COMMUNICATION AND SUBJECTIVITY IN THE THOUGHT OF SØREN KIERKEGAARD

By R. M. M'GREGOR, M.A., B.D.

Thesis presented for the Degree

of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

of the

University of Edinburgh

in the

Faculty of Divinity

31st August 1965.

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Name of Candidate Robert Murray M'Gregor
A
Address

Degree Doctor of Philosophy *Date* 31st August 1965

Title of Thesis Communication and Subjectivity in the Thought of S. Kierkegaard

Although there exists a fragment on The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication in Kierkegaard's Papirer, we need to approach the Works as a whole in order to find any comprehensive dialectic. When Kierkegaard speaks of communication it is about the communication of Subjectivity which he is thinking. According to him Subjectivity is Truth; where the individual, instead of being related to an objective body of knowledge which is considered as "the truth", is related to himself in inwardness. He who sets about the ethical task of becoming subjective soon finds that he is involved in religious categories, but at the end of it all, because of the consciousness of guilt, he discovers that within the limits imposed by his subjectivity and immanence, he can neither be fully related to himself nor to God; although a relationship of a kind does exist. In order to be truly related to the self, which is what Subjectivity is, the individual requires to be rooted and grounded in the Power which posited his self. This can only happen in Christianity when God bestows upon him the condition for belief in the Absolute Paradox, which belief can only take place after he has chosen to overcome the various forms of offence associated with Him. It is only in Christianity that the individual really becomes related to himself and the thesis:Subjectivity is Truth becomes completely valid.

In the sphere of objective knowledge the appropriate form of communication is through direct expression, but where Subjectivity is concerned any such direct communication would be a contradiction. By definition that which is inward cannot be made outward and still remain the same. The only feasible way of communication in the ethico-religious sphere is by indirect means, whereby the subjectivity of both communicator and recipient is fully respected. But still the contradiction persists because there has to be some expression even although it is

Use other side if necessary.

P.T.O.

only indirect. There is a communication of a kind, but it is not a true communication of Subjectivity.

In Christianity the situation is more complicated for here there are two aspects involved in the communication of Subjectivity - a direct and an indirect - which do not necessarily occur through the same communicator. Firstly there must be a direct communication of historical fact about God's primary communication in Christ : secondly the indirect communication of God's primary communication which flows through the communicator. This is Christian love. The implications of this are fully worked out in Works of Love where we find that the individual can only become truly subjective as he communicates love to all men. This is not to give expression to his own subjectivity which is preserved through communicating but only to the love of God which is deeper than that. Communication is therefore an essential part of Subjectivity. Thus for the Christian Communication and Subjectivity are synonymous.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface

Introduction 1

A. The Dialectic of Subjectivity

1. The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication 10

2. Fundamental Presuppositions 74

3. The Aesthetic Sphere 130

4. The Ethico-Religious Sphere 168

5. Christianity 219

B. The Dialectic of Communication

6. The Communication of Subjectivity in the Ethico-Religious Sphere 288

7. The Communication of Subjectivity in Christianity 337

Conclusion 464

Bibliography 475

P R E F A C E

In the book Kierkegaard Critique Paul Holmer has written an excellent essay under the title: On Understanding Kierkegaard.(1) In it he asserts that a common way of studying Kierkegaard, as of studying other thinkers, is to relate the content of his thought closely with the biography of his life, the argument being that: "another man's writing cannot be understood without historical knowledge about the man and his writings".(2) But Holmer questions such an approach with regard to the writings of Kierkegaard, and he goes on to assert that: "the scholars seem to say that Kierkegaard is a great author and full of truths and then adopt methodologies which are in large part compatible only with the falseness of Kierkegaard's argument".(3) This assumes that in order to understand a writer: "the sentences about an author must be read with the sentences which the author himself wrote, and this, presumably to understand the latter",(4) and he goes on to say that this: "supposes that the issue or question which engaged the author is the same or translatable into the same as that which engages the historical scholar who writes some time later. This is to disregard the fact that sentences about other sentences .... do not augment the truth-claim of the first

---

(1) Paul Holmer Kierkegaard Critique pp.40-53

(2) Op. Cit. p.41

(3) Loc. Cit.

(4) Op. Cit. p.42

group of sentences."[1] If we assert "that one 'understands' an author's writings by exhausting the possible knowledge about the author, then this conception of 'understanding' is mythical, an invented and contrived aim".[2] "Furthermore," he says, "this kind of understanding is usually defined as qualitatively distinct from 'understanding' any particular truth-claim about an author or about his books".[3] All this is to assume that the present-day historical scholar with Kierkegaard's life before him, and also his writings, is in a better position because of that, to understand Kierkegaard, and that the more that is known of Kierkegaard's background, both historical and intellectual, the better will we come to understand Kierkegaard. But as Holmer points out: "It was precisely such inflated views of knowledge ... which Kierkegaard was at such pains to deny when he distinguished so clearly between logical claims and those about existence, between historical claims and those religious and ethical in content".[4] Although there is a place for historical and biographical studies of Kierkegaard, just as there is for such studies of other great thinkers, yet: "these cannot, if Kierkegaard's literature is thought to be important and/or true, be conceived of as part of a puzzle

---

(1) Paul Holmer — Kierkegaard Critique — p.42

(2) Op. Cit. — p.43

(3) Loc. Cit.

