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Hong Kierkegaard
Library



Friends correspondence in care of Jamie Lorentzen, Chairperson, 29065 Wood Ave., Old Frontenac, MN 55026, Phone: 651/345-2908

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- acquire and preserve Library books, and
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The *Friends* also hosts a semi-annual forum, in November and May, for members to discuss past and future *Friends* work and activities. In addition, a selected Kierkegaard text or passage will be the focus of an informal critical discussion at each forum. Members will be notified of upcoming meetings, texts for critical discussions at those meetings, and other events of the *Friends*.

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Friends of the Howard V. Edna H. Hong Kierkegaard Library

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A note to our readers:

For a movement that, officially speaking, is dead, there seems to be quite an interest in existential matters. Be it "virtual" or "extreme," be it "religious" or "narcotic," people today crave experience. Existentialism: (roughly speaking) thinking about one's existence. Because this is an interdisciplinary journal, we try to include various takes on Existentialism (creative writing, literary criticism, visual art, psychological analysis, philosophical and religious discourse) while maintaining a cohesive and intellectual rigor present throughout disciplines and genres. Because this is an undergraduate journal, we attempt to offer selections hitting on various levels of the broad realm of Existentialism. Some readers have never encountered existential themes and lingo (at least not explicitly). Others are steeped in it. We hope we have allowed you various points of entry in the following selections. Enjoy the reed.

Sincerely,

Your editors

To Submit a Work: The Reed is an interdisciplinary undergraduate journal of Existentialism printed each spring. If you are interested in submitting a work for publication, please send us an email attachment to [<thereed@stolaf.edu>](mailto:thereed@stolaf.edu). To find out more about The Reed, visit our website: <http://www.stolaf.edu/depts/philosophy/reed/reed.html>

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his belief that people ought to be self-reliant. He asks, “Can her [Sonja] convictions not be my convictions now...Her feelings, her aspirations...” (Dostoevsky, 551). In realizing that it is much more valuable to be able to share in commonalities among humans, he is resurrected from the shadows of isolation. He does not have to depend on his own ideas to lead him to the Truth. He enters into his unknown reality- the reality that every single human being is resurrected in love, that love is the divine spirit that calls all people to bond together. Furthermore, casting aside one’s humanity will not be met without friction. For even Napoleon was caught and Svigaildov shot... the self-reliant will not slip past the presence of love.

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of genius” (Dostoevsky, 491). Because he places so much value on these great men, and he cannot become one of them, he can find no reason to continue to live.

It is not until he speaks with his mother for the last time that Raskolnikov believes that life is not about becoming a great man: “ ‘Mama, whatever happens, whatever you hear from me, whatever they tell you about me, will you love me as you do now?’ he asked suddenly, from the fullness of his heart, as if not thinking about his words or weighing them” (Dostoevsky, 514). He proceeds to tell his mother that he loves her “more than himself, and whatever you may have thought about me being cruel and not loving you, it’s all untrue. I’ll never cease to love you” (Dostoevsky, 514). Although it has been clear to the reader through various examples that he is capable of showing compassion for other people, it is only here that he knows for himself that he can live for the sake of love, rather than for the sake of a theory. He does not deny his love for his mother. For the first time, his actions do not correspond with Emersons’: “I shun father and mother and wife and brother, when my genius calls me” (Emerson, 261). He has chosen to set aside his genius for love in this moment. This moment provides a step towards understanding the meaning of humanity. Although he temporarily slips back into hating his lot in life--namely, that he cannot be self-reliant—he does not forget this moment.

His final moment of resignation comes when he dreams of a world where everyone walks around with their own personal reality—each person believes that the truth is contained in himself alone. Everyone lives in abject isolation, pursuing their own nature to the best of their ability. This leads to utter confusion, chaos, and killing. Pestilence grows further and further. This dream causes him to realize the perversity of

Porfiry confronts Raskolnikov on his belief that he is one of the great men of society. He says, “You place the most value on human intelligence, following the example of all young men. A playful sharpness of wit and abstract arguments of reason are what seduce you sir... I mean, reality and human nature, sir, are very important things, and oh how they sometimes bring down the most perspicacious calculations!” (Dostoevsky, 342). Porfiry’s insight and keen perception drives Raskolnikov to the point of insanity. He cannot deal with the fact that his human nature is sensitive to the effects of his “perspicacious” murder-plan. Raskolnikov shouts out, “... it wasn’t a human being I killed, it was a principle! So I killed the principle, but I didn’t step over, I stayed on this side...” (Dostoevsky, 274). The phrase “stayed on this side” implies that he was not able to do as Napoleon or other great men did; they were able to step over the blood without hesitation, without contemplation, without moral reflection.

He cannot step over the blood of the two women he murdered without doing this, and therefore he fails to be one of he and Emerson’s’ so-deemed great men. Ironically, Emerson states that, “Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principle.” (Emerson, 280). Dostoevsky shows, through Raskolnikov’s character, that Emerson’s statement cannot be farther from the truth. For Raskolnikov attempts to triumphantly kill a principle, but he is not capable of turning that principle into anything salutary for mankind. His principle rots alongside the dead bodies. Svidrigailov perceives Raskolnikov’s dilemma: “He got terribly carried away with Napoleon- that is, essentially what carried him away was that a great many men of genius disregarded isolated evil and stepped over it without hesitation... though he knew how to devise his theory, he was unable to step over without hesitation and therefore is not a man

Founder’s Note Peder Leif Kjeseth

Thinking Reed. It is not in space that I must seek my human dignity, but in the ordering of my thought. It will do me no good to own land. Through space the universe grasps me and swallows me up like a speck; through thought I grasp it.
Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*

Officially, one could say this publication is an undergraduate journal of philosophy centered around the school of thought most commonly known as “existentialism.” However, the term “existentialism” has many definitions and can refer to altogether different issues. On the one hand, “existentialism,” or perhaps more aptly “so-called existentialism,” is a label conferred upon an intellectual movement that can be traced back to the 19th century philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard. I include the term “so-called” because the actual term existentialism was not coined until the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre broke on the scene defining the term and movement. Moreover, many of the thinkers associated with the movement, such as Sartre’s contemporary, Albert Camus, flatly rejected the title. Despite the confusion surrounding the term, a definition of existentialism can and will be provided.

Perhaps a more commonly known usage of the root word “existential” refers to a moment or experience in life that forces reflective analysis of what it means to exist. For instance, Mary may allude to her recent automobile accident as an “existential moment” because the episode caused her to take stock of what she has, her life, and how she chooses to live it. A Volvo ad promises that their new rugged series is an answer to the “existential crisis” occurring in the individual’s soul. Existentialism in this sense is a basic, gut reaction to an event in one’s life. Both elements of existentialism are represented in this journal, as the authors of the work explore the multifaceted dimensions of the term.

“So-called existentialism” as a whole is a response to the school of thought labeled as essentialism. Essentialism holds that there does indeed exist a lasting essence within any given thing. For Plato, there existed a trans-temporal world in which the essence of things existed. In Plato’s view, our senses were unreliable, and in order for an individual to be sure of what he knew, he had to access this world through his intellect. Aristotle later disagreed with Plato and asserted that the essence of things exists within the thing itself. Joe did not need a trans-temporal world in order to understand that the thing in his hand was a cup, simply because the cup possessed cupness in itself. Essentialism led nicely into Christianity and Thomas Aquinas who held that God conferred Joe’s essence upon his flesh and that Joe’s soul existed within him. Christianity came to be dominated by an essentialist philosophical and theological orientation. It was not until a Dane by the name of Soren Kierkegaard began writing in Copenhagen that the premise of essentialism was contested. Kierkegaard was the first of many thinkers to put an emphasis on the individual and the degree of choice involved in the development of a person. The individual is presented with a seemingly infinite array of possible forms of reality and is left to will one or another for himself. For Kierkegaard, Joe is this or that because Joe willed this or that form of existence. Joe chose and willed to become a Christian, a Jew, or a secularist. His belief in the wealth of possibilities is one reason why Kierkegaard wrote under numerous pseudonyms presenting various, and at times, conflicting positions.

The importance placed on individual choice and will is a common theme threaded throughout “so-called existentialism.” Other thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, wrote poetically on the beauty and power of individual choice and will. Joe and Mary are what they create of themselves. In a meaningless world, the only meaning Mary can hope to make sense of is the meaning that she ascribes to herself and the world. As Sartre wrote, each person is infinitely free to do and make of themselves as they please. To consider oneself under the dominance of another entity or power is to live in what is one of the most famous notions to arise from existentialism, “Bad Faith.” Bad Faith was explicated by Sartre, and is the denial on the part of the individual that he has control over himself and his experiences. For example, Mary lives in “Bad Faith” because she believes her unhappiness is due to a meaningless job that she cannot afford to leave. Her life is hopeless because she has no choice in the matter and must continue on this way. “Incorrect,” says Sartre, Mary simply is not willing to recognize that she has control of the situation and can at any moment choose another option. According to Sartre, the individual is infinitely free to pick among any number of possibilities; and in doing so, the individual has chosen whatever consequences may befall him. Thus, the individual is responsible for his own reality, whether it be disastrous or glorious.

A unique and freeing aspect of existentialism is that it has a literary outlet. Writers such as Camus, Kafka, Dostoyevsky, and Percy, have explored existential issues in brilliant literary pieces. Themes such as absurdity, free will, irrationality, disunity, revolt, and disillusionment appear and reappear in literary works considered to be existential, as well as those that are not. In this journal many of the submissions, whether wittingly or not, are literary excursions into the realm of existentialism. A phenomenological approach often provides what may be the best literary tool for some of our writers who furnish vivid episodes of pure consciousness. In all, *The Reed* attempts to represent the many faces of “so-called existentialism” and phenomenology, in both its academic and literary manifestations. Enjoy.



well. This is what he wants more than anything... to live, only to live! If these great men are burdened by the moral implications of their actions, then they have recognized their affect on others. But this cannot be! For great men are completely independent from all humans; it is not possible for them to affect others! And yet this is why Raskolnikov cannot be the great man, and it is this part of the theory that he cannot escape. For he has affected others, and in return has been affected, by his loving sister and mother, his dear friends, and the strangers on the street. He does not remain in a state of isolation. He does not remain indifferent towards all people. He tries to defy his humanity but he encounters moments of morality.

