

Kierkegaard and the Quantity and Quality of Human Motion

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ABSTRACT: *This paper locates Kierkegaard within the philosophical tradition and as the co-founder with Nietzsche of existential-postmodern philosophy. With his analysis of the quantitative build up of human motion Kierkegaard follows the pre-Socratics and their tradition in wanting to know the truth about the becoming of all things. But in his analysis of the qualitative leap with hints from Leibniz he founds postmodern philosophy. His double movement leap as first quantitative and then qualitative is here explained in terms of: (1) sin and faith, (2) despair and truth, (3) anxiety and freedom, (4) offence and love, (5) madness and earnestness. Finally, an explanation of his concept of repetition shows how there can be a new quality and more of that same quality.*

RÉSUMÉ: *Cet article situe Kierkegaard à l'intérieur de la tradition philosophique et en tant que co-fondateur, avec Nietzsche, de la philosophie existentielle-postmoderne. Par son analyse de l'accroissement quantitatif du mouvement humain, Kierkegaard suit l'ornière des présocratiques et de leur tradition en cherchant à connaître la vérité du devenir de toutes choses. Or, dans son analyse du saut qualitatif, il fonde, à l'aide d'indications de Leibniz, la philosophie postmoderne. Son double saut, en tant que quantitatif d'une part, qualitatif d'autre part, est expliqué ici en termes de: (1) péché et foi, (2) désespoir et vérité, (3) anxiété et liberté, (4) offense et amour, (5) folie et sincérité. Enfin, une explication de son concept de répétition montrera comment il peut y avoir une nouvelle qualité et davantage de cette même qualité.*

From the beginning of philosophy the problem of motion has been at the center of attention. The Pre-Socratics moved beyond mythology to philosophy by wanting to know the truth about the becoming of all things. Each of them in his own way questioned, reflected upon and wondered about the beginning of motion in its *arche* or source. By the time of Heraclitus the *arche* as *logos* was an attempt to understand the beginning, the process and the end of becoming or motion. The collecting, ordering *logos* was the origin,

the standard and the end of motion. The problem of being and becoming has remained central for metaphysics from then until now.

Kierkegaard is recognized as the father of existential-postmodern philosophy because he worked out a new model of human motion. His new definition of the person as a being in process through the stages on life's way is the key for understanding his elaboration of human motion. In a nutshell he is always reflecting upon the double movement leap of faith and sin. Kierkegaard's notion of human motion can be clearly understood if we think of it in terms of: (1) sin and faith (2) despair and truth (3) anxiety and freedom (4) offence and love (5) madness and earnestness. These five pairs of contrasting concepts reveal further detail about the double movement leap in its quantity and quality. But it is Kierkegaard's metaphysics of repetition as contrasted with the Platonic recollection metaphysics and the Hegelian mediation metaphysics that further fleshes out that special instant of becoming. He thinks that it has to do with the Biblical saying: "Behold I have made all things new." Finally, in conclusion, it should be noted that Kierkegaard's network of concepts has to do with existential embodiment. It is the gift and task of humans not merely to think through the motions of the double movement leap. It is our gift and task to appropriate that leaping motion throughout our life in fullest passion.

I. Person — Stages — Double Movement Leap

From Boethius through Kant the person was defined as "an individual substance of a rational nature". In some ways philosophy has been footnotes to Plato. The four Greek concepts of *physis* (becoming), *logos* (rationality), substance (form) and individual (distinct entity) had great influence as the Christian belief in persons was elaborated. Even Hume with his person as a bundle of perceptions and Kant with his person as a transcendental condition for experience as distinct from a thing, relied on the traditional model. But, Hegel completely reworked the notion of person in terms of process as progress. For him nature and substance were not enough. Human motion was not like the motion of a natural substance. He moved from substance to subject. He thought of the person as an intersubjective subject in process, the special dialectical process of cancelling the old and transcending it by elevating it. As Kierkegaard wrestled with the new Hegelian understanding of persons in process he found it necessary to redefine person in a new third way. He thought of the person as a relation that could relate to itself and in relating to itself could relate to the Other.¹ That Other is God both as immanent and transcendent. Thus Kierkegaard thought of the person as ideally existing in a fourfold dynamic movement and relation. The person begins as an aesthetic immediate relation to the world. But, the person can move into a