(4) Op. Cit. — p.43

which, when all pieces are present, is going to be the 'Understanding' of Kierkegaard's authorship".(1) It was against such a view of the "oneness" of truth, namely: "everything is related to everything else and all relations can be known", that Kierkegaard wrote.(2) So Holmer concludes that: "one is obliged in writing about Kierkegaard to do one of two things: (a), write historical literature about his deeds, his books, the events occasioning either, etc., or (b), write a critical literature in which one engages the argument, religious and philosophic. In the first instance there is no promise of a systematic consequence .....; in the second instance one writes not about the man and his books as much as one translates his language and thoughts into one's own".(3)

The rest of Holmer's article is devoted to demonstrating how Kierkegaard's own thought supports all that he (Holmer) has been asserting, and it makes eminently worth-while and salutory reading. The first section has been quoted at length because it establishes a principle upon which this present study is firmly based. There is no need for us to proceed any further with Holmer's essay.

If we accept the point of Holmer's argument, as I whole-heartedly do, then this has consequences regarding the manner, method of approach, and even presentation of any

---

(1) Paul Holmer — Kierkegaard Critique — p.43

(2) Op. Cit. — p.43f

(3) Op. Cit. — p.44

study of Kierkegaard's thought. The two American writers, Walter Lowrie and Reidar Thomte,are examples of the kind of approach against which Holmer is arguing.(1) They both assume that some kind of knowledge of Kierkegaard's life is necessary for an understanding of the writings. Thomte does not perhaps speak much about his life, but the fact that he deals with different aspects of Kierkegaard's philosophy of religion in a chronological fashion, tracing them first as they occur in the early works and then as they appear to develop in later publications and the diaries, shows that he considers the "time factor" to be important in any assessment of the writings; which means that this must of necessity be bound up with Kierkegaard's own life and historical actuality. The great Danish writer on Kierkegaard also adopts this biographical approach to understanding him.(2) It is only comparatively recently that scholars have been able to disentangle themselves from this particular approach to Kierkegaard. An example of this wrong method of studying Kierkegaard occurs in Lowrie's treatment of the problem of communicatinn in Kierkegaard, which is discussed at the appropriate place in this Thesis.(3)

---

(1) W. Lowrie — Kierkegaard
R. Thomte — Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion

(2) E. Geismar — Søren Kierkegaard, Hans Livsudvikling og Forfattervirksomhed

(3) Compare — pp.329ff

One of the great merits of Herman Diem's book, Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence is that he avoids this approach and deals exclusively with Kierkegaard's writings as a whole when trying to discover what he has to say with regard to some particular subject. They are dealt with *in toto* and not "piecemeal". Diem maintains that we can discover in Kierkegaard a wonderful consistency of thought which is revealed when we range over his thought in general, and not just in some particular aspect of it.(1) We shall see, however, when we come to discuss Diem's point of view in the present study, that he does not give Kierkegaard sufficient credit for this.(2)

This does not necessarily mean that the student is required to engage in critical argument with Kierkegaard. There is also a great need for exposition of his thought on the part of those who find themselves in complete accord with him. This is the emphasis in the present Thesis. The primary function of the whole exercise is to discover what Kierkegaard has to say with regard to Communication and Subjectivity as they are revealed through a study of his works as a whole, and also to see how they are related. In other words, it is the "dialectic" of these two concepts in Kierkegaard's thought which is of interest to us.

The scholar who adopts the historical method of approach in trying to discover what Kierkegaard says,

---

(1) H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p.52

(2) Compare pp.369-92

however mistaken this might be, has a certain advantage over the one who adopts the comprehensive method. He is already provided with a ready-made structure with which to clothe his findings. He thinks of Kierkegaard's writings as being divided into "periods": he can group the different subjects under review according to the period of Kierkegrard's life in which they occur. There is something quite definite upon which to base their writing.

It is quite easy to follow Geismar, for example, in his great study of Kierkegaard.(1) The first volume deals with Kierkegaard's upbringing and background. Volume 2 studies the "Stages," and relates them to Kierkegaard's own life. For example, there is a short section on: "Elsker and Regina."(2) The third volume concerns Kierkegaard's philosophy of life, and in this there is a section devoted to Hegel,(3) and one contrasting Hegel and Kierkegaard in their opinion of Christendom.(4) Volume 4 discusses the question as to whether Kierkegaard is Martyr or Writer, and the next volume is entitled: "Only the Truth which Humiliates can Edify". The final volume deals with the attack upon the Church, ending with Kierkegaard's death.(5)

---

(1)	E. Geismar	Søren Kierkegaard. Hans Livsudvikling og Forfattervirksomhed	
(2)	Op. Cit.	Volume 2	p.30ff
(3)	Op. Cit.	Volume 3	p.8ff
(4)	Op. Cit.	Volume 3	pp.63-92
(5)	Op. Cit.	Volume 6	p.94ff

Everything is closely linked with Kierkegaard's historical life. It could almost be said to be a philosophical biography. In the same way Lowrie, in his great biography of Kierkegaard, attempts to relate the events of his life with different aspects of his thought. As we follow Kierkegaard's life in this book, so also we follow the development of his thought, which is portrayed almost as a mirror of that life, albeit hidden behind the pseudonyms and indirect communication. Such a procedure as both these writers follow greatly simplifies matters as far as the reader is concerned, at least with regard to having a coherent structure before him, even although it may lead him astray in trying to discover what Kierkegaard actually thought in his writings.

