P.108

Against his will, his "heroic despair" has been made to coincide with "the leap of faith"; against his will, his courageous acceptance of absurdity has been given a religious interpretation. Can the will be ignored in this manner? Does his will to atheism count for nothing? Obviously not! We must therefore maintain that Sartre's atheistic postulate be taken seriously and that it be understood as constituting an insurmountable barrier to any attempt to establish a congruence of the leap of faith and heroic despair.

We come now to the second reason for asserting the heterogeneity between these two concepts of authenticity. This is the other face of Sartre's postulatory atheism, viz. the apotheosis of man. In Sartre, Barth writes, we see " 'atheistic' man, man discarding acknowledgement of any Supreme Being other than himself, (standing) forth clothed in the garments of the conventional figure of God."[1] Nowhere can we find a better picture of this 'atheistic' man than in Kierkegaard's description of the self which defiantly wills to be itself. Such a self, Kierkegaard says, wishes to be an infinite self by detaching itself "from every relation to the Power which posited it, or detaching it from the conception that there is such a Power in existence."[2] Thus the defiant self seeks to create itself, acknowledging no power over it. It thus becomes "its own lord and master," but with closer inspection, "one easily ascertains that this ruler is a king without a country, he really rules over nothing; his condition, his dominion, is subjected

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[1]Barth, P.343

[2]Sickness, P.201

to the dialectic that every instant revolution is legitimate."[1] Nevertheless this defiant one is determined to be himself and the result is that his despair potentiates itself, becoming demonic. He sets his face against eternity, raging most of all that it "might get it into its head to take his misery from him!"[2] Kierkegaard then concludes his analysis of despair by equating despair with sin. Sin, he says, is this: before God....to be in despair at not willing to be oneself, or in despair at willing to be oneself."[3] It now becomes clear why heroic despair must be seen as antithetical to the leap of faith, for it stands revealed in its true colours. It is the opposite of faith. It is sin. Such a judgment however can be made only from the perspective of faith since, as Kierkegaard explains, sin-consciousness is possible only by the power of the Deity in time.[4] And since it requires a leap of faith to hold fast to this paradox, it must require that same faith to posit sin. Sin then "breaks forth first in the qualitative leap."[5]

But faith, this "qualitative leap", though made possible by the Incarnation, depends ultimately on decision, on subjectivity, otherwise, as Kierkegaard says, we have fatalism.[6] Therefore we cannot conclusively dismiss Sartre's existentialism as error and set up

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[1]Sickness, P.203

[2]Sickness, P.206

[3]Sickness, P.208

[4]Postscript, P.517

[5]Concept, P.82

[6]Fabro, P.161

Kierkegaard's dialectic of faith as the truth, for then we would be falling into the snare of objectivity. We must avoid, what Bonhoeffer calls, a "revelation positivism." The alternatives must lie open. They must continuously present themselves in the form of "either/or." Thus, while we have succeeded in showing that the leap of faith and heroic despair are genuine alternatives, we have, in a sense, arrived at no conclusion. But this is quite in the spirit of Kierkegaard, since, as he himself says: "if inwardness is the truth, results are only rubbish with which we should not trouble each other."[1]

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[1]Postscript, P.216

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