relation of reflecting on himself which is ethical and makes decisions possible. Then in infinite resignation the person can go beyond both the ideal of the aesthetic desired and of the ethically required to an immediate relation with the immanent Other. Then the person can move from religiousness A to religiousness B² by having faith in the Transcendent Other and trusting in the promise of the value of the aesthetic and the ethical.

Kierkegaard's definition of the person and of personal motion can become clearer if we think of it in relation to his analogy of the house and contrast that with Plato's cave and Hegel's staircase. Plato thought of the human soul as having fallen into the bottom of a cave where it would know only shadows. But, with music and gymnastic, it would move up to beholding reflections in a pool of water. Then with mathematics and science it could come to know the truth about things themselves. Finally, with dialectical philosophy it could come to know the forms of things as the good or the form of forms. Plato's metaphysics and logic of this hierarchy thought of us as moving from darkness to light which are exclusive opposites. Hegel thought of the person as moving up a staircase in which we leave behind the previous stairs, but not simply as excluded opposites. His dialectic has a logic of implicational opposites in which getting to the light implies moving through the dark. Kierkegaard with his third logic of paradoxical opposites thinks of the person as first living in the basement of his interior house.³ The person can move from the aesthetic basement up to the ethical first floor. Then he can move to the superb second floor of religiousness A. Finally, he can leap into the freedom of faith by coming to live on all floors of the house at once. With faith it is possible to move from either the aesthetic or the ethical to the infinite resignation⁴ of the second floor which is neither aesthetic nor ethical and then to both the aesthetic and the ethical in religiousness B. Plato's movement goes from the lower opposite to the higher which excludes it. Hegel goes to the higher one by means of the lower one. Kierkegaard's is a double movement which paradoxically goes beyond the lower opposites and then returns to reappropriate them.

Kierkegaard elaborates his concept of the double movement leap of faith in *Fear and Trembling* and of sin in *The Concept of Anxiety*. This analysis shows that human movement as human has both a quantitative and a qualitative aspect.

In *Fear and Trembling*, Abraham is described as the father of faith. His faith involves his submission to God's will by being willing to give up Isaac and his belief by virtue of the absurd that he will get Isaac back. With his own effort he makes the first movement of infinite resignation. He is resigned to giving up the finite by sacrificing Isaac through whom the promise of land, nation and name could be fulfilled. But, because he believed in God's promise as well as God's command to sacrifice Isaac, he believed even as he went to

Mt. Moriah to sacrifice his son that that was only a trial. He believed that the promise would still be fulfilled through Isaac. That did not make sense. It was absurd. But Abraham believed it. The first movement was infinite resignation or going up to the second floor by leaving the ethical responsibility to Isaac behind. The second movement is made while being on the second floor. It is the movement of being willing to keep the doors open to the first floor and the basement. Faith is the movement of believing in getting Isaac back. It depends on infinite resignation but that is not yet faith. Kierkegaard's pseudonym, Johannes de Silentio, says that Abraham could make the first movement naturally with his own effort. But because he puts all of his effort into sacrificing Isaac, he can get him back only by grace.⁵ The first aspect of movement up to the second floor is one of effort and nature. The second movement back to the other floors is one made possible by the Other or by grace.

It is in *The Concept of Anxiety* that he elaborates the quantity and the quality of human motion. Sin like faith is a moment of choice in which we move from one state into another. In sin there are two aspects: hereditary sin which he calls the quantitative build up of sin and original sin which he calls the qualitative movement of sinning. A question arises at this point. Is this distinction between the quantitative build up of sinfulness and the qualitative leap of sinning the same as or connected with the double movement leap of faith in its giving up and getting back? Can the quantity and quality of the sin movement be understood in relation to the movement within the house? To explore this we can now examine Kierkegaard's concepts of faith and sin as human movements in detail and see how they are related.