On the other hand, the scholar who attempts to study Kierkegaard's writings as a whole, in order to find out what he really thinks on a certain subject, without reference to his life, thereby deprives himself of this specific point of reference. The only point of reference which he can possibly have is the mention of the subject itself in the course of the writings, and he very soon finds that this has to lead him into distant lands as he probes the relationships and inter-relationships of the various themes, each of which is quite considerable in itself. All this tends towards diffuseness and may make for a certain lack of form or clear-cut structure in the study in question. Whenever we find a writer following the method advocated by Holmer above, then we are almost sure to have difficulty with regard to making it intelligible for us.

Diem's book: Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence cannot by any stretch of the imagination be called easy reading, even in the original German, and I believe that part of the difficulty which the reader finds is due to the very method of approach which Diem adopts. One discovers that the more one gets to know about Kierkegaard oneself, the easier Diem's book becomes. The difficulty arises through having to sift and analyse the vast amount of material which Kierkegaard wrote, and trying to reduce it to some sort of order and structure. Kierkegaard was deliberately "unscientific" and unsystematic in his approach to his own thought. He deliberately avoided any suspicion of introducing another "system" to replace that of Hegel, but nevertheless one can find an absolute coherence and consistency in his thought if one looks for it.

The task of the present Thesis is to study the concepts of Communication and Subjectivity as they are revealed in Kierkegaard's thought, and it must be emphasised that it is his thought, his writings, with which we are dealing, and not his historical actuality. In particular, with regard to communication, one must be most careful to distinguish between his concept of communication as revealed in his writings, and the altogether different question of Kierkegaard's own problem of communication as a man, which is connected with his melancholia and so on. The question as to whether any particular book is direct or indirect is something which concerns Kierkegaard the person: the dialectic of communication is something which concerns Kierkegaard's thought and can be discovered quite

independently of his life and historical actuality. It is with this latter aspect of communication that the present study is concerned. Perhaps it would be legitimate to relate the two aspects of communication in Kierkegaard after having discovered what they both consist of, but this would be the subject of an entirely different study.

The Structure of the Thesis

David Swenson, writing about the relevance of subjective reflection as opposed to objective reflection, says: "Here the individual sloughs off his objectivity more and more, until only subjectivity remains. The mode of procedure accentuates existence and tends to make it increasingly significant..."(1) This is precisely what we discover as we follow through the two concepts of subjectivity and communication. As the individual discards more and more of the objective way of looking at things these things become increasingly significant. They take on new meaning as the analysis proceeds. To begin with they are thought of in quite general terms, and then as the individual becomes increasingly subjective they become increasingly narrowed down in application, but at the same time more and more stringent and apposite. This thesis attempts to show how this process is worked out, as first of all subjectivity and then communication

---

(1) D. Swenson Something about Kierkegaard p.123

is traced through the various "spheres of existence." Finally we discover that these two concepts are very closely related to one another.

Although there is not any specific mention of it the thesis is roughly divided into two sections. The first deals with the dialectic of Subjectivity,(1) and the second with the dialectic of Communication.(2) In the final chapter they are seen to be dependent upon one another when it comes to the final qualification.

(a) The Dialectic of Subjectivity

In some ways the task is complicated by the fact that there exists a fragment in the Papirer called The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication. Although this is only a fragment, yet nevertheless it contains some of Kierkegaard's most characteristic ideas, and we find here some striking affirmations which help to fill out the meaning of the same concepts as they are to be found in the Works. One might expect that such a fragment would give a clear indication of the way in which Kierkegaard would have dealt with the subject of communication, treating it entirely as a topic on its own, but this is far from being the case. The reader who does not know already what he means by "ethico-religious" must lose much of the point of the whole fragment. And it is necessary to understand that ethico-religious communication means the communication

---

(1) pp. 10 - 286

(2) pp. 288 - 462

of subjectivity. In addition we need to know that the emphasis upon primitiveness is really just a plea for the ideal relationship of the self to the self which finds its fulfilment in Christianity. We can only recognise such things when we have studied such books as: "The Philosophical Fragments; The Concluding Unscientific Postscript; Sickness unto Death; Training in Christianity; Works of Love; and so on. It is quite possible to trace Kierkegaard's dialectic of Subjectivity and Communication without being acquainted with this fragment.