Throughout the novel, Raskolnikov experiences the affect of love and moral action on people. He finds himself trying to protect a young girl's innocence from a man's demand for promiscuity. His hands tremble as he reads loving words written by his mother and sister. He leaves money on the windowsill of a stranger when it is clear that they live in abject poverty and need support. He defends a perfectly honest woman from a cruel accusation. These are just a few examples of how he shows compassion for others and his inability to disregard the affect of his actions on the common people. Although he often withdraws from his impulsive selflessness and concern for others, he never withdraws so far that he envelopes himself in indifference. Even though he tries to dismiss these moments of morality so as to pursue his self-reliant nature, he cannot ignore the love, admiration, and appreciation that people shower him with for his magnanimity and concern. And although he cannot ignore his affect on others, he does manage to devalue himself. He has yet to see that the ability to be giving and caring is more valuable than the ability to reason well.

and then only in the event that the fulfillment of his idea- sometimes perhaps salutary for the whole of mankind- calls for it” (Dostoevsky, 259). The perversity of his suggestion lies in his assertion that an extraordinary man has a right to carry out his idea even if it is *not* salutary for the whole of humankind. He has the right because, in the words of Emerson, “Where he is, there is nature” (Emerson, 260). Morality does not pertain to these rare men because they are capable of transcending humanity; morality pertains only to the ordinary simply because they do not know how to ignore feelings of immorality. Simply put, it is in the extraordinary man’s nature to transcend humanity whereas it is in the ordinary man’s nature to act humanely. Raskolnikov’s theory parallels Emerson’s idea that “good and bad are but names very readily transferable” in regard to following one’s true nature.

Raskolnikov furthers his theory by saying that great men actually have a duty to become criminals because it is one’s duty to follow his own nature. Emerson’s statement could easily serve as a substitute for Raskolnikov’s words: “If you can love me for what I am, we shall be happier. If you cannot, I will still seek to deserve that you should. I must be myself... you will soon love what is dictated by your nature as well as mine, and if we follow the truth, it will bring us out safe at last”(Emerson, 272). One can imagine Raskolnikov standing in front of his two comrades, stating Emerson’s exact quotation. Once again, the means do not need to justify the ends... morality is futile. According to Raskolnikov, “... if one needs, for the sake of his idea, to step even over a dead body, over blood, then within himself, in his conscience, he can, in my opinion, allow himself to step over blood...” (Dostoevsky, 261). This permission to shed blood in all conscience is very important to Raskolnikov because this allows the extraordinary to continue living

The Rising Tide

Cool grains slip from my hand
Back to the still earth
As a river revisiting the sea
Returning to the silent sand
Coating the shore.

Tired fingers drop to my side
And shy waves tease my toes
Concealing the fury that
Tears holes into hulls,
Cracks masts, and capsizes
Boats and dreams to leave a man
Humbled and weary on a sandy shore.

Waves surge and break on eternal rocks
And we are quietly crushed between
To be swept onto the constant sand
Showing the scars of the abated storm.

So here I lie with my
Broken body cutting its signature
Into all these placid grains;
Eyelids fill with sleep
As night approaches with the
Rising tide that will take me down
To the last peaceful home
In the opaque undertow
When the waves wash my fingertips away.

--Nate Olson

The Letters of Soren and Fyodor
By Clare Sanford

Dear Comrade,

I do not mean to be an annoyance, but I wonder if you received the package I sent a few weeks back. You know how the post can be—one digit misplaced and inter-existence delivery can be held up indefinitely! In any case, forgive me if you are simply in the process of reviewing that material. It's just that the manuscripts contained in the package are (in my humble opinion) phenomenal, and I want your critique before I make my final compilation. Your opinion, my friend, is of the utmost importance because I credit this current project to my reading of your *Fear and Trembling*.

Since discovering your aforementioned achievement, the notion of the *possibility* of a teleological suspension of ethical principles has gnawed at my intellect. Your telling of the story of Abraham and Isaac held me in rapture, and I considered it in ways I never before thought possible. I don't want to spoil the snippets I have sent, but it suffices to say that I have constructed a comprehensive version of your vision. My God, I shudder at my own thoughts! I have a man who makes the movements of faith, a man who attempts to transgress morality, a man for whom morality may not even exist. A superman, if you will.

I call him Raskolnikov. Fantastic, don't you think? The name denotes a schism of some kind, and you shall soon see the schism I have in mind. He's a student, or at least he was one. I'm not quite sure on all the details yet. I do know that he's desperate, though, desperately desperate. He's down on his luck, out of money and listless, yet teeming with potential. He's explosive, but he doesn't know it. I place him in a picture

perception of humanity. Feelings of "obstinate, hate-filled loathing" consume him. These feelings eventually explode into an enormous cry:

"Where was it that I read about a man condemned to death saying or thinking, an hour before his death, that if he had to live somewhere high up on a cliffside, on a ledge so narrow that there was room only for his two feet- and with the abyss, the ocean, eternal darkness, eternal solitude, eternal storm all around him- and had so stay like that, on a square foot of space, an entire lifetime, a thousand years, an eternity, it would be better to live than to die right now! Only to live, to live to live! To live, no matter how-only to live!" (Dostoevsky, 158)

The reader realizes from this cry that Raskolnikov struggles to understand his newfound feeling of "infinite solitude and estrangement." He is aghast at how a man could possibly want to live in pervasive solitude, yet he wants to firmly believe that one could live this way. Raskolnikov treasures the story of this man because he sees this man as himself.

Raskolnikov has cut himself off from society by committing murder, but he rationalizes his action by believing that killing, for him, is living. For him, the man on the cliff represents his hope that he will be able to live despite his awareness of his crime. He wants to live, as Emerson wanted to live. "I do not wish to expiate, but to live. My life is not an apology, but a life. It is for itself and not for a spectacle" (Emerson, 261). This paradoxical notion of killing for living is explained in Raskolnikov's conversation with Razumkihin and Porfiry Petrovich.

Razumkihin and Petrovich inquire about Raskolnikov's theory, which states that certain persons of unique intellect can and are entitled to commit crimes and therefore transgress all laws. These so-deemed great men do not fall on the same plane with the rest of human beings. They are "extraordinary" beings who actually transcend their own humanity. "I merely suggested that an 'extraordinary' man has the right... that is, not an official right, but his *own* right, to allow his conscience to... step over certain obstacles,

the will of God. Emerson's words spell out the very point Dostoevsky wishes to refute. Dostoevsky conveys that this notion of a personal "constitution" is the very cause of immorality and misery among human beings.

For it is in one's personal "constitution" where isolation begins and the common Truth in all beings is defied. Raskolnikov, the self-righteous student who tests his ability to transcend human nature by committing murder, cannot fully accept his personal constitution as truth. He is dubious of Svidigailov's character and thus Emerson's theory. He fights his doubt, but he cannot ignore it. The novel traces his inability to resolutely live by his personal judgments, calculations, and convictions. The apparent perversity of his personal constitution is revealed through his persistent misery. Ironically, recognizing this inability reveals to him the very essence of his humanity, and therefore Dostoevsky's message that the Truth is not contained in the self alone becomes evident.

After Raskolnikov kills two women with an axe, his precious reason abandons him and is replaced by feelings of isolation: "A dark sensation of tormenting, infinite solitude and estrangement suddenly rose to consciousness in his soul... what was taking place in him was totally unfamiliar, new, sudden, never before experienced. Not that he understood it, but he sensed it clearly, with all the power of sensation, that it was no longer possible for him to address these people in the police station, not only with heartfelt effusions... but in any way at all, and had they been his brothers or sisters, and not police lieutenants, there would still have been no point in his addressing them, in whatever circumstances of life" (Dostoevsky, 103). This is the first moment when Raskolnikov feels a complete disunion with society. He feels that he can never share "heartfelt effusions" with a single soul. And it is here that his isolation starts to dictate his

of wretchedness, somewhere in a generic city with all the generic and rotten incidences of urban life. On the surface there is little reason to waste sympathy on him, but I provide glimpses of his humanity. At one point he saves a poor girl from the arms of a lustful fiend, and I'm toying with the idea of him graciously donating his last cent to a poverty-stricken family in need of a proper funeral for its patriarch. I don't know—perhaps that would be *too* good of him. Raskolnikov is not a malicious man, yet there is an instance in which his altruism conflicts with the norms of society. It is in this instance that I begin to sketch the superman, the man who is your "knight of faith."

Raskolnikov becomes obsessed with the life of a societal leech, perhaps a lousy pawnbroker or dishonest tax collector, a person of seemingly little value to life as a whole. Would not life be better if this person was eliminated? Certainly so, and it is from this that the question of murder arises. Raskolnikov is not a bloodthirsty killer. He is not meant to terrify the reader, only to arouse. He has often wondered if there exist men of supreme genius, men for whom the binding morality of the world does not exist. Or, in your terms, men for whom the ethical may be suspended. Raskolnikov is enthralled by the notion that he may be one of these geniuses, wallowing in uncertainty because his strength has never been tested. He experiments on himself by killing the leech, as well as (out of circumstantial misfortune) an innocent bystander. He creates the order to kill, obeys it under the control of reason, and follows through with the action. He wants to see how the murders will affect him, to see if he can support a suspension of ethical principles.

That is all I will say for now. I eagerly await your remarks. Please do not think me pretentious for developing your idea in such a manner; I have simply modified it. I

sincerely hope you're taking advantage of your community's social opportunities, for I worry about your solitude. It is a shame you never married Regine. She was such a terribly sad and delicate woman, yet hauntingly beautiful in her piety and faith. I miss her, as I'm sure you do.

Fondly,
Fyodor

Old Friend,

What a joy to see your familiar penmanship upon the box at my doorstep! Time does fly between lives! Please accept my sincere apologies for the length of my silence. Even now I have only read bits and pieces of your manuscripts, but I feel it my duty to maintain our communication in the interim. I am flattered to be an author that lit the fire of your intellect, but I fear that my work has been misinterpreted. Still, this discussion is quite welcome, for you know my obsession with the marvel of the knight of faith and how this subject concerns me absolutely!¹ How does the supposed suspension of the ethical succeed for this man, this Raskolnikov? From what I can see, he does not succeed in anything except a hideous and basic crime that is entirely inexcusable and subject to moral law. Out of curiosity, is there any special importance to Raskolnikov's status as a student? Why not a titular councilor, if you are looking for something rather banal? By the way, I thoroughly enjoyed the part where Raskolnikov says that in killing he hoped to find out if he was a louse (like all the rest) or someone extraordinary.² Ha! I'll tell him what he is: an extraordinary louse!

¹ Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Alistair Hannay (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 68.

² Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Random House, Inc., 1992), 419.

The Right to Crime Leads to Resistance

By Candace Crockett

"It is only as a man puts off from himself all external support, and stands alone, that I see him to be strong and to prevail..."

-Emerson

Ralph Waldo Emerson's stance on human nature as seen in *Self-Reliance* is antithetical to that of Dostoevsky's in *Crime and Punishment*. It is my sincere hope that, had Emerson read this novel, he would have considered more carefully the implications of embracing a self-reliant human nature. A self-reliant nature infers that the self is not relying on the divine for wisdom, but on personal judgments, scientific conclusions, and moral convictions. A self-reliant human being is one that believes that (s)he is capable of arriving at the same plane as God; divinity lies within. Following this nature leads to pervasive feelings of isolation from others because one feels independent from the thoughts of all human beings and thereby rejects any commonality among humans. By failing to recognize the fallibility of the self and the limitations of personal thought and experience, one transcends and also defies his own humanity.