II. Sin and Faith

Kierkegaard claims that Christian faith believes in two basic dogmas: the incarnation and sin. Faith is the appropriation of the incarnation in the double movement leap. The God-man's eternity and infinity are appropriated in the first movement of the leap and his temporality and finitude are appropriated in the second movement. This absurd paradox of the creator becoming creature is at the heart of Kierkegaard's entire faith and philosophy. But belief in the incarnation enables belief in sin. There could, of course, be various levels of guilt without belief in the incarnation but they would not yet reach the level of sin. That is why Kierkegaard claims that Socrates cannot sin. For Socrates a moral fault would be a matter of ignorance. True knowledge is virtue and vice is ignorance. That could never qualify as sin.

If we were to consider Kierkegaard's notion of guilt and sin within the big picture of his house analogy we could see why only the person of faith can paradoxically sin or why only the sinner can be saved by faith. In *Fear and*

Trembling Johannes de Silentio tells the story of the Merman and Agnes.⁶ For many years the Merman was a seducer but that became offensive to him. He had the aesthetic guilt of taking offense at himself. Then he realized that he could be saved from his offensive seduction by the love of Agnes. He seduced her into loving him. But then he saw that he could offend her. That was ethical guilt. He became guilty by offending another. He only wanted her saving love, but she wanted his seduction. He let her down. Taking Agnes without repentance would be aesthetic guilt. Taking repentance without satisfying Agnes would be ethical guilt. He needed both repentance and Agnes. That brought him to religious guilt. By seeing the collision between repentance and Agnes he saw that he could offend God. He could offend himself — aesthetic guilt. He could offend Agnes — ethical guilt. He could offend God — the guilt of religiousness A. But then he could move to sin. If he believed in the paradox of having both repentance and Agnes, he could take offence at God for not giving him both. That would be sin. If he got to the neither Agnes nor repentance of infinite resignation and was fixed there he would sin if he blamed it on God. In the house there are four ways of living only one of which makes the qualitative leap of sin. That is the one Socrates cannot make because he does not have faith. In order to explore Kierkegaard's full concept of sin we could define it as that guilt in which we do not only offend ourself or another person or God, but take offence at God in despair and anxiety. Kierkegaard's concept of sin involves despair, anxiety and offence. In order to understand the qualitative leap of sin, we need to understand the movements of despair, anxiety and offence.

The relation between sin and faith is very curious. If a person has faith he rests peacefully in the power that sustains him and he is not sinning. Faith and sin are in some ways opposites. Sin works against faith and faith works against sin. So how are the leaps of faith and of sin related? In exploring the double movement of each can we find a clue to understanding their relation? Are they most clearly related insofar as they are both a movement?

III. Despair and Truth

In seeking to understand the movement of sin we must first seek to understand the movement of despair for "sin is despair before God."⁷ For Kierkegaard as Anti-Climacus explains there are four stages of despair just as there are four ways of living in the house. Aesthetic despair in the basement is the despair of spiritlessness. The aesthete does not yet practise the self-reflection of the ethical so he is without an actuated self or spirit. Despair is a break in the multifaceted relation which the person can be. The aesthete does not relate to self or to the Other either as immanent or transcendent. But despair is not only a lack it is also a value. It can push the person to a higher