But nevertheless an exposition of this fragment is included in this thesis as a kind of introduction to the whole discussion, although perhaps its value might be better appreciated after reading the rest of the study, rather than before it. It will in fact be seen that it does provide some useful pointers on how Kierkegaard regards the question of the Communication of Subjectivity, especially when Subjectivity is narrowed down to its final qualification in Christianity. (The word "qualification" is used in the sense of "making the grade"; "graduating"; "reaching fruition"; and so on) In a study of Kierkegaard's dialectic on the communication of Subjectivity, one obviously cannot ignore such a fragment, if only for the fact that it gives us some indication of the importance which Kierkegaard himself attaches to the whole question. We can see that he does not consider it as something which arises incidentally throughout his thought as a whole, but as something which is of quite

crucial importance to the completeness of that thought. Kierkegaard himself may well have considered that all he had to say about communication and subjectivity could be learnt from a reading of the Works, but perhaps he felt that this was an aspect which, because of its involvement with practically everything he wrote, required to be dealt with more specifically at some time or another. Whatever may be the reason, it is a fact that this fragment exists in the Papirer, and we in this study must take some account of it. It is placed in the first chapter because it forms a useful basis from which to start.

But obviously we are still in no position to delve straight into the question of Subjectivity in Kierkegaard. For unless we understand some of the fundamental presuppositions which underly this concept, and indeed all Kierkegaard's thought, then we are in grave danger of being led astray by presuppositions other than Kierkegaard's, causing us to misinterpret him. In fact subjectivity itself is one of Kierkegaard's presuppositions, but in order to be made aware of it, we must realise how the whole question arose for Kierkegaard. From a consideration of the Dialectic of Ethico-religious Communication, we turn to the question of subjectivity proper, to an examination of the ground out of which it arises, namely, opposition to Hegel and so on, and we discover that having formulated the thesis: Subjectivity is Truth, Kierkegaard must go on to make clear further fundamental presuppositions which arise as a result of this. Subjectivity is posited when the existence of the individual is accentuated, but so do other

things which also must be taken into account in all subjective thinking. One is forced to consider the importance of time and the historical, the significance of which is only fully appreciated when the accent is upon the individual's own existence; and this imposes a strict governing factor on every thought in which time and the historical are involved. When one is dealing with subjectivity, in all its different aspects, full account must always be taken of all these fundamental presuppositions, and no conclusion can be valid which goes against them.

It is therefore necessary to set them forth by themselves. Kierkegaard no-where describes them separately in order as such, but we discover from a reading of his Works as a whole that they are there, and therefore it is useful to separate them out before proceeding any further with the project in hand. In so doing we are introduced to the concept of Subjectivity in a general way. A more particular study must await a searching analysis of the life-view which ignores existence and does not assume that Subjectivity is Truth.

This particular view of life Kierkegaard calls the "aesthetic" sphere of existence, and in the chapter which follows we now turn to examine what Kierkegaard understands by this. We discover that he uses the word "aesthetic" in a very much wider sense than the common one, and it covers every view of truth which has its object outside the individual. Although we see that Kierkegaard considers such an outlook to be completely futile, nevertheless a

certain negative postulation of subjectivity emerges. For the warped, self-forgetful kind of inwardness which such an attitude portrays, is in fact the truth for that individual - it expresses very well the frustration of not finding a satisfactory expression for the truth outside himself. As Swenson says: "the subjectivity that remains to him tends to become trivialized".(1) We find that such a view means that: "the enquirer has been brought into contradiction with himself."(2) There is despair at the very heart of the individual although he may not be conscious of it.

In this analysis of the "aesthetic" view of life we are introduced to many more of Kierkegaard's characteristic ideas. Subjectivity, or the lack of it, concerns the self. What does Kierkegaard understand by "the self?" We discover what it means to be a self when an aesthetic view of life is posited, and we come to realise that according to Kierkegaard to be a self in this particular sphere of existence is to be in "despair."

There is included in this particular chapter a short section dealing with communication in the aesthetic sphere of existence, because there is not enough said about such communication to warrant an entire chapter in the second part of the thesis. We learn that from the point of view of subjectivity there can be no communication in a direct

---

(1) D. Swenson Something about Kierkegaard p.124

(2) D. Swenson Op. Cit. p.123

aesthetic fashion. There is an appropriate place for such direct communication when it concerns objective knowledge, but not with regard to the truth which is subjectivity. Kierkegaard does not quarrel with the direct communication of knowledge as such. He agrees that, as Swenson says: "other truths, whose relationship to human existence is external and accidental, requires as a matter of course objectivity in the inquirer ..... It is not science, but the sophistical use of science to emasculate the ethical and confound existence, against which Kierkegaard directs the arrows of his wit and satire."(1)

The futility of the aesthetic sphere of existence having been posited, we now proceed to examine how Kierkegaard considers the task of setting about becoming subjective. The obvious way is to concentrate exclusively upon the inwardness of the individual everything other than that being outward and objective. We have just seen how it stood with regard to the individual when he ignored his own self. Now we discover how he stands when he does the very opposite, namely, concentrates entirely and utterly upon his own self; his inwardness. This is what Kierkegaard understands by immanence. Here again we discover a clear-cut process in the subjectivity of the individual as the task proceeds.