Svidrigailov, the pernicious, obstinate character who successfully defies humanity, personifies Emerson himself. Emerson's words echo Svidigailov's resolute theory on human nature: "... If I am the devil's child, I will live then from the devil. No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature. Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to that or this; the only right is what is after my constitution, the only wrong what is against it. A man is to carry himself in the presence of all opposition as if every thing were titular and ephemeral but he" (Emerson, 260). Emerson and Svidigailov share in the amoral belief that Truth is found only by following one's own nature. Because divinity lies within one's nature, it is logical that not following one's nature is to reject

Israel Lives Within Me

Israel lives within me.
His hardened roots
Wrap 'round my heart;
The strong-willed shoots
Worm through my arms.

So I wrestle with God.
Every fiber inside
Burns with the fire
Of rebellious pride
Until we're tangled like wire.

My genesis unhinges.
The future and past
Stretch to eternity;
I see my spirit flash
Beyond its physical fraternity.

Then God cripples me.
I limp from Peniel,
Shamed by the holy place,
And my foolish appeal
For a touch of cosmic grace.

--Ryan Healy

Allow me a bit of discourse on the subject of Abraham and Isaac. Recall that in my vision Abraham prepared to make the movement of faith, but God intervened, and my notion of complete resignation was never realized. The demonstration of pure faith would only have surfaced at the instant that Abraham ended his son's life, and not a moment before. Why would this have been faith, and not the greatest sin? God commanded Abraham to kill his son. Usually I would use the categorical imperative to argue that murder is always wrong, even if based on utilitarian principles. If one willingly murders and claims that under his personal circumstances that the act can be excused, what is there to prevent countless others from doing the same thing? Havoc and eternal chaos would reign! Still, I make an exception when such a command comes directly from God. Who other than God can suspend the ethical? Who has that power? Who? No one. Only in this case can the particular exist in a realm above the universal.³ Raskolnikov rests in the universal, nowhere near a transcendence of the ethical. Abraham, however, *could* have been the particular above the universal. His murder of Isaac would have had no universality. The sacrifice would have been an action ordered by God, and in this circumstance alone murder would have been justified as an act of faith and faith alone.

Faith, my friend, is a slippery subject, if a subject at all.

You say that Raskolnikov's need to kill originates within the depths of his own mind. If so, is he not assuming the power of God? Is this not a case of self-deification? I believe it is, and this is the tragic flaw in your reasoning. It is one thing for the creator of morality to manipulate it, but it is quite another for a pawn in the game to assume such arrogance. If there is one thing a man is not, it is God. I have yet to find a man who even

³ Kierkegaard, 84-87.

possesses true faith in Him. Abraham was on his way, but God's intervention spared the life of Isaac, and Abraham's movement was never completed.

Keep in mind as well my notion of the knight of faith: "Carefree as a devil-may-care good-for-nothing, he hasn't a worry in the world, and yet he purchases every moment he lives...He drains in infinite resignation the deep sorrow of existence, he knows the bliss of infinity, he has felt the pain of renouncing everything, whatever is most precious in the world, and yet to him finitude tastes just as good as to one who has never known anything higher..."⁴ Tell me please, in all honesty, when you envision Raskolnikov, is this the person you see?

Please do not be offended by the tone of this reply. Your tale so far has been a fine read, but I cannot see that Raskolnikov completes his movement of faith, or even that he conceives of faith. He is a simple killer. Since the order to kill comes from within, he has not the excuse of transgressing the ethical on the basis of faith. Please, feel free to respond. Steady dialogues are quite sustaining, and I fear that the lulling hum of bliss here in the afterlife can at times dampen one's supposed sagacity. Thank you for your kind mention of Regine. She was extraordinary, and my dismissal of emotion for her is counted among my greatest mistakes. She was one deserving of the world.

Farewell,
Soren

Dear Comrade,

I read your response with feverish intensity. I must admit to have been surprised. So surprised, in fact, that I decided to excuse your criticism on the basis that you had not

⁴ Ibid., 69-70.

interpretation of truth. Even if one compiled all the perspectives in the world on a particular subject, these perspectives mean nothing until they are *interpreted* by a person looking at them out of his or her own confined perspective. As Solomon writes, "Loose talk about perspectives, as if they were nothing but potential viewpoints, leaves out the critical aspect of Nietzsche's perspectivism: The fact that a perspective is *occupied*" (Solomon 197). Therefore, the idea that Nietzsche in his later works believed that there could exist a conglomeration of perspectives that would approach "absolute truth" seems rather ridiculous. Why would such a personal philosopher care if there could be such an absolute truth, if no one who could appreciate its objectivity exists?

One need not make the conclusion that Nietzsche does not always strictly adhere to his notion of personal perspectivism, as Clark does, or that Nietzsche does not mean intend his "doctrines" to be interpreted as a type of truth to resolve the apparent contradiction between these two ideas. However, the type of truth ascribed to eternal recurrence, the will to power and the *Übermensch* cannot be a *metaphysical* truth. As is consistent with Nietzsche's stance as a personal philosopher these ideas are best looked upon as "attitudes towards life" which help one to live life in the most life affirming way possible. Yet Nietzsche's lack of a direct response to this apparent contradiction ensures that this matter will continue to be hotly debated well into the future. For this seemingly simple contradiction of positing truths when one has denied all absolute truths, Nietzsche gives a very complex and personal answer.

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speaks of “the free spirits” who “are born, sworn, jealous friends of *solitude*” (*BGE* II.44). A true philosopher, this “free spirit,” needs the space that solitude brings in order to distance himself from the spirit of the times that would infect his philosophy. That Nietzsche values this philosophy of distance shows that he feels perspectives can be more and less influenced by the culture of which one is part. One could create a more valuable perspective for one’s self if one is allowed to expand one’s perspective. This would allow for Solomon’s idea that some perspectives are more valuable than others are.

Maudemarie Clark, in her book *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, presents a much different picture of the apparent contradiction between Nietzsche’s perspectivism and his conception of truth. Her interpretation is based on a different idea of what Nietzsche’s perspectivism fundamentally is. She states that to say that there is no “nonperspectival seeing” is not to say that there is not an “omniperspectival seeing” (Clark 145). This is tantamount to saying that just because we can perceive an absolute truth from one individual limited perspective is not to say that there is no absolute truth out there, which is obviously a valid argument. She goes on to say that this situation of seeing from a limited perspective “means not merely that we cannot know all there is to know, but that what we know is only partially true, that it would be completely true only if we supplemented it by the way things appear from other perspectives” (Clark 146). Her point, then, is that Nietzsche, in his last six works (from *The Genealogy of Morals* to *The Antichrist*), does not claim anymore that knowledge falsifies and, in fact, seems to believe that science can be a means to reaching this unified, and therefore absolutely true, perspective (Clark 103). So her way of looking at Nietzsche’s perspectivism is far from the earlier stated interpretation in that she allows for a much more impersonal and unified interpretation of Nietzsche’s idea.

Clark’s remarks that Nietzsche’s ideas on truth changed after writing *Beyond Good and Evil* will not be empirically refuted here, but Clark’s belief that Nietzsche late in life submitted to a form of objectivism seems completely contrary to his stated philosophy. For a philosopher of the nature of Nietzsche who found it most interesting and beneficial to focus on the personal in philosophy, whether it be how the baggage of a person’s existence creeps into his philosophy or how morality is a personal, creative undertaking, it would seem wholly out of character to submit to any claims for an impersonal

yet read my manuscripts in their entirety. I assume you to be in that very process as I write, but for the sake of sustaining our present and most agreeable contact I shall dash off a quick reply.

It is true that Raskolnikov’s order to kill comes from within, not a higher power. In killing, however, he *does* make a movement of faith: faith in himself. It is his own conscience which authorizes the shedding of blood.⁵ He has to see if he is a member of the elite, a man who can transgress ethical principles and continue to exist unfazed, a man who can act (as you say) on the strength of the absurd.⁶ He must make an initial resignation to this before he ends his victim’s life. This resignation is necessary, as you believe, and the decision must be made on the idea that a certain act (in this case murder) alone constitutes fulfillment. As you have argued, once a man is truly resigned to something, non-action will cause great pain.⁷ At the scene of the crime, however, I begin to unravel Raskolnikov’s self-view. Here the dichotomy within his personality (the theoretic notion of possibility versus aesthetic repulsion at the thought of murder) bubbles forth. The split in his self-consciousness becomes fully apparent, and from this point on the tale is one of his journey to faith through self-knowledge.⁸ Perhaps he was fully resigned when he murdered Alyona Ivanovna, but then something tragic and unexpected happened: Lizaveta came home. In a fit of fear and self-protective instinct Raskolnikov killed her as well, and for this act he was decidedly *not* resigned. Once he commits what must be conceived of as a true crime against humanity (for Lizaveta’s death cannot be

⁵ Konstantin Mochulsky, “Crime and Punishment: A Novel Tragedy in Five Acts,” in *Critical Essays on Dostoevsky*, ed. Robin Feuer Miller (Boston: G.K. Hall and Company, 1986), 96.

⁶ Kierkegaard, 67.

⁷ Ibid., 65.

⁸ Mochulsky, 94.

universalized under the auspices of beneficence), he begins to feel the pangs of moral inquietude.

I must cut this letter short, for I promised to make dinner this evening. Tonight I shall prepare borscht. I craved that meal yesterday, and since Anna had promised it to me my mouth was watering by the time I returned home. Much to my dismay she had baked a goose instead. Ugh! All I craved was my borscht—was that too much to ask? My mood was soured for the entire evening. Thank goodness Mother Russia produces fine vodka!⁹

Fondly,
Fyodor

Old Friend,

This has become involved! I am still not convinced that Raskolnikov can be considered a knight of faith in accordance with my vision. First of all, I make clear that only God's chosen few are subjected to such trials as murder on demand (and actually, my knight of faith is not required to perform such actions to demonstrate infinite resignation). Raskolnikov acting on faith in himself does not act as one of God's chosen.¹⁰ I feel that in taking such action Raskolnikov succumbs to the tragic flaw of so many individuals: belief that for humans, everything is possible.¹¹ What, my friend, could be more foolish? You are at least correct in your interpretation of a resigned state encompassing only the act demanded by the divine and therefore not supporting murders

⁹ Kierkegaard, 75. This relates my favorite description of the knight of faith. In one section he is described as yearning for a certain dish which he hopes his wife will serve him for supper, something succulent and well beyond his family's means. Still, he yearns for it as if it will *actually* appear. When he arrives home and his wife does indeed not have the dish, he is "strangely the same."