stage. Despair in the boredom of its lack of ethical passion can move the aesthete to become ethical. It can move one from being a mere horizontal relation to the world to becoming also a reflective relation to self which makes possible responsibility and decision. However, the merely ethical person is also in despair. He suffers from the despair of weakness and of not willing to be a self. The ethical person might try to be good but he will still suffer the afflictions of Job.⁸ Unlike the aesthete he tries to take responsibility even for the happiness of others, but he will still despair because of his weakness and impotence before the chaos that threatens his vulnerable fragility. This despair of weakness can push him to the strength of infinite resignation. He can go to the second floor and be beyond the suffering of the basement and the first floor by being a strong Stoic or Buddhist type who will deny the importance of aesthetic and merely ethical values. He will also relate to the Other as immanent and take strength in being one with being. He will will to be himself by being one with the totality. But this too is despair. It is despair over the aesthetic and ethical values. So far none of these three forms of despair are sin. But if he becomes aware of the God-man through faith then he will be able to despair before God and sin. The incarnate God reveals that not only the infinite and eternal can be appropriated, but also the finite and the temporal. The incarnation promises that one can go back and live in the basement and on the first floor without despairing. If the person of faith in the eternal-temporal, infinite-finite God-man believes that, but does not do it, he will be able to be in the despair of sin. He will be before the God-man and despair. So despair is a movement that human persons are always in. We are even sinners once we have faith. We should always see that we are sinners before God. But this movement of despairing sin is both negative and positive. It makes us suffer and yet it pushes us further. It can push us into further faith which would even be further awareness of our sin. As we become more aware of our despair and sinfulness we become more faithful. Despair is a break in the three fold relationship of horizontal, reflective and vertical transcendence which constitutes the person. Yet it can be remedied by faith. Faith is 'the transcending of despair in which the self, in relating itself to itself and in willing to be itself, rests transparently in the power that established it.'⁹

But, to better understand the faith-sin movement in terms of despair it is now helpful to think of despair as contrasted with truth. Throughout *The Sickness Unto Death*, Anti-Climacus contrasts despair and Faith. But despair always involves a self deception and thus we need to be deceived out of our self deception in order to be saved from despair and sin. In *Postscript*, Johannes Climacus links faith and truth and defines truth as "objective uncertainty held fast in the appropriation process of the most passionate inwardness."¹⁰

Truth for Kierkegaard is no longer an aesthetic matter of the ancient, realistic, correspondence theory in which my concepts are true if they conform to things out there. It is no longer a reflective matter of the modern, idealistic coherence theory in which the subject of a proposition is true if all the predicates cohere with each other and with it. Truth becomes for Kierkegaard a matter of *how* we live and know and not just *what* we objectively know. Truth in ethical and religious concerns is not a matter of denotative, referential meaning or connotative propositional meaning, but it has to do with my lifelong performance. The truth of aesthetic beauty or ethical goodness or religious holiness has to do with how I appropriate it throughout my whole life. Kierkegaard with his existential definition of truth puts the emphasis on attitude and getting that right. Ethics for him is not a matter of judging a particular act in the modern way according to the utilitarian calculus or the calculus of the categorical imperative. It is as it was for Aristotle a matter to be judged in terms of one's whole life. You have to wait 'til a person's death to determine if he has been happy. You have to see how well one holds fast to the attitude of living in the whole house or to a more limited attitude to determine how true he is to himself and to the Other. Truth has to do with the movement of subjective becoming rather than of objective certitude. Descartes had his two criteria for objective certitude — clear and distinct ideas. Kierkegaard has his two criteria for subjective certainty — holding fast and the most passionate inwardness. If one floor holds us fast we are not living in the truth. We will not be able to hold fast to that one floor with fullest passion. But if we hold fast to the double value of the incarnation, to the temporal aesthetic and ethical and to the eternal religiousness A, we will have the most passionate inwardness. The fourfold passion of the aesthetic, ethical, mystical all at once gives us something we can hold fast to in full passion and without boredom.

In *Fragments*, Climacus argues that by nature we flee the truth.¹¹ We have a strong inclination to live on only one floor and deceive ourselves that that is sufficient. But the God-man can be our teacher. He can show us that being fixed in either the finite or the infinite is not full appropriation. He can give us the condition for receiving the truth by his incarnation. He can show us that we are fleeing the truth by revealing the possibility of living on all floors at once. Then he can give us the truth once we see that we are fleeing it. Our evil and self deceit is so strong that its momentum only becomes greater as we move with it. If we are to turn around and live on all floors he has to turn us around. He has to let us become free. What is this strong inclination with a greater and greater momentum? How can we be freed from it? These questions bring us to a discussion of anxiety and freedom.