The first, and most vital step in the subjective task

---

(1) D. Swenson Something about Kierkegaard p.128f

is to make an absolute choice, a choice which decisively rejects the aesthetic and appropriates the ethical. Everything which is not of the self must be abandoned as of relative significance only and thus pertaining to the aesthetic sphere of existence. This means that the absolute choice of the self is the only one left to the individual. But at this point we immediately come up against the fact of time which, as we saw, is one of Kierkegaard's fundamental presuppositions. Time is a process and therefore this absolute choice must be made not only once, but continually maintained if it is not to be lost in the vanishing moment. There must also be a continual process of renunciation which involves maintaining an absolute relationship to the absolute and a relative relationship to relative ends. But as soon as the individual attempts to become related to the absolute, even when it is to be found only in his own subjectivity, he is introduced to a God-relationship. In other words, religion enters in.

The task of becoming subjective leads from the ethical to the religious. But within the terms of reference which he has set himself, namely his own inwardness, the individual can only find God within his own inwardness, hence Kierkegaard's reference to religion in this sense as "the religion of immanence." But because he lives in time the individual can only think and act intermittently. He finds himself enmeshed in the relative while at the same time wishing to maintain a continuous relationship to the absolute. He has discovered the absolute within him,

but he is prevented from having any positive relationship to it by the fact of his existence. This tension brings about a sense of suffering within him, and as he further realises the difference between what he is by virtue of his existence, and what he should be by virtue of the absolute, and sees the incompatibility of the two, he becomes conscious of guilt. He finds therefore that although he has discovered the absolute within himself nevertheless it is impossible to maintain any continuous relationship to it. He cannot go any further on the task of becoming subjective, at least within the limit set by his own inwardness.

So we cannot yet say that subjectivity has been fully posited, because there is a disrelationship within the self. That is to say, a negative relationship. This means that the individual who has consciously taken his own self with its own existence into account is still in despair, because he cannot find a positive relationship to God or to himself. We find that subjectivity takes on a new qualification within purely ethico-religious categories which Kierkegaard expresses by the thesis: Subjectivity is Untruth.

If the thesis: Subjectivity is Truth is not to lead in the final analysis to such a result then it is obvious that we cannot stop here in our attempt to trace the dialectic of Subjectivity, but this is as far as we can possibly go within the sphere of immanence where the only term of reference is the individual himself. We find that Kierkegaard turns elsewhere for a solution to the problem,

which he finds without question in Christianity. In Christianity God exists outside the individual, but the condition for realising this and becoming aware of its significance has to be given by God Himself. In the ethico-religious sphere of existence the individual has gone as far as he possibly can within immanence, as far as the human intellect can go. He has exhausted every possibility. Along with the condition which God gives comes the consciousness of sin. There is more than just guilt involved in the individual's separation from the Absolute. He exists "before God". Now this God must appear as the Absolute Paradox - something which cannot be comprehended by the human reason. If it were able to be understood thus then we would be once more back within the sphere of immanence.

In this chapter we are introduced to another of Kierkegaard's characteristic concepts - the "Possibility of Offence". The individual can be completely put off by what he discovers about Christianity, which is against reason, or he can through faith appropriate it. If he chooses to be offended then he remains in sin - if he overcomes the offence then he is saved. In all this subjectivity is accentuated to the highest possible degree. The individual is placed in a position of choice. He realises that he is "before God" and thus a sinner - and he finds that the only way in which he can be truly related to God or to himself is in Christ: that is to say, through a relationship to Christ. But here we are involved in a question of communication. Any further elaboration of

what subjectivity means, therefore, must wait till the final chapter. Meanwhile, we see that only in Christianity can the thesis: Subjectivity is Truth really be said to find its fulfilment, or fruition. And it is only in Christianity that the self becomes truly related to itself - because it has become related to God.

The first part of the thesis is devoted to tracing Kierkegaard's dialectic of Subjectivity. After an introductory section concerning the presuppositions out of which subjectivity arises, we examine firstly the implications of the life-view which ignores subjectivity. Then we follow Kierkegaard through as he traces what it means to be subjective purely within the bounds of immanence; of the existing individual himself. When this is seen to be unsatisfactory we go on to trace Kierkegaard's solution to the problems which are raised, as it is to be found in Christianity where Subjectivity is truth.

(b) The Dialectic of Communication

When Kierkegaard comes to deal with communication as it applies to the ethico-religious sphere of existence, which concerns only the inwardness of the individual and nothing else, then we find that a dilemma immediately presents itself. How can that which is essentially inward - the subjectivity of the individual - receive outward expression? As soon as any communication of subjectivity is attempted it ceases thereby to be inwardness and becomes outward. The only way to get round this would be to make the communication indirect, so that subjectivity is

preserved in both communicator and recipient. In other words, it must not be recognised as a communication. Both communicator and recipient must be kept as far apart as possible. How is this to be done? The communication must be disguised by the use of irony and humour, both of which serve the purpose admirably. Irony has to do more specifically with the ethical part of the ethico-religious, and humour more with the religious part. Here again we discover that Kierkegaard considerably widens the scope of these two concepts, irony and humour, from their usual popular sense.

But even in spite of this there still exists the dilemma that what is essentially inward has received outward expression even although it is only indirect. No communication at all would best meet the needs of the situation. As far as possible there must be no relationship established between communicator and recipient, but yet in as far as some expression of subjectivity has to be found in order that there may be some communication, the communication which results cannot really be said to meet the essential requirements of the ethico-religious - namely, complete and utter segregation from all that is not of the self. So even this indirect form cannot really be said to be a communication of subjectivity in the fullest sense. It can only be termed what I might call a "discommunication". That is to say, it corresponds to the disrelationship which the individual in the ethico-religious sphere of existence finds within himself. Subjectivity in the ethico-religious existence

sphere is not yet fully qualified, so it must follow that any dialectic of communication within the terms of reference set by the ethico-religious itself, cannot be adequate or fully qualified either. Kierkegaard himself recognises this.