¹⁰ Ibid., 61.

¹¹ Ibid., 73.

theses" but as "attitudes towards life" (Solomon 186). Perhaps it is going too far to deny that these doctrines are philosophical theses, but it is an apt point that they should not be considered as theses that are metaphysically true.

Nietzsche may be a philosopher who is more interested in the personal aspect of philosophy than the impersonal, formality of the subject, but he is enough of a traditional philosopher to recognize a contradiction when he sees it. And if he were to postulate that the will to power, eternal recurrence and the *Übermensch* were metaphysically and transcendentally true, he would obviously be stating a contradiction. The idea that these doctrines are "attitudes towards life" seems to me plausible if we return to Nietzsche's idea that given the uncertainty of the world, we need to *create* values. By looking at the world through the lens of the will to power, eternal recurrence and the *Übermensch*, we are shown criteria by which we can determine how life-affirming our lives are. (The degree to which a life is life affirming is the standard by which Nietzsche chooses to value a life.) Consequently, if these doctrines serve their purpose to help determine if a life is life-affirming or not, Nietzsche should not care if they are metaphysically true or not. He even writes, "The falseness of a judgement is to us not necessarily an objection to a judgement... The question is to what extent it is life-advancing, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-breeding" (*BGE* I.4). If truth, then, is not the most important value to Nietzsche, it would seem that he would not make metaphysical claims to truth if he didn't need to.

Another justification for this "attitude towards life" interpretation of eternal recurrence, the will to power, and the *Übermensch* is given by Solomon. His point is that to say that there is not a metaphysical truth is not to say that there are not varying levels of truthfulness. He writes, "Perspectives and interpretations are always subject to measure, not by comparison with some external 'truth,' perhaps, but by evaluation in their context and according to the purposes for which they are adopted." (Solomon 196). In other words, one can evaluate a perspective according to how well the writer uses the tools her perspective gives her, e.g. logic or reasoning, and how much her purposes for writing were likely to affect the content of the work.

Nietzsche himself gives credence to this theory in his explanation of what the true philosopher should be. In the second part of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche fondly

untouched by our petty prejudices. It is through Nietzsche's idea of perspectivism that the world of absolutes, as posited by a specific philosopher, becomes a contradiction in terms. For, as Nietzsche has made clear, no person can ever write untouched by these worldly prejudices.

Although Nietzsche has made it clear that we can never know an absolute truth, he deplores the scepticism that he sees as rampant in the Europe of his time. Just because one does not know that one's beliefs are true does not mean that one should not forcefully will them to be true. Indeed, if there is no transcendental truth, we are given the freedom to *create* truth as we want it to be. However, Nietzsche sees a prevalent scepticism, one might even call it "nihilism," in Europe that has resulted from his cultural "death of God" and usually produces a "paralysis of will" (*BGE* VI.208) that Nietzsche despises. He believes that humans need to continue to act in the face of this uncertainty, which should be viewed as the opportunity to create something new rather than an ominous burden preventing us from moving.

However, Nietzsche perceives that a person cannot act while examining his actions with an uncertain eye. A person must believe his or her actions to be *the* true and just ways to act even if this belief is a lie. In *The Will to Power*, he writes this idea as "truth is the kind of error without which a certain being could not live" (*The Will to Power* 493). To see that this "certain kind of being" to which he is referring is definitely humanity, one need only look to *Beyond Good and Evil*, where he says that "for the purpose of preserving beings such as ourselves, such judgements [synthetic *a priori* judgements] must be *believed* to be true; although they might of course still be *false* judgements!" (*BGE* I.11). Therefore, we humans need to act as if we are certain of what we are doing even though we cannot be certain.

It is at this point that Nietzsche begins to get himself into the sticky situation of advocating how humanity should act at this point in history, a point we can only truly recognize we have reached when we acknowledge perspectivism. But it is perspectivism itself which, in turn, would seem to prevent Nietzsche from making any type of universal claim about the world. Nietzsche, however, holds forth with his doctrines of eternal recurrence, the will to power, and the *Übermensch*. I follow Richard Solomon's lead in interpreting this "famous triad of Zarathrustrian doctrines" not as "grand philosophical

of innocent bystanders, etc. The suspension of the ethical does not expand due to circumstances. It is at once fluid and concrete, responsive to God and God alone.

Now, as far as Raskolnikov lives up to *his own* notions of what a superman is, I fail to see how he even approaches success. Immediately following the crime he is riddled with guilt. Well, maybe not guilt exactly, but definitely fear. Fear of confessing his role in the crime, fear of being caught, and fear especially of facing the obvious fact that he is not one of the extraordinary he has so painstakingly contemplated. He cannot support a suspension of the ethical because such a suspension never existed for him, and he is still nowhere near the status of a knight of faith. He was wrong from the beginning, wrong to think that he himself could support a suspension of whose existence he had no proof. Do you mean to sketch so pathetic a figure?

Surely you understand the confusion I face with the concept of Raskolnikov. He cannot truly make the movement of faith (whether to God or to himself, as you claim he does) because faith begins precisely where thinking ends.¹² Raskolnikov never ceases to think. Prior to the crime he plans and plots. After the crime he works himself into physical and psychological illness by mulling over every detail of the crime and its repercussions. For Bjorn's sake, he's even thinking at the scene of the crime, between the planned murder and the unexpected one. At this point there can be no mistake, for you write that Raskolnikov is in full possession of his reason.¹³ *In full possession of his reason*. He is not resigned (not that he ever was), and his conscience is not unaffected. Where is the "super" in this man? I barely see a man at all!

¹² Ibid., 82.

¹³ Dostoevsky, 77-78.

I must again leave you, dear friend, but I look forward to—wait! Great Danes! I almost forgot the main point of this entire diatribe! The most radical departure from my line of thinking is the very notion of your superman as a man of genius. If there is one thing in my work that should be apparent, it is that the man who makes the movements of faith is *not* a genius.¹⁴ I could not make him one even if I tried, for my vision of him has always been complete and unalterable. Believe me, I have tried to deconstruct this man, and I have been driven to fury more out of envy than anything else. I try in vain to understand him, to glimpse a crack through which the infinite might peep out. I find nothing. Nothing! You see, we *want* to believe that such a man embodies genius. We cannot fathom a suspension of the ethical for any less a man, and this is precisely the faulty reasoning followed by you and your Raskolnikov. Transgression of an ethical system cannot be dependent upon one's rational, intellectual, or physical faculties. God will not be subject to man, whether the man you take as your example is an unassuming civil servant or a killer obsessed with taking a life while expecting no moral uncertainty or fatigue.

I know you too well to believe that this letter will not elicit a response. I must say I am beginning to pity Raskolnikov, and I expect to discover that he commits suicide. I see in Raskolnikov no genius, no power, no faith, and no support from a higher power, but simply a man who wields evil and pays the price.

Farewell,
Soren

Dear Comrade,

¹⁴ Kierkegaard, 69.

philosophers have presented them as and wished them to be. The philosophy of an individual is precisely that, not a product “of a cold, pure, divinely unperturbed dialectic.”

This example is typical of the very personal method that Nietzsche uses in his philosophy. (This method is what generates his perspectivism.) For him, every idea has a life, a skin wrapped around it through which it is presented to the world and by which it is created. It would be fallacious to look at a philosopher's ideas without looking at the philosopher who was motivated to write them down. Nietzsche regarded himself, as Richard Solomon points out, “first and foremost as a psychologist.” And as a psychologist, he was perhaps more interested in what led someone to believe something rather than what they actually believed.

The very next section after the previous quote in *Beyond Good and Evil* supports this hypothesis of Nietzsche as a “psychologist.” Nietzsche states that “It has gradually become clear to me what every great philosophy has hitherto been: a confession on the part of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir” (*BGE* I.6). While this quotation shows another instance of Nietzsche looking at the personal aspect of philosophy, the most important word in the quotation may be that these personal touches are “unconscious.” Nietzsche's perception that these prejudices which characterize a philosopher's work remain unconscious to his readers is the main impetus for Nietzsche to do his work. He wants to make these “unconscious” prejudices, conscious; he wants us to question what we have not questioned before.

If we are doomed (or blessed, depending on *your* perspective) to always view the world from our own point of view, then one can never know an absolute truth. Nietzsche states that in light of perspectivism the very idea of an absolute truth is unintelligible, so there can be no absolute truth to be known. He writes, “I shall reiterate a hundred times that ‘immediate certainty’, like ‘absolute knowledge’ and ‘thing in itself,’ contains a *contradictio in adjecto* [contradiction in terms]: we really ought to get free from the seduction of words!” (*BGE* I.16). All of these terms, ‘immediate certainty,’ ‘absolute knowledge,’ and ‘thing in itself’, are ways that Western philosophers beginning with Plato, the originator of the ‘thing in itself’, to Kant and even Schopenhauer have explained their position that there is a more valuable transcendental world that is

**Perspectivism and Truth in Nietzsche's Philosophy:
A Critical Look at the Apparent Contradiction**
By Nate Olson

"There are no truths," states one. "Well, if so, then is your statement true?" asks another. This statement and following question go a long way in demonstrating the crucial problem that any investigator of Nietzsche's conceptions of perspectivism and truth encounters. How can one who believes that one's conception of truth depends on the perspective from which one writes (as Nietzsche seems to believe) also posit anything resembling a universal truth (as Nietzsche seems to present the will to power, eternal recurrence, and the *Übermensch*)? Given this idea that there is no truth outside of a perspective, a transcendent truth, how can a philosopher make any claims at all which are valid outside his personal perspective? This is the question that Maudemarie Clark declares Nietzsche commentators from Heidegger and Kaufmann to Derrida and even herself have been trying to answer. The sheer amount of material that has been written and continues to be written on this conundrum demonstrates that this question will not be satisfactorily resolved here, but I will try to show that a resolution can be found. And this resolution need not sacrifice Nietzsche's idea of perspectivism for finding some "truth" in his philosophy, or vice versa. One, however, ought to look at Nietzsche's philosophical "truths" not in a metaphysical manner but as, when taken collectively, the best way to live one's life in the absence of an absolute truth.

By looking at one of Nietzsche's specific postulations of perspectivism, we can get a better idea of precisely how this term applies to his philosophy and how it relates to the "truthfulness" of his other claims. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche begins with a chapter entitled "On the Prejudices of Philosophers." Almost immediately he begins to tear into the lack of integrity on the part of traditional philosophers who present their ideas as the product of pure reason. Nietzsche declaims, "they pose as having discovered and attained their real opinions through the self-evolution of a cold, pure, divinely unperturbed dialectic: while what happens at bottom is that a *prejudice*, a notion, an 'inspiration,' generally a desire of the heart sifted and made abstract, is defended by them with reasons sought after the event" (*Beyond Good and Evil*, which will be referred to as *BGE*, I.5). Thus, philosophical insights are not the universal claims to truth that

By now I assume that you have completed your reading of my manuscripts. I hope that my resolution of Raskolnikov's trial has enlightened you a bit, for your last letter was terse, to say the least. Yes, I understand that the order to kill originates within Raskolnikov himself, I realize that you disagree with his exempted status in the eyes of a higher power, and I understand the argument that faith can only begin where thinking ends. I admit, I took my time in developing this character, but I am firm in my belief that Raskolnikov makes the movement of faith.