IV. Anxiety and Freedom

In *The Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard discusses the double movement leap of sin in its quantity and quality. Hereditary sin has to do with the quantitative build-up of anxiety. Original sin occurs in the qualitative leap into anxiety. Adam and Eve are the paradigms of the double movement of sin just as Abraham is the paradigm of the double movement of faith. Each person as a child of Adam and Eve also has both the hereditary sin of anxiety's quantitative build up and the original sin of the qualitative leap into anxiety.

Anxiety, as Heidegger and Sartre have also shown in developing Kierkegaard's thought in their own way, is a being threatened by non-being. Fear is a being threatened by something definite but anxiety is a being threatened by the non-being or indefiniteness of possibility. Anxiety is a sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy. That which makes us anxious fixes our attention. We move toward it. But it also repels us. We move away from it. Anxiety is a paradoxical ambiguous movement. Adam and Eve experienced all of this. When God gave them the prohibition not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they became anxious. They were attracted to it because the prohibition fixed it in their attention and made them wonder why they should not eat it. Their curiosity made them anxious. But also God told them that if they ate it they would surely die. That also made them anxious. They did not know what death was or what punishment was but again they were curiously concerned. Eve also had the anxiety of derivation. Adam had been anxious about not having a mate as the other animals did. But then Eve was taken from his rib. That made Eve anxious. Her being was precarious. She knew that she was as contingent as Adam's rib which could be taken from him. She felt more and more the threats of possibility as she daily lived with the prohibition, the punishment and the derivation. She was tempted by the servant whom she let deceive her. She thought God might not want her to eat the fruit because she might then become like God. In her anxiety and need not to be threatened by non-being she disobeyed and challenged God by wanting to become like him. She plunged into anxiety and ate the fruit. Her giving into the temptation made her more anxious. She told Adam that she had eaten the fruit. She was not dead. That tempted him. He plunged into his anxiety that was precipitated by her having plunged into hers. Adam and Eve experienced the quantitative build up of their anxiety. They experienced the qualitative leap into it.

So it is with each of us. As the children of Adam and Eve we inherit the prohibition and the threat of punishment given to them. As the totems and taboos of our cultures become more advanced we inherit further anxiety from our history and from our more and more developed concern about sexuality, which from the time of our parents' fall has been kept secret in its fig leaf

modesty. As we move from the basement to the first floor to the second floor we experience a quantitative build up of anxiety. Don Giovanni as Kierkegaard's three Don Juan's reveal becomes more and more anxious.¹² Job, the ethical paradigm, becomes more anxious than Don Juan. The infinitely resigned Stoic when he finally reaches suicide is more anxious yet. In our dizziness before this anxiety we can leap in with the qualitative leap of sin. Each sin that we leap into with omission or commission is an original sin. It is a qualitative leap into the new with all the newness of *creatio ex nihilo*. We do not have to have clear and distinct knowledge to be able to sin. That comes after with the punishment. But we do need the faith that can let us be anxious enough to truly despair before God. Sin is that qualitative leap which we are able to freely make because of the prohibition. The God-man shows us the freedom of the whole house and prohibits the fixed idea of dwelling on one floor only. With the quantitative increase of anxiety or hereditary sinfulness we are inclined to and free to fix ourselves behind closed doors.

So what is the freedom which makes us anxious about opening doors and yet lets the doors be opened? What is the freedom that can let us close the doors and freely make ourselves unfree? Freedom like faith and truth is a gift and a task. The leap of faith is a free movement of accepting the gift of freedom or free movement in the house. The leap of sin is a free movement of rejecting freedom or fixing ourselves on one floor. Concerning freedom, Kierkegaard writes:

The greatest good, after all, which can be done for a being...is to make it free. In order to do just that, omnipotence is required. This seems strange, since it is precisely omnipotence that supposedly would make (a being) dependent. But if one will reflect on omnipotence, he will see that it also must contain the unique qualification of being able to withdraw itself again in a manifestation of omnipotence in such a way precisely for this reason that which has been originated through omnipotence can be independent. That is why one human being cannot make another person wholly free...only omnipotence can withdraw itself at the same time it gives itself away, and this relationship is the very independence of the receiver.¹³