And so we come to the final chapter of the present study, where we attempt to discover how Kierkegaard works out the dialectic of communication as it applies to Christianity where, as we found earlier, subjectivity finds its fulfilment. To meet the needs of the case we have to prove that it is possible to find in Kierkegaard's thought a dialectic which takes fully into account the need to preserve the subjectivity of both communicator and recipient, and at the same time be an effective communication.

The communication of true subjectivity as it is to be found in Christianity is a more complicated affair than that which we find within purely ethico-religious terms. For instead of only two persons being involved, there are three: Communicator, Recipient and God. And it is God who is "the middle term" between communicator and recipient. So we have to examine first of all the nature and content of God's communication to man. This is found to be love, and it is shown in the sending of Jesus Christ, the God-man. We are introduced to some of the anomalies which must occur in the communication of the God-man. We find that even a direct utterance in the mouth of the God-man becomes, by virtue of the Person who utters it, indirect.

When we come to the present day we see a two-fold

aspect of Christian communication - a direct proclamation of the Word, and an indirect communication of subjectivity between communicator and recipient. This indirect communication of the subjectivity which is Christianity is something quite different from ethico-religious communication. It is definitely not a question of trying to fit the dialectic of ethico-religious communication, which we saw to be defective, into the direct communication of Christianity in the present day, and calling the resultant amalgam, Christian communication.

By a close examination of the Works of Love, which occupies a large part of this chapter, we discover that the subjectivity of both recipient and communicator is protected by the fact that God is the basis and foundation out of which all subjectivity arises. There is something deeper than the mere subjectivity of the individual which can never be fully expressed. Love forms the substance of God's communication to man, and so it is not surprising that this primary love of God as it is to be found in the individual Christian is the foundation upon which Christian communication between two individual people is to be found. We discover that it is only by loving in the Christian sense that the individual can be truly subjective. If he does not love then he is not Christian and therefore not truly subjective. In other words, communication is an essential part of the dialectic of subjectivity, and subjectivity is essential to Christian communication. This is the theme of the Works of Love. We find it in the command to love the neighbour as oneself and in the

constructive power of love to "build up" love within others.

The exposition of the Works of Love in relation to the concepts of Subjectivity and Communication, is the whole point of the present study. The dialectic of both leads up to their eventual fusion in Christian love. That it is quite legitimate to find it so in Kierkegaard's thought is clearly discernible in the Works of Love.

The purpose of this preface has been to give some guidance to the reader as he tries to follow through the argument of this study, both from the point of view of the whole approach to the subject and from the subject-matter itself. But I cannot close without expressing my gratitude to the many people who have given me considerable help and encouragement in the task. I have been fortunate indeed in my "Directors of Study," the late Professor W.S. Tindal and Professor John McIntyre. Professor Tindal was in poor health for most of the time, but he never failed to give kindly advice whenever I saw him. One felt a personal sense of loss at his sad death. Professor McIntyre thus bore the brunt of the oversight of this Thesis and it is in no small measure due to his words of encouragement, tempered with helpful advice, that the task was completed at all. Many years ago the Trustees of St. Deiniol's Library, Hawarden, Chester were kind enough to award me a "Gladstone Studentship." This enabled me to spend a whole year reading Kierkegaard, for which I am

most grateful. Finally, I appreciate the tolerance and forbearance of my Congregation of St. Margaret's Polmadie, whose understanding made the burden of carrying on the pastoral ministry side by side with the work involved in this thesis much lighter.

Communication and Subjectivity are two of the most striking of all Kierkegaard's thoughts. It is possible that they are what impresses the new reader of Kierkegaard most of all. We may be impressed with some of the pictures which he paints in Either/Or, and mystified by others, but it is when we come to read the more philosophical works that we are introduced to Communication and Subjectivity at least by name, although they have also been present in the first book. And whatever book of his that we read, either or both of these two things are to be found although there may not be mention of them by name. For example, Sickness unto Death deals with the definition of the self in relation to itself, which is really what Subjectivity is all about. It is not superficially obvious that here we have a further qualification of Subjectivity than that which we find in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript. But whoever leaves out one or another account of Subjectivity, thereby omits something important. And again it is not easy to see how the thesis 'Subjectivity is Truth' is actually developed by a reading of the Concluding Unscientific Postscript alone, although by closer study we can recognise a further outline of its development through the different spheres of existence.

Kierkegaard was deliberately "unscientific" in his approach, as compared to Hegel who had everything neatly and "scientifically" tied up in The System. Kierkegaard prefers the reader to work things out for himself if he possibly can. And so if we wish to discover what he has to say on some particular point of interest then we must range over the whole of his works, allowing sections in one book

to comment and expand upon others elsewhere to be found in other books. We cannot accept anything which Kierkegaard says at its face value without first having discovered all that lies behind it. If we do not take the trouble to do this then we shall find that trouble is never very far away. For there are times when Kierkegaard is talking about communication for example, when to all intents and purposes it is some other topic which is being discussed, and we cannot see at first glance that the subject under review is a part of the dialectic of communication, unless we have followed the whole thing through from a study of the Works as a whole.