The criminal has a spiritual need to be punished. Life is suffering, and Raskolnikov himself comes to this realization. He accepts suffering and believes in the statement, "he who dares the most will be the rightest of all."¹⁵ Raskolnikov dared, he was humbled, and he understands. He endures much psychological turmoil following his crime, but this does not constitute a failure. It marks instead a voyage towards happiness, and in the end, faith. You may think that I have discarded the notion of a higher power, but indeed I have not. Keep in mind that I mentioned faith as the telos of Raskolnikov's journey, not as a pre-existent cause. In the absence of a god, his troubled mind has indeed turned to self-exaltation. Though throughout the work there is no doubt that Raskolnikov is lacking in faith, there are glimpses into his mind that foreshadow his eventual turn towards it. Raskolnikov holds convictions regarding the soul's eternity, though his reason and stubborn arrogance hinder this journey.

What then, you'll surely ask, *does* allow him to reach faith? Human suffering plays this role, in all its exquisite pain. Without suffering, Raskolnikov would never be forced to face God. Human happiness is contingent on suffering, and the man who feels

¹⁵ Dostoevsky, 418.

no pain, the man who never challenges the infinite, this is the man for whom happiness shall not exist. Come on, Soren! Can you not see? Raskolnikov repents! He suffers and reasons and writhes in pain, yet is finally driven to repent. He acknowledges that beyond the renunciation of Christ there is no freedom, only enslavement. Perhaps not slavery to a system of moral maxims, but slavery to something more terrifying and indiscernible: fate.¹⁶ I know that you want to point out the fact that he stole the lives of two people. Quite right! Do you see the brilliance of it all? It is then that he understands exactly what you have said: the ethical resists suspension by those who are not infinite. Without this pure and paradisiacal realization, Raskolnikov is nothing. With this understanding, and with unfeigned repentance, Raskolnikov moves to complete the cycle.¹⁷

Experience, dear friend, is really the key to Raskolnikov's end in faith. At one point Svidrigailov tells Raskolnikov to give himself directly to life.¹⁸ These are prophetic words. Complete deliverance to life is something Raskolnikov does not attain in my story, but the *belief* that he will attain such a level stays with the reader. Human experience is all that Raskolnikov has by which to suffer, live, repent, and exist. His cycle will be completed. When he submits fully, thinking will end and faith will begin.¹⁹

I hope that the preceding lines have clarified my position. You see, my superman does not reject God. Quite the contrary, he falls into Him more fully than a man who has never challenged the infinite. For Raskolnikov, the cycle of suffering is the movement of faith. In his arrogance he attempts to exempt himself from morality, he suffers from the

¹⁶ Nancy Jay Crumbine, "On Faith," in *Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling: Critical Appraisals*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (University, Alabama: the University of Alabama Press, 1981), 100.

¹⁷ Dostoevsky, 415.

¹⁸ Ibid., 460.

¹⁹ Ibid., 550, also Kierkegaard, 82.

Hymn for St. Apostate's Day

Was spoken by a young girl's voice
in nativity colors of nascent yellow
and nightthroat blue.
First God created Love,
and then he created us,
and then I met you.

You were another room and another temple,
when you talked with animals and once understood
the birdsong explanation of all possibility;
I was a path between this and pictures of castles,
I was the book and things written,
history explaining its intersections in today,
its befores and its afters, and now for us what remains?

It was corners of houses
in obscure European cities.
It was the anthem of remembered.
It was plateau and edifice around the furniture,
vistas above edges of living room.
It was mind untouched as just-made bed,
touching something as nearly attained
as love, in the beginning.

It was words stonecolored unspelling themselves
in being said and in disappearing from hearing
it appeared to vision as wind's skeleton.

It was string tied symbolically
like an almost recollection
of the sand's belief written on flesh.

It was dreams of circles reappearing in morninglight,
it was what is remembered by a life beginning.
It was the way that the movement of their silences
retold old stories. Skies somehow looked parental
and time's embrace tightened around us
almost beginning to hope.
Then let go,
the arms unwrapped themselves
and let us go, as easily and as plaintively
as the shiver of a memory's radiance
and the failure to become what the shiver described.

--Nate Miller



realization of his weakness, and he ultimately understands his place in infinity. His actions cause him not only to need God but also to recognize his need. The knight of faith finds his reality, a luxury withheld from the deluded.

Fondly,
Fyodor

Old Friend,

In this epistolary battle I accept not defeat, but stagnation. The knight of faith does not find his reality, as you so exuberantly claim—he accepts it without hesitation or frustration. He is one who resigns himself to a single idea and pours the whole content of his life into this construct, knowing full well that nothing on earth will ever permit his desire to be satisfied, and he *accepts* this without denying the notion of possibility.²⁰ Faith is not a single act but a rhythm of being, a state sustained by its relation with finitude.²¹

I am uncertain as to what to make of your idea of repentance. Raskolnikov's apparent remorse stems from the wrong reasons. He repents because he did not live up to his own expectations, not because he violated the law of his community or the moral law of humanity. I understand the notion that the expected transgression of the ethical, not the actual killing, was the true crime, but I cannot forget those two deaths. Raskolnikov feels no pain in this regard. Is he then a monster (for as you repeatedly note he *does* in the end come to God in the Christian sense and is therefore bound by His morality), or has he gone beyond that to a realm where he can exist in earthly finitude, basking in God yet feeling no *need* for remorse?

²⁰ Kierkegaard, 17, introduction by Hannay.

²¹ Crumbine, 189.

Also, am I correct in assuming that your superman need not go so far as to murder before achieving his place in your cycle towards faith? Can faith be achieved by those who do not commit heinous acts against themselves or others? Does the type of moral transgression matter, or simply its aftermath? I do hope the latter to be true, for I choose not to give in to the bleak picture of humanity presupposed by the former. At this point I cannot fathom holding the belief that *I* could suspend the ethical, no matter what my intended transgression. Without that, I have no aftermath, no terror, no resignation to experience. Tell me then, am I damned? Is the argument you make one of irresistible grace?

I continue to be flattered by the idea of this complex work being in some way inspired by the fruits of my intellect, and perhaps your argument of ultimate repentance may very well be the seed of some future discourse of my own. I thank you both for allowing me a bit of intellectual exercise and for maintaining the tie of friendship I feared my death had severed. I never expected much mail, for I realize that service from the living to the dead is scandalously expensive. As always, give my best to Anna. And try not to fluster yourself over incidents such as the baked goose. You may surprise yourself.

Farewell,
Soren

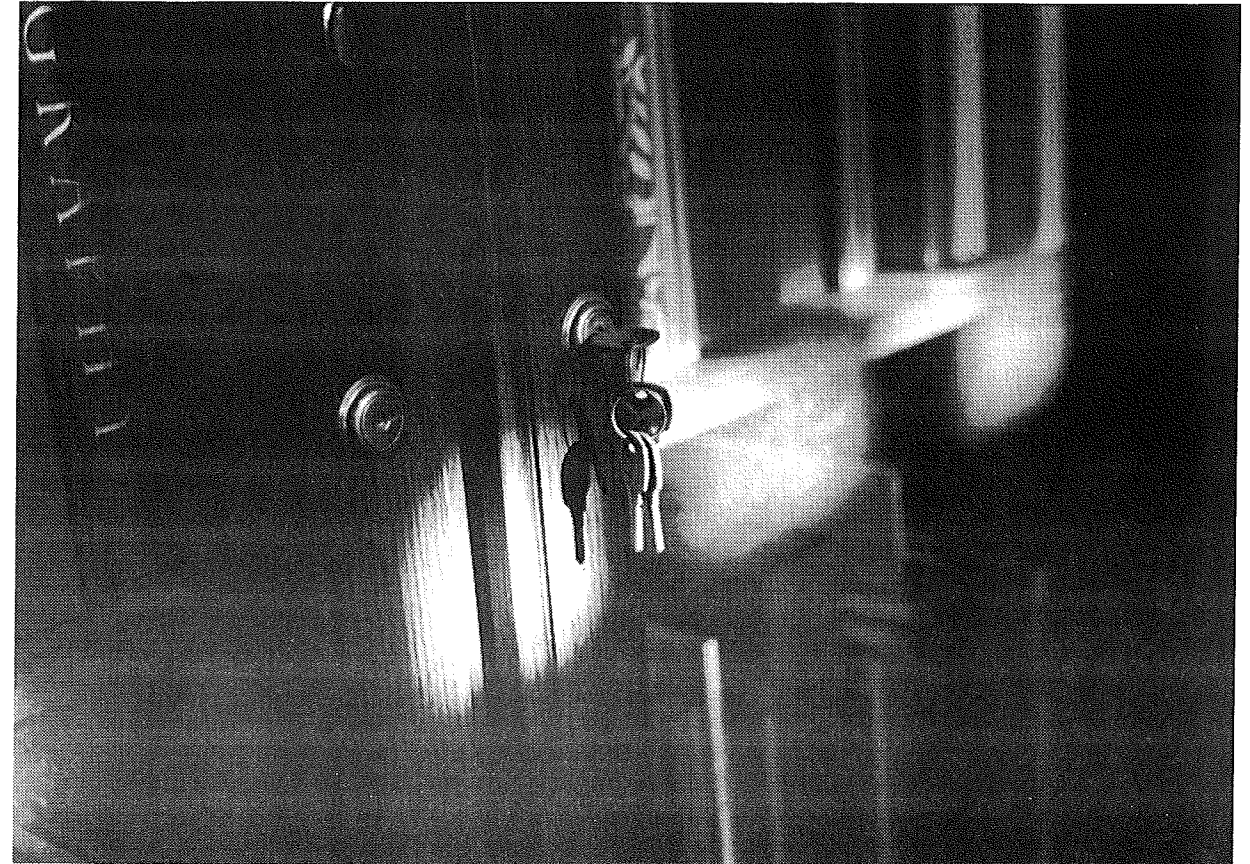
greater if the person being loved knew that the person loving them loved them in their free state, understanding all of the implications?

With that I would say that love would be love when it leaves desire for identity behind and instead seeks only to love the whole. Love will cease to be love when it objectifies or limits anyone. Love should be what seeks the good of the whole. Love should be the embracing of the freedom of the self and of others. Then it will be both responsible and non-judgmental. Though the problem of the in-itself still remains, it will not remain forever.