Omnipotence revealed the prohibition and the penalty to Adam and Eve and withdrew. That left them free in their anxiety to choose for or against omnipotence. They chose against. Omnipotence revealed further choices throughout the narrative of the family of Adam and Eve. They became more free and more anxious. The children chose against freedom in various ways

and in various degrees. Then Omnipotence revealed in the incarnation the choice of imitating and appropriating both the eternal and the temporal. Omnipotence stepped back and let those who see the possibilities decide moment by moment throughout their lives. They can choose one floor or another or the whole house. Freedom becomes a matter of loving. "Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love everlastingly free in blessed independence."¹⁴ Omnipotence reveals the duty to love all and steps back. Omnipotence reveals that we are all sinners. We are free to love ourselves and each other as sinners or not. We are free to be lovers and hide the multitude of sins with extenuating explanations.

There is always an explanation for something being what it is. The fact or the facts underlie the situation, but the explanation swings the balance. Every event, every word, every act, in short everything may be explained in many ways; as someone has falsely said that clothes make the man, so one can truly say that the explanation makes the object of the explanation into what it is. As regards another man's words, deeds, modes of thought, and so on, there is no such certainty, so that to accept them really indicates choosing. The interpretation, the explanation, is therefore, just because a different explanation is possible, a choice. But if there is a choice, then it constantly lies in my power, if I am a lover, to choose the most extenuating explanation. If, then, this milder or more extenuating explanation explains what others frivolously, overhastily, hardheartedly, enviously, maliciously, in short unlovingly, as a matter of course, explain as guilt — if the extenuating explanation explains this in another way, then it takes away now one fault, now another, and thus makes the multitude of sins less, or conceals it.¹⁵

Each choice we make in faith between sinning or not sinning is a qualitative movement of freedom. Each choice by which we love sin away is a qualitative movement of freedom. Human life can consist of constant qualitative choices. But the quantity and quality of human movement can be better understood if we consider taking offence and love.

V. Offence and Love

Sin is not only a leap of despair before God in anxiety, but it is possible only when we take offence at God. Kierkegaard's book about offence or scandal is

Training in Christianity. But he also treats offence in *Sickness Unto Death* and several other works. Jesus and Socrates were both put to death because they were seen as a scandal or an offence. The scandalon is an obstacle over which we might trip or fall. It is something that might trap us. Those who did not believe that Jesus was the son of God were scandalized by his higher, eternal, infinite and divine side. Those who believed that he was the Messiah could be offended by his lower side. Peter who believed in the higher side could not accept that Jesus allowed himself to be treated as the suffering servant. So he denied him until the third crow of the cock. Once Omnipotence reveals itself in the incarnation beholders can take offence. They can deny the eternal or they can deny the temporal. They do that by living on one floor of the house or another. They might live in the basement or on the first floor and take offence at the second floor. They might live on the second floor and deny the first floor and the basement. They do that out of offence. Kierkegaard writes that it is as if we were a sentence that is written out by Omnipotence and we find that our name has been misspelled. We complain to Omnipotence who responds: "Oh, I am sorry. Let me erase that and make it right." But we defiantly say: "No, I want to forever remain misspelled to show that you are a bungling author."¹⁶ Taking offence for Kierkegaard is like ressentiment for Nietzsche. It is the root explanation for why we give in to reactive negativity, to anxiety and despair. We are hurt. We feel impotent. We brood. We turn the hierarchy of values upside down. We do not practise loving interpretation. We invent a rewarder-punisher God to take revenge on our enemies and to favor ourselves.

Kierkegaard always stresses that we are not simply offended. We take offence. It is our choice. The refrain of Luke cited throughout *Training in Christianity* is that those are blessed who do not take offence at the incarnate God-man. Kierkegaard writes that we are each like a day laborer who has been told that he can marry the emperor's daughter and inherit the empire. But he is afraid to take the risk. In his anxiety he chooses to be offended and despair. He decides to ignore the promise. So it is with us. We have been promised by the incarnation that we can live on all floors of the house at once. Will we choose to be offended by the promise or will we appropriate it. Each choice of our daily life answers that question.