There is a further point which might immediately strike the reader of Kierkegaard: in the Philosophical works comparatively little seems to be said about Christianity. It is true that a precise outline of the nature of Christianity is to be found in the book Training in Christianity, and that there are many discourses and sermons which are specifically Christian in content, but this does not appear to be linked to his thought as a whole. We find that the ethico-religious sphere of existence is dealt with at considerable length, both as it relates to subjectivity and to communication, but there is a curious lack of information with regard to Christianity in this specific context. Whenever Christianity is mentioned it is thought of only in the highest terms, as the absolute something which supercedes the ethico-religious and so on, but yet comparatively little attention is paid to it as compared to the ethico-religious. Kierkegaard seems to go to great lengths to analyse the ethico-religious but appears to take

Christianity almost for granted. As I have said, Christianity is clearly outlined in Training in Christianity, but it does not appear to be clearly worked into his thought as a whole. Why does Kierkegaard not do this and how does the great theme of Subjectivity fit in with Christianity?

In the philosophical works Kierkegaard seems to be preoccupied with the ethico-religious. Does Subjectivity only apply to that sphere and not to any other? And is Kierkegaard only interested in communication as it applies to the ethico-religious without going any further? Most scholars would agree that with regard to Subjectivity Kierkegaard does take the matter further by relating it to Christianity, although we have to work this out from his writings. But in respect to communication they would say that he stopped short at the ethico-religious, although again there are hints of a further qualification when it comes to Christian communication. The furthest Kierkegaard would appear to go with regard to that, at least from the human point of view, seems to be in the dialectic of preaching and in the qualification of authority. This is the common stopping place for most students of Kierkegaard.

But it seems questionable, to say the least, that such a thinker as Kierkegaard could possibly leave the matter there, although on the surface it might appear as if he did so. The position of Kierkegaard scholarship on the question of Subjectivity and the communication thereof calls for a detailed study of the source material in order to see whether this really is all that Kierkegaard says on the subject, or whether we have not perhaps overlooked some aspect of his

thought which would take the matter further. This Thesis is such an examination and exploration. It will of necessity cover much familiar ground, but this ground must be related deliberately to the questions of Subjectivity and Communication, and at places may have to be re-valued in the light of Kierkegaard's own presuppositions. So much Kierkegaard scholarship betrays the fact that the underlying presuppositions of the authors are the direct opposite to those of Kierkegaard, and of course this is bound to lead to misinterpretation. This means that comparatively early on in this Thesis we must seek to discover what Kierkegaard's underlying presuppositions are, and to emphasize them throughout the whole study.

Before we make a beginning by outlining what Kierkegaard has to say in The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication, it would perhaps help to clear the ground a little if we examined Kierkegaard's use of the word Dialectic. In one sense this present study is an example of the way in which he uses the word, but there must be some introductory definition however inadequate it might be. A separate study could be carried out on the subject of the Dialectical in Kierkegaard but this present Thesis will amply illustrate his use of the word, although it is not my primary purpose to do so.

Kierkegaard's use of the word "Dialectic"

There are two main senses in which this word has been used in the history of philosophy, which have been admirably pointed out by Professor T. M. Knox of St. Andrews University in an article under the heading Dialectic in Chamber's Encyclopaedia[1]. He points out that the word was originally a Greek one meaning conversation, and was the method used by Socrates in his teaching. As Herman Diem points out, Kierkegaard had examined this closely in his Concept of Irony[2] and he rightly concludes: "In his Begriff der Ironie Kierkegaard has drawn out the characteristics of this dialectical type of ~~of~~ conversation with reference to the activity of Socrates and has thus laid the foundation of his own dialectic".[3] There is in Kierkegaard a continuous dialogue between himself and the reader, in so far as he often leaves the reader to go on from where he leaves off although the discerning reader will discover that what he finds has been there all the time. In this sense there must be established a relationship between two individuals, a fertile relationship where subjective knowledge can grow between them. When we read what Kierkegaard has to say regarding communication then this aspect of dialectic is clear. Kierkegaard openly acknowledges his debt to Socrates, so it is only natural that his concept of dialectic should be partly based upon this.