Finally, Sartre's footnote regarding "an ethics of deliverance and salvation"⁴⁷ is either a cruel joke on his part, or a sincere effort to get us to seek a better way that must exist.

Plato's Love seeks to be united with the beautiful. It is always loving the beautiful. So Love always takes the role of the lover. The vision of beauty is not being, but value. Perhaps, loving would be a goal toward partaking of a constant good will toward others that does not limit being. Love should be, like so many virtues, something we strive for because it is right. Existentially, there is no way of knowing if the lover will love me tomorrow. I can hope that he will, but within his freedom anything is possible. My anxiety may cause me to wonder if I will love the other tomorrow. So love is love by the proactive free choice that is made moment to moment. In this sense, how we love will be as different as each person and situation is, so that freedom will always be needed to confirm it.

Of course, there is no answer that this paper can nicely put together. If there were, everyone would know it already and we would all be loving, instead of discussing love. Certainly Sartre's examination of love beautifully details the failures of relationships. What it does not do is explain the peace that can be gained when people let go of trying to control the other. This is also a phenomenological reality, yet Sartre seems to ignore it. Or perhaps, he never experienced it. I must assert myself within Sartre's framework when he says, "let each refer to his own experience."⁴⁸ While the subject of Sartre's discussion in the excerpt is not love, the idea still remains that each person's experience should guide him. Sartre felt that love was desire to be loved. I wonder if the desire to be accepted is not the real desire. Would not the love seem



⁴⁷ B&N p. 534

⁴⁸ B&N p. 358

Defending Organized Religion and Kierkegaard's Anti-Climacus
By Will Benton

“...This is the solemn pronouncement of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the originator of God's Creation: 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot! So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of my mouth!'...The one who has an ear had better hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

-Revelation 3:14-16,22

Practice in Christianity, written by the pseudonym²² of Anti-Climacus, describes the ideal Christian life from the perspective of the ideal Christian. 'Anti-' in the sense of 'Anti-Climacus' is not an indication of opposition (to Climacus, the 'devoutly non-Christian' ethicist and editor of *Either/Or* whose esthetic sense was particularly keen). Rather, "Anti-" is an older form of "ante", meaning 'before' both in the sense of time and in the sense of rank. Anti-Climacus is the perfect Christian; this was useful to Kierkegaard, who could not claim that distinction for himself. *Practice in Christianity* deals harshly with the Church's homogenization of Christianity by removing its "offensiveness." This paper will examine and analyze several passages from *Practice in Christianity*, draw parallels between the inoffensive Church of Denmark in the mid-19th century and both the charismatic and "High-Church"²³ traditions of worship in the United States today, and suggest criteria for sincere, "offensive" worship in an organized church.

Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is he who takes no offense at me."

-Matthew 11:2-6; RSV

²² The choice between saying "written under the pseudonym" and "written by the pseudonym" was a difficult one, but I feel that this best reflects the pseudonym's purpose—Kierkegaard considered himself a better man than Johannes Climacus, his pseudonym representing the esthetic life, but felt that he could not live up to the sincere Christianity of Anti-Climacus.

²³ "High-Church" in this paper refers to the recent trend in some churches toward services and liturgy saturated in ritual with little or no theological basis—to churches who attract members with the quality of their costume shows, *not* merely to all churches which have placed some emphasis on liturgy and ritual. "High-Church" shall appear in quotes throughout when it is used in this way.

of loving properly would be thinking not of the other but of the whole and of the whole then of myself also. In this, I would affirm myself as existing as one who loves. My answer to whom I am is most definitely whomever I make myself, so the project is on going. I would only objectify myself if I seek another to love me and turn myself into an object in order to find that love. So maybe the project should be limited to loving others, and loving others would mean accepting their freedom. One could accept love from others but could not seek it out.

If I could then define myself as one who loves, then while I am that person, I would seek nothing. Sartre says, "A being which is what it is, to the degree that it is considered as being what it is, summons nothing to itself in order to complete itself."⁴⁵ Sartre would still say that I will be troubled by my lack of knowledge of my in-itself. Maybe this is why Plato's love moves away from bodies. It is true that we would be fleeing our in-itself. But since this does not take away from our freedom and our responsibility, why is it so bad?

Also, what of Sartre's allusion to the ability to move toward authenticity through self-recovery of being? He leaves this only as a footnote at the end of his section on bad faith. Sartre seems to be playing a somewhat mystical role by leaving authenticity as a potential with no explanation of how to attain it. Sartre does this again during his discussion of *le regard*. He mentions an absolute reality of transcendental consciousness.⁴⁶ Again, he does not explain how to attain it, or even what exactly it is.

⁴⁵ B&N p. 136

⁴⁶ B&N p. 364

love that Sartre's individual seeks longs for a totality of being and seeks for the other to define her. The beloved would have to understand that she would never be known or understood by the lover as anything other than potential.

Loving would only make sense by an understanding that it is a constant renewal. The lover is free to stop loving at any time, so what is to stop the lover from loving when his beloved does not seem worthy? Again, the lover would have to recognize that the freedom that exists in each person allows the potential for any person to become unworthy at any time. This makes each person equally worthy and unworthy. Love would have to be unconditional. Also, if the person understands that the other is like her own consciousness, then she will know that the person both is and is not whatever they perceive them to be. Still, this does not stop the freedom of the individual from ending her love merely on a level of should/should not.

Here it may be beneficial to refer to Sartre's lecture *Existentialism is a Humanism*. As Sartre refers to existence as it precedes essence, he notes that the burden of responsibility is greater as it pertains to living rightly.⁴⁴ So, while the each person would have the freedom to not love, if one is to think in terms of what is good for the whole, then he will love the whole—without condition.

Sartre would not agree with this still. He would see it all as either leading to the self escaping the self through objectifying itself, or he would see the self objectifying others. Indeed, it is difficult within Sartre's philosophy to see a way out. However, it would seem that the rungs of the ladder in the *Symposium* lead to love as an abstraction. Perhaps this abstraction of the other need not objectify him. Instead, perhaps the project

⁴⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, excerpted from Walter Kaufman, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, Meridian, 1989, p. 348

"The possibility of offense is the crossroad, or it is like standing at the crossroad...one never come to faith except from the possibility of offense."
-Anti-Climacus; *Practice in Christianity*, pg. 81

What is offensive about Christianity? Surely such a question is absurd, even blasphemous! The word "Christianity" implies to many people a lifestyle characterized by altruism, kindness, mercy and sincere love—even *after* centuries of monarchs and murderers alike have used "Christianity" as an excuse for a variety of causes. Consider also the Christian's devotion to God and attempted emulation of Christ—it is surely impossible to take umbrage at this patently inoffensive way of life. This argument makes great sense to many who call themselves "Christians." Indeed, the concept of Christianity as a belief system is unlikely to offend many. The *practice* of Christianity, on the other hand, is particularly offensive, albeit not in the sense in which "offensive" is particularly used.

Kierkegaard does not use "offensive" to mean 'vulgar' or 'obscene'—rather, in *Practice in Christianity*, "offensive" refers to that which goes against the grain, that which does not appeal to sensibilities. To go against the grain is a prerequisite for sincere Christianity; Kierkegaard says that "one never comes to faith except from the possibility of offense" because he saw a world practicing 'Christianity' that was thoroughly unchallenging. To call oneself 'Christian' was almost fashionable, nothing more than a reflection of a status quo—the word had lost meaning and sting because the practice of Christianity had lost its risk, its offense. To be 'Christian' was not an activity; rather, it was an intangible quality which parents imparted to their children at an early age. One was born Christian because her parents were Christian. One went to church every week—so did everyone else. Everyone was complacent in their 'faith' and no one was challenged; Christianity was a set of teachings, not a lifestyle.

Practice in Christianity demands a more challenging approach to living in faith. Kierkegaard found many ways in which sincere Christianity was offensive; indeed, his use of

the pseudonym Anti-Climacus was to indicate that even he was not capable of pure Christian offense. The questions which remain to be asked, then, are “What is offensive?” and “How can one achieve faith through offense?”

“Fear and tremble, for faith is carried in a fragile earthen vessel,
in the possibility of offense.”
-Practice in Christianity

Kierkegaard’s concept of Christian offense relates to the God-man: Christ. Before we can examine his categories of offense, we must first understand his concept of the God-man. Kierkegaard dismisses the idea of humankind as “direct kin” of God: rather, the human race is fallen and separated from God by sin. The God-man is the result of God becoming human, of God subjecting Himself to the limitations of humanity—with the exception of sinfulness. The Christ is both entirely God and entirely human, which is a particularly challenging paradox, because the two are fundamentally very different and not by definition mutually exclusive, and, as a result, it demands careful consideration. “It is possible to imagine a divine mortal without challenging presuppositions about either concept; it would be an entirely different matter to propose that “Christ is both sinful and sinless,” which would be a contradiction and not a paradox.) The fact that this consideration (and many others of Christian theology) leads so quickly to a mental cramp has been the basis for much of the lack of emphasis on theology in the charismatic and “High-Church” movements—this shall be discussed in detail later.

“The God-man is not the union of God and man... the God-man is the unity of God and an individual human being.”
(Practice in Christianity)

The very *idea* that the God-man—this absurd alloy of perfection and imperfection, of creator and created—is *possible* is offensive for two reasons. Offense may be taken by those who do not believe that this union is justified, by those who feel that humankind does not *deserve* to have God walking in a man’s body, by those who feel that it is not possible for God to condescend to humanity and maintain godliness, and by those who feel that a human is intrinsically unable to act in a manner which claims godliness. Kierkegaard also discusses the possibility of offense from the *idea* of God suffering as a man, as a man condemned, as a

The universal form of beauty is described as “an everlasting loveliness which neither comes nor goes, which neither flowers nor fades, for such beauty is the same on every hand, the same then as now, here as there, this way as that way, the same to every worshiper as it is to every other.” It is a “vision” that is “neither words, nor knowledge, nor a something that exists in something else...subsisting of itself and by itself in eternal oneness, while every lovely thing partakes of it in such a sort...that it will never be more nor less.”⁴² While this language becomes mystical in its ambiguity, it is also telling of some important aspects of this form. This entire process is project of Love that Plato describes. It is what leads to the “sanctuary of Love.”⁴³

In short, Plato’s Love seeks to be the lover, not the beloved. Love seeks to partake of beauty in its most abstracted and pure form. This means stepping away from a beauty that is limited by the manifestations of culture. Love seeks the happiness that will be gained through this relationship.

Sartre’s love is a project in futility toward uniting the self with the self. Plato’s love is a project in mysticism toward uniting the self with the pure form of beauty. Plato’s love is only in its early stages when it seeks to love a body. From there it must move in order to complete its project. Perhaps we can synthesize some of Sartre’s philosophy with some of Plato’s: loving is good if we do not love others as a solid limited object but as pure potentiality toward truth and beauty.