Kierkegaard's theory of love shows how we can choose not to take offence. It is as if Kierkegaard like C.S. Lewis also believes in the four loves. We might like a once born child just live in the basement of affection. We might be so brought up in the affectionate family that we can move out into the ethical first floor of friendship and stand side by side appreciating the world with others. Then we might move into the second floor of eros, even of erotic inspiration, and partake of the energy that comes from seeing the beloved as manifesting the divine in all things. But each of these loves in

which I love *my* family, *my* friend, *my* beloved is a preferential love. In it I especially love myself for I am proud to be bonded with *my* family, *my* friend, *my* beloved. Kierkegaard shows the need to dethrone¹⁷ each of these preferential loves so that the lover can come to a universal love. These loves can have their quantitative movement which, however, takes them deeper into love of self. But there can be the qualitative movement of conversion in which the lover comes to absolutely love the absolute so that he can then go back and relatively love the relative.¹⁸ If I absolutize my family or friend or beloved then I infinitize the finite. But if I come to love God as Love with my whole heart, mind and soul and my neighbour as myself then I can go back to each floor and love family, friend and beloved with a new tenderness. If I love Love itself, then I can approach each at each moment with the free choice of a loving interpretation. I need not take offence. I can have a faithful and true love that calms anxiety and lets me be free in the whole house without despair.

VI. Madness and Earnestness

But Kierkegaard has another paradoxical set of opposites in terms of which he show the quantity and quality of human movement. Kierkegaard, like Nietzsche, Freud and other existentialists lived a life of creative illness. In *Concept of Anxiety* he spells out his theory of madness and shows how the sin, despair, anxiety and taken offence of our natural efforts only take us from one fixed idea to another. But he also describes the qualitative leap with which Omnipotence can so grace us that we are freed to move beyond fixed ideas. He defines madness as 'an enclosed reserve which unfreely discloses itself all of a sudden out of boredom.'¹⁹

If we do enclose ourselves on one floor and get fixed there with a limited set of values we will not be able to live in the most passionate inwardness and we will get bored. Out of this boredom we will blurt out what we keep locked up within ourselves. Just as there are various kinds and degrees of despair, anxiety and being offended so there are many kinds and degrees of madness which can be their symptoms. As this madness increases in its quantitative build up it is possible to diffuse it with faith, truth, freedom and love so that one can practise creative madness in the constant qualitative leaping of loving interpretations.

What makes transformation possible is an earnest acceptance of the truth and freedom that omnipotence gives us through the incarnation. The Socratic insight that vice is ignorance has some truth to it. Socrates did not see, however, that we can make ourselves ignorant. An alternative can present itself between the three floors or for all floors at once. We can rationalize and procrastinate²⁰ and make ourselves believe that one of the floors should be the right way of life. So we have the task not to take offence and not to become

anxious about the gift of freedom and its risk which has been given us. Earnestness is the activity of leaping into responsibility at once. Earnestness is the opposite of procrastination and rationalization by which we make ourselves ignorant so that we can sin. Adam and Eve by procrastinating and rationalizing about eating the fruit were not being earnest. Abraham by trusting God right away when asked to sacrifice his son was being earnest. Earnestness is the leap into the double movement leap. It sees the trap and at once leaps over it. Madness is the leap into self made ignorance. It sees the trap and trips and falls into it. Both movements along the way of life have a quantity and a quality. With our own efforts to move along there is the quantitative movement upward stage by stage from basement, to first floor, to second floor. Then we are given the choice to move to all floors at once or to stay fixed on the second floor. This movement back is the qualitative leap. If we do it earnestly we will keep open all the doors and live in the place of faith. But we can also make the qualitative leap of sin and not earnestly avoid taking offence. We can lock ourselves up by locking up others in negative interpretations.

VII. Repetition

Kierkegaard worked out his concept of repetition in order to contrast his metaphysics of human motion with that of Plato and Hegel. The focal point of the contrast has to do with their three concepts of lived time. Plato sees recollection as a movement backward by which the present is filled with the past, that is, the eternal past. According to Plato souls already knew the truth as soul contemplated the forms throughout eternity. Souls fell through forgetfulness and wrongdoing. They can rise up again through recollection and virtue. In human movement nothing really new can take place. Learning the truth is only a recovery of what has been. In Platonism there is no place for genuine freedom or openness to new possibilities in the future. Plato has no genuine future. The image of the Phoenix rising from its ashes fits the Platonic movement of recollection. Hegel wanted to account for the qualitative leap into the new with his metaphysics of mediation by way of negation or the *Aufhebung*. He did not want human motion to be understood as simply being like that of the acorn becoming the oak. That would be an Aristotelian metaphysics of motion as a transition from potency to act and not really any different from the Platonic. Whatever there would be in the oak would already have been in the acorn. Hegel thought that the past could be cancelled, transformed and elevated as it moved into the future. His metaphysics would be like the Kierkegaardian movement upward from basement, to first floor, to second floor. But Kierkegaard thought that that sort of movement was still only quantitative. He thought that it failed to account for the qualitative leap

of the single individual who would come back and reclaim the first two kinds of value. The new future for Kierkegaard renews the old aesthetic, ethical and mystically religious realms. Kierkegaard in his treatment of repetition argues that it retains and renews the ethnical which would refer to natural cultures and philosophies. For Kierkegaard, this is not historical progress in the sense that the individual can be born into a progressively better period. Each single individual has to work with the burden of history which gets heavier with more anxiety in each age. In the basement there is the dot of time. On the first floor the dots are connected into a line of time so that the past and future in reflection are made present. On the second floor the moments become part of the eternal circle of time. Kierkegaard's person of faith while living in the eternal circle goes back and also lives in the dot or instant and in the line of time.

Kierkegaard's new existential model of human becoming is repeated with modification by both streams of postmodern ethicists. Derrida with his responsibility-to-the-other ethics retains the mad leap before the abyss of the indecidable. He cites Kierkegaard concerning this qualitative leap. Deleuze with his self-realization ethics refers to Kierkegaard's and Nietzsche's concepts of repetition in the early part of *Difference and Repetition*. In his treatment of Nietzsche's will to power he treats the quantity and quality of the life forces. Kierkegaard's distinction between the quantity and quality of human motion lives on in the postmodern legacy.

Notes

- 1 Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1980, p. 13.
- 2 Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding the Unscientific Postscript*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992, see pages 555 and following.
- 3 *Sickness Unto Death*, p. 43.
- 4 Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1983, the knight of infinitive resignation from the Preliminary Expectoration on represents those on the second floor of the house.
- 5 *Fear and Trembling*, p. 48, 49, 99.
- 6 *Fear and Trembling*, pp 94-101.
- 7 *Sickness Unto Death*, p. 78 and following.
- 8 Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1983, Kierkegaard treats the young man's reflection on Job from p. 204 to 222.
- 9 *Sickness Unto Death*, p. 49.
- 10 *Postscript*, p. 223.
- 11 Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985 p. 13.
- 12 He tells three stories about Don Giovanni. The first is about Mozart's opera in the middle of the first volume of *Either/Or*. At the end of that volume, he tells of a more reflective Don Giovanni in the *Diary of a Seducer*. Then in the fifth speech of *The Banquet in Stages on Life's Way* he gives another account.
- 13 Merold Westphal, *Becoming a Self, A Reading of Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, West Lafayette, Indiana, Purdue University Press, 1996, p. 16. From (JP 2. 1251).
- 14 Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 29.
- 15 *Works of Love*, p. 291.
- 16 *Sickness Unto Death*, p. 74.
- 17 *Works of Love*, pp. 49-58.
- 18 *Postscript*, p. 422.
- 19 *Concept of Anxiety*, pp. 118-136.
- 20 *Sickness Unto Death*, p. 94.