In this sort of love, it would be necessary to love oneself as well as all other beings. If hate exists toward another, the hate would impel itself toward the self since each person is equally capable of any heinous act. This love is an abstracted love. The

⁴³ Symposium, p. 562 or 210-211 c

Through the mythology given by Diotima, we learn that love is a powerful spirit that is the son of Resource and Need.³⁸ This leads to love being needy. So far this seems to agree with Sartre. However, what love is needy for separates the two philosophies. Since Love was conceived on the day that Aphrodite was born, Love seeks to love the beautiful. However, this is not a love that is exclusive from or inclusive only to superficial beauty.

Plato's Love loves *all* beauty and seeks to make the beautiful his own in order to gain happiness.³⁹ The important distinction made is that love is *not* a search for a person's other half. He writes, "Love never longs for the half or the whole of anything except for the good."⁴⁰ In this definition, it is further qualified that Love longs "not for the beautiful itself, but for the conception and generation that the beautiful effects."⁴¹ Whether it is through procreation or creation of art, mankind is seeking happiness and immortality.

This seeking leads to the possibility of a true experience with love. Diotima then explains how love of beauty leads one through many steps toward the universal beauty. First, a person will "fall in love with the beauty of one individual body." The person will soon realize the similarity of one beauty to another and will then begin the project of loving all beautiful bodies. After this, the person must be graduate to the understanding that the beauty of the soul exceeds the beauty of the body. Following this, the person will begin to love all forms of knowledge. If the person truly seeks to love these various kinds of knowledge, he will inevitably encounter universal beauty.

³⁸ Plato, *The Symposium*, from *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, trans. Michael Joyce, Princeton Univ. Press, 1989, p. 555 or 203 b-d

³⁹ *Symposium*, p. 556-57 or 204 b-e

⁴⁰ *Symposium*, p. 557-58 or 205 d-e

⁴¹ *Symposium*, p. 558 or 206 e

man condemned to the most painful and humiliating execution process which the Roman Empire knew. Both of these are different reactions to an important paradox: The God-man is the composite of the inherently flawless and the intrinsically flawed.

The former reaction reflects a view of a decidedly non-Christian God, a God without grace. Kierkegaard says that the notion that humankind is a race made up of the children of God is "ancient paganism," but that the notion that God could and did *become one* man is Christianity.²⁴ The Christian God was willing to sacrifice his Son to save humankind. God—who is without fault—was willing to make a painful, unjust gift to redeem his fallen creations, and it is from consideration of this paradox—that a mere man could claim divinity—that the former type of offense stems.

The latter type of offense is derived from the incredulity at the humanity of the innocent God-man. How could God-as-man be so plain and meek? An additional consideration is this: the Christ was without sin, and endured the world's punishment for sin so that humans need not pay Satan's price for sin. The notion of an innocent man suffering for the transgressions of another is thoroughly "offensive". Contemplation of this suffering and sacrifice leads to guilt in Christians and cynicism in others, which creates in us this second type of offense—that the man who claimed divinity was ultimately placed in the most lowly, humiliating place possible, even that the man who claimed divinity was born and raised as a lowly carpenter's son.

These offenses are necessary for the Christian concept of salvation. If Christ were not fully God, his death would have been meaningless; if He were not full man, his death would have been impossible. If He were not sinless, He could not have borne the burden of our sins; if He had not come from the possibility of sin inherent to humans, his death could not have redeemed the sinful. Faith requires an acceptance of this inexplicable paradox: a

"Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers...
²⁴Where then did this man get all this?
²⁵And they took offense at him."
 (Matthew 13:55-57, RSV)

²⁴ Page 82

fragile balance between understanding *what the paradox is* and a “child-like”²⁵ willingness to accept what one cannot explain. This willingness demands humility and reliance on God, which we cannot see or touch.

Faith is important; without it, the concepts of a human purporting godliness or of God’s willingness to be born as a human into a poor family are too anti-rational for us to possibly accept. If we take offense at these paradoxes and reject them, then we have rejected the Christ; however, if we ignore these offenses and skirt around them, then what we purport to believe in is *not the Christ!*

The fact that the Christ, the God-man, is by nature paradoxical and offensive means that anyone who accepts this paradox *is also an offender*. “Blessed is he who is not offended” at the Christ,²⁶ but how shall the world see the one who regards this with a child-like faith? One calls a child foolish for accepting things that common sense and reason dictate are impossible; an adult adopting these child-like traits would meet with still harsher criticisms.

Kierkegaard also examines several qualification for “the essential offense”—that is, the offense which is necessary for the explanation of Christianity. These qualification deal with the indirect nature of Christ’s message and how that indirectness is essential to faith. If Christ were to offer a proof that he were both God and man, that he were the Redeemer, that reliance on him was essential to salvation, then faith would be meaningless. Expressing faith in God would be akin to expressing that 2 to the eighth equals 256 or that water was composed of hydrogen and oxygen. Without the uncertainty, faith would be science; if God were provable, salvation would be meaningless because it would require no effort on the part of the redeemed. Therefore, the role of the Christ was not to tell people what to believe, but

“The offense under discussion here is one of which anyone, for that matter, can be the object if he, the single individual, seems to be unwilling to subject of subordinate himself to the established order.” (Practice in Christianity)

²⁵ See Matthew 18:1-4 or the boxed note.

²⁶ See Matthew 11:6

However, this is faulty for the reasons that have already been established. If the other is capable of telling the self who and what it is then it is only viewing it as an object. The self, still hoping for identity, will purposefully make itself appear as object so that the other may validate its existence as value and positivity. The self wishes to view itself through the other’s eyes. This is dangerous because the other is then in the powerful situation of determining what the self is. This limits the potential of the self to be only what the other has decided that it is and ultimately the self loses its freedom.

The lover and the loved will exist much like the vacillation between the parts of the self. Only one can exist as subject and so the other has lost its transcendence but inevitably will cause the other to lose his transcendence when the other, seeking love by loving, causes himself to appear as object for the self. Neither lover can know the other as subject. Consciousness cannot be known because it is surrounded by nothingness. Love must fail because of the nature of human existence. Sadly, it is this same nature that will always cause the self to seek this love.

So Sartre’s love is an action which has the motive of an incomplete being searching for its whole existence. Its failure is caused by the impossibility of a being-for-itself to commune with another being-for-itself. How does this idea of love compare to that of Plato’s?

The *Symposium* offers many ideas from each person in the dialogue of what love is, ranging from the act of lust, to the act of nurturing another person to become better. Plato’s idea of love is conveyed through the voice of Socrates who gives reference to a female mystic, Diotima. Much of Plato’s idea of love remains elusive. Even so, there is some direction that is given in order to gain an understanding of what love is.

for-itself experiences a lack of itself as in-itself.³⁴ Sartre writes, “The for-itself in its being is failure because it is the foundation only of itself as nothingness.”³⁵ So human beings fail because their nature dictates that freedom will always stand in the way of self-knowledge and identity. The consciousness desires to know itself and cannot. The consciousness has its freedom but would prefer to *be* something for-itself. However, if it could be an identity it would become limited, and since it is unlimited through freedom, it would cease to be what it *is*. The for-itself is a freedom. Beyond that there is nothing positive and concrete to say. The consciousness yearns to be something. The for-itself exists as a being that can create value through action but can never actually *be* the value to which the action is pointing.³⁶ Again, if the for-itself could be value, it would be concrete, defined, and finite in potential.

All of Sartre’s ideas regarding love are built on the foundation of this understanding of human existence. It is the lack of value, the lack of identity that will cause people to turn to one another for assistance. The hope is that through the mediation of the other the self will be able to gain knowledge of identity. Each person appeals to another. This stems from the belief that “the other holds the secret—the secret of what I am.”³⁷ Love is the project of being loved for the purpose of finding being-in-itself through being-for-others. Shame and pride tell the consciousness that others exist. While being-for-others imprisons the self as in-itself, it also promises that there is someone who knows what I am.

³⁴ B&N p.138

³⁵ B&N p. 139

³⁶ B&N p. 144

³⁷ B&N p. 475

rather to act as a sign pointing to a message, as a symbol for a message which is incomprehensible to us.

A sign is not what it is in its immediacy, because in its immediacy no sign is, inasmuch as ‘sign’ is a term based on reflection.

-Practice in Christianity, pg. 125

What is a sign? We deal with many signs daily: street signs, photographs, even *words*.

Obviously, a street sign is not actually the street that it points to, a photograph is a representation of its object, and a word is a symbol for the concept that it is associated with, not the actual concept. A sign is meaningful only in that it points to something; without the object of its reference, it would be nonsensical.

Kierkegaard posits that the abased Christ, the God-man, is just *a sign for* the risen, triumphant, returning Christ. Since Christ has not returned in glory (but Christians believe that he is in glory now), we have no way to know what the glorious Christ is like or what he would say; we only know what the abased Christ has said and done, and only through the accounts in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. The resurrected Christ demands our faith; the abased Christ is merely a historical figure, or, as some traditions would hold, a great—albeit mortal—prophet. Because we cannot come to “Christ in glory”—we do not know him! We have not seen him!—, we must approach faith and belief by approaching and emulating the abased Christ. The abased Christ is an *indirect communication*, a sign which must be dereferenced by the believer to have the understanding which leads to faith.

Christ’s miracles, the most tangible results of his time on earth, may seem at first to be a *direct* communication with mankind: a sort of proof of the Christ’s divinity. This analysis is incorrect, however. The God-man’s miracles only serve to demonstrate that the God-man was a miracle worker, Christianity would call such a conclusion blasphemy. These miracles occurred to *require* that humans examine Christ, the God-man under a different rubric. The miracles are inexplicable just as is the entire concept of the man through whom

they were worked. These miracles were a means, not an end: they served as symbols for something greater, something paradoxical. This paradox could not be understood or explained without taking these symbols into account, just as we cannot explain the concept of language without a language. However, language is never an end in itself—literature uses language to impart something beyond the tokens which make up sentences (even the French Symbolist poets have used language for something beyond *language*). Christ's miracles, then, were an indication, a hint at the greater reality of simultaneous God and man; a symbol for something greater.

The mainstream church boldly refuses to “go against the established order”; the trends toward inclusivity and ecumenicalism in recent years have reduced most mainstream denomination to nothing. Perhaps not surprisingly, membership and motivation in mainstream congregation has been on the decline. Two worshipping styles are rapidly increasing in popularity, but they each have their flaws.

The charismatic movement in Christianity today seeks to make “worship” and “faith” accessible to anyone. This end is generally accomplished by lack of structure in worship, liturgy and hymnody influenced heavily by pop music, and little emphasis on theology, especially anything which is not immediately uplifting. These people are very fond of catch-phrases like “My God is an awesome God” and of large, “tent revival” gatherings in which “faith” is expressed emotionally.

It is right to find salvation through Christ exciting, but the charismatic movement seeks to make Christianity exciting by molding it into something which is not. *Of course* Christianity is exciting when it is emphatically discussed in a stadium full of young people, when it acts as social glue to bring these children together. (It has been wryly pointed out that “Christian” organizations on college campuses are little more than dating services for chaste students who don't drink or smoke.) Charismaticism does not care about whether or not there is a struggle to faith, whether or not offense is possible—in fact, one of the main

conclusions drawn in the discussion of bad faith can lend to a fuller idea of the problems that the self experiences.

First, he concludes, “I am my transcendence in the mode of being a thing.”³² Here the body, the in-itself, is justifiably as much a valid part of the person as the transcendence, or for-itself, is. While the transcendence cannot escape the in-itself completely, neither can it gain true knowledge of self through it.

Second, I am my being for others in the mode of being what I am not. This means that as being-for-others the person will be limited as an object would, as their body is also a limited determined being. However, the person is also being-for-self and so is faced with their own freedom-for-self. Again, a seeming knowledge may be gained of self as it pertains to other's perception of the self, but since the for-itself can transcend beyond this perception, it is cannot really *be* that self—the self that others see.

Third, it is impossible to be what one is. As has been already established, the temporality of existence allows for constant change so that one may not simply *be* anything. They exist both as it and not as it. For Sartre, “...as soon as we posit ourselves as a certain being, by a legitimate judgment, based on inner experience or correctly deduced from *a priori* or empirical premises, then by that very positing we surpass this being—and that not toward another being but toward emptiness, toward nothing.”³³

There are problems that exist for a being that cannot connect to all aspects of itself. The consciousness is referred to as the *for-itself*. The other parts of the self, the body, the being-for-others, and being-as-past, are referred to as the *in-itself*. Since the freedom of the for-itself creates the nothingness that separates it from the in-itself, the

³² B&N p. 99

³³ B&N p.106

existence. Questions will haunt the present consciousness toward what it may regard as negative characteristics of its past being. The present being will wonder if it may again become the past self. However, the consciousness will always have the ability to separate its present self from its past self so that the past self becomes like an object for the present self to consider.

The anguish over the future occurs in the realization that the present self is the future self in the mode of not being it. Sartre states, “The self which I am depends on the self which I am not yet (future) to the exact extent that the self which I am not yet does not depend on the self which I am.”³⁰ This again, refers to the element that once in the future, the now present self will then be the past self, which we have already determined has no bearing on the future self which will be, at that time, the present self. So there may exist in the present self anguish both over what it has been and what it may choose to become. He writes, “Essence is all that human reality apprehends in itself as having been. It is here that anguish appears as an apprehension of self inasmuch as it exists in the perpetual mode of detachment from what is; better yet, in so far as it makes itself exist as such.”³¹ So the self is separated from its essence by the nothingness its freedom creates.

As the self flees from anguish, Sartre shows that “bad faith” is in assistance. There are some important conclusions drawn in the discussion of “bad faith.” In each instance a “vacillation” exists between two elements of the self. In the patterns of bad faith listed by Sartre the self seeks to escape its freedom by twisting the truth of the reality of existence. The full discussion of bad faith is not necessary here. Instead, the

³⁰ B&N p.69—parenthesis added

³¹ B&N p. 72-73

appeals of the charismatic tradition is the social “support net” of like-minded cheerful “Christians.” The Charismatic tradition is comfortably sleeping—not just in a bed which they have made themselves, but in an entire *community* of ecclesiastical dormancy.

The concept of Christian offense demands that the sincere Christian lifestyle go against the grain of society. Christian offense is a prerequisite to faith, and the charismatic tradition makes offense, and therefore faith, impossible. The charismatic movement asserts that it is the way to a personal relationship with God—which denies the impossibility of direct communication. This is not only theologically unsound, it precludes Christianity. *Of course* the charismatics don’t have faith! They don’t need it, for they know God is real. It is *truly* absurd, truly blasphemous to assume that the “buddy-buddy” relationship with God that some charismatics assert is possible is even a step on the path to faith.

The “High-Church” movement, rich in liturgy, hymnody, ceremonial garb and incense, seems to be particularly opposed to the hand-holding, guitar playing “pop Christianity” of the charismatic movement. The ritual, ceremony, and seriousness imply a heartfelt commitment to worship. This movement is not, however, burdened with much faith, either. Just as some people chose to go to the opera and other people choose to go to the movies, there are different forms of worship-as-entertainment to suit different tastes. It could even be argued that the “High-Church” is less Christian than the charismatic. It is certainly more fashionable, and involves much less work for the worship-goer: sit back, relax, smell the smells, hear the bells, and watch the show—participation optional.

The situation, to be honest, is not much better in mainstream churches, where “Sunday Christianity” is rampant, and the sense of belonging, of progressing with a community—each compromising her principles equally—prevents offense. How, then, is offensive Christianity possible within an organized setting? There are several criteria which must be met, and I shall discuss each in turn.

The Church must nurture the individual and encourage her in her offense. It is very popular in the charismatic movement to spend a few weeks in a Third World country on a “mission trip,” preaching the happy news (not the Good News) to anyone who will listen. This may be well and good for Third World countries, but what of the unchurched in one’s own backyard? To speak only to those who will listen is to discourage offense. The Church, then, must encourage bold faith, offensive Christianity, and feed the individual’s desire for personal growth in understanding.

The Church must not condescend to society. The Church cannot sacrifice principle for the sake of “outreach”—to do so dilutes Christianity and removes the possibility of offense. Many congregations have been very rash in the process of homogenizing Christianity for evangelism’s sake—in a cathedral in New York, for example, a female Christ hangs on the crucifix. This is certainly a most extreme example of molding Christianity to suit one’s own needs, but others are perhaps worse in their deviousness and subtlety. Slight changes in wording, even if they make some more comfortable with the service, rob the liturgy of its theological significance and make it meaningless. The Church must recognize that making Christianity accessible results in something which is not very accessible and certainly not very Christian.

The Church must view education as its primary endeavor. One of the way which the organized church can be most useful is by demanding theological acuity from its members. Our society makes it so easy to call oneself a Christian that few people who claim Christianity understand what it implies or involves. Perhaps more shockingly, very few “Christians” know what they really believe. Kierkegaard says that they duty of preaching is to help Christians accept emulation of the abased Christ as their goal; this is an excellent place to start.

These concerns leave us with a simple rubric for determining whether an organized church is helpful or harmful to one’s pursuit of offense, sincere Christianity. Does the church

others and lives in the world with people can choose at any moment to alter the world because it is her world to alter through her freedom. This may happen because the possibility for anything has underneath it an implicit nothingness. As consciousness considers all other objects and existence, it realizes that none of it needs to exist. The consciousness may find these objects to exist elsewhere or not at all. This realization is the nihilation of these objects and other forms of existence as they pertain to the conscious for-itself.

A strange consequence of this phenomenon is the separation of the conscious present for-itself from its own past being or future being through a barrier of nothingness. Sartre gives many reasons for this. First, the self which the consciousness will be, or has been is not what the consciousness is at present. This issue is a time related one. Second, Sartre says that what the consciousness is does not provide the “foundation” of what the consciousness will be. The consciousness could be related to the present self but, in fact, freedom allows that it *could* be anything. Therefore, no relation is implicit. Sartre’s last reason seems to reiterate the concept that is already given: the present consciousness does not have a determining factor in the future self. The future self is a constantly renewing consciousness that freedom wills. All of this is most concisely put when Sartre says, “I am the self which I will be, in the mode of not being it.”²⁸ As distance is created, the present self realizes its alienation from its past and its future self. This is the “nihilating structure of temporality.”²⁹ When the consciousness realizes this separation, it begins to understand that the freedom that it is becomes a burden of constant self-renewal. An anguish will exist over the relation of the past and future as it pertains to present

²⁸B&N, p. 68

²⁹B&N, p. 72 top

Love and Freedom

By Susan Linich

What is love? Is it something we do or something we can know? Some classify love as something that you feel for some people sometimes. It is often linked or used interchangeably with lust. Others feel that it is something that is constant and untouched by judgement and feeling. The only common denominator for love is that it is something that is desirable; it is something that we want. So what do people want? Many philosophies pose answers; but those answers frequently lead to more questions. Examining Sartre's idea of love from *Being and Nothingness*, we find a love that is an action in the form of a project. The goal of the project is to attain a totality of being through the use of another. This differs from the love outlined by Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*. Through Socrates, Plato characterizes love as a desire to partake in the beautiful for the purpose of gaining happiness. Sartre states that love is an engagement in an impossible project. Plato, while agreeing that the task is not easy, feels quite differently that love is attainable. This paper seeks to find the areas where the two philosophies overlap, hoping that an even better definition or goal of love can be reached. In order to understand Sartre's idea of love, we must first examine his ontology. This will lead us to why love is sought.

First, there is a distinction between what is free and what is determined: our consciousness exists as a freedom, for-itself, that can transcend any element that is not part of the present consciousness. The human being is a freedom that is able to detach itself through a "nihilating withdrawal."²⁷ This means that the person who talks with

²⁷ *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel. E. Barnes, Washington Square Press Pub., 1965, specifically term "nihilating withdrawal" pp.58 and 61, discussion in between

ignore the paradox and offense of the God-man; does it ignore the more difficult aspects of Christian theology? Is the church willing to go against the grain, to stand in the face of the "established order"? Does the church hold emulation of the abased Christ as the highest good; is it willing to educate one and nurture her in her attempts toward this end? An organized church which meets these criteria has addressed most of Kierkegaard's concerns, and is all the closer to bringing "Christianity" back into "Christendom".

How can we approach the "fragile earthen vessel" of the possibility of offense? Is it even realistic for one born sinful to attempt this, to try to stand against the grain of the world in imitation of Christ? Kierkegaard acknowledges this in his choice to publish *Practice in Christianity* pseudonymously that even he fell short of this ideal; but it is in the striving that Christianity can be achieved through God's grace. An organized church that allows and encourages offense *can* be a most fertile ground for sincere faith.

Work Cited:

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Canopy of Dreams

Thin dreams weave the canopy of my sleep
Where I walk the wasteland
Between creation and destruction,
Clutching the anemic bloodline of my heritage.

I slog back through the sagging years.

And should I reach the beginning, what vistas await?
A black mass gathering the fragments of history;
An explosion of energy hurling us into orbital existence;
An omnipotent hand loosing an army of demigods from its fingertips.

These images flash in my unconscious like meaningless runes.

Thirsty and cold,
I walk on in the wasteland,
Thrusting at this thin canopy of dreams
So I can return to the terrible land I love.

--Ryan Healy