---

(1) T.M. Knox Chamber's Encyclopaedia, Volume 4. p.490f

(2) H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence pp.10f

(3) H. Diem Op. Cit. p.11

But this obvious sense in which it would be natural for Kierkegaard to use the word does not measure up as an accurate definition every time he uses the word, which is very often indeed. We find this when we come across such statements as the following: "The infinite reflection in which alone the concern of the subject for his eternal happiness can realize itself, has in general one distinguishing mark: the omnipresence of the dialectical."(1) Or again: "Dialectics itself does not see the absolute, but it leads, as it were, the individual up to it...a dialectic that mediates is a derelict genius ."(2) Or finally: "If the individual is in himself undialectical and has his dialectic outside himself, then we have the aesthetic interpretation. If the individual is dialectical in himself inwardly in self-assertion, hence in such a way that the ultimate basis is not dialectic in itself...then we have the ethical interpretation...If the individual is paradoxically dialectic...then we have the paradoxical religiousness."(3) To think of dialectic merely in Socratic categories or in the original Greek sense will not get us very far in trying to find out what Kierkegaard understands by the word when used in such contexts.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.35(N)

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. p.439

(3) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. p.507

But Professor Knox goes on to deal with Hegelian dialectic.[1] Hegel thinks of dialectic as an inner process of thought and development. It is a movement of thought from thesis, through antithesis to synthesis. For Hegel: "thinking always begins with a thesis, i.e. with a partial and abstract conception of its object, which, as thinking proceeds, turns it into its opposite or antithesis, a conception as partial and as abstract as the first. But ...the resulting contradiction was a challenge to think further and to transcend it by a new conception, a concrete synthesis of the first two, overcoming their partiality and abstractness."[2] Now we know that in spite of himself Kierkegaard was greatly influenced by Hegel, even if only in a purely negative way, that is to say, as a violent reaction to him. It was largely Hegelian philosophy which he studied at the University of Copenhagen, and although he came to reject it completely in no uncertain terms, yet some of its influence remained. It seems to me that in his use of the word dialectic Kierkegaard, while utterly rejecting the Hegelian analysis of the thought process and so on, and the primacy of thought, nevertheless could follow him in asserting an inner intellectual content with regard to existence and subjectivity. Here again it would be wrong to assert that this was what Kierkegaard exclusively meant

---

(1) T. M. Knox Loc. Cit.

(2) T. M. Knox Loc. Cit.

by dialectic. When we emphasize the Socratic to the exclusion of the Hegelian (for want of a better word) or vice versa then we can never fully understand what Kierkegaard understands by the word. But as soon as we regard them both as being different aspects of the same thing, which for the purposes of analysis it is possible to trace separately, then the use of the words dialectic, dialectical and so on, become clearer.

As will become apparent during the course of this study we can clearly see both at work together within the individual to produce a dialectic of Communication and Subjectivity.

With this preliminary definition, let us now turn to the study in hand.

CHAPTER 1

THE DIALECTIC OF ETHICO-RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION

General Remarks

Communication has become one of the most important questions of our time. Preoccupation with it is to be found in practically every field of activity. There is a great emphasis upon education and upon the most efficient methods of education. In other words how does one person educate another; how is education dealt with, how is it communicated?

There is, I think a vague realization that the whole question of communication involves something which is rather fundamental. But this is usually as far as it goes. The popular mind thinks of communication quite naively - mass media, advertising, and so on. And perhaps there are even associations with brain-washing in the popular mind. The man in the street tends to think of the means of communication rather than what communication means, and having done that he concentrates upon what is to be communicated, or upon what the communication is for him. The editor of a daily newspaper decides what it is he wishes to communicate through the means at his disposal. The reader of that same newspaper concentrates upon what he reads. In both instances it is the object of communication which is of importance. And in the main, this is generally how the problem of communication is considered. It is all in the interest and direction of what is to be communicated; whether it is some deep philosophical or theological thought, or some fundamental scientific truth, or merely the advertising of the latest washing detergent on television.

Now Kierkegaard is one thinker who goes into the question of communication in great detail and depth, although this might not be apparent on a superficial aquaintance with his works. It is true that he speaks at length about direct and indirect communication in various places, but many students of Kierkegaard consider that fundamentally this has to do with his own personal problem of communication. They link it with the psychological problem of his melancholy. Thus in his "aesthetic" period he attempted to employ direct communication which was rejected in favour of indirect or maeutic communication when he came to the ethical or ethico-religious works. This indirect communication was in complete conformity with the peculiarities of his melancholy nature, indeed was an expression of it...But when he went through the "Easter experience" he was able to a certain extent to be freed from his daemon, and then once more he employed direct communication in the specifically Christian works. In fact it is maintained that he rejected the idea of indirect communication as something which was neurotic and unhealthy, and eventually as something which in the long run he was never completely free from, although he would have liked to have been.(1)

---

(1) Cp. W. Lowrie Life of Kierkegaard and Elsewhere p.380

R. Thomte Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion p.194f

Now there is no doubt that there is a certain amount of truth in these views. Kierkegaard certainly had a peculiar life and a peculiar turn of mind which caused him to be unduly secretive and obtuse. But we have to distinguish between the biographical aspect of communication in Kierkegaard and the philosophical aspect: that is to say the idea of communication as it constitutes an integral part of his thought. The thinkers aforementioned fail to make this distinction and as a result must end up in a puzzle. For Kierkegaard distinctly holds that indirect communication is a natural consequence of the ethico-religious view of life. It is of the intrinsic nature of the ethico-religious that any communication must be indirect. Now if we maintain that indirect communication is something which he rejected with the Christian experience or with the coming of Christianity into his life or the life of the individual, then we must also say that he has rejected the whole of the ethico-religious aspect of existence as having any validity at all. But according to Kierkegaard the ethico-religious is a necessary precursor to the Christian, as we shall see. We cannot have the Christian without the ethico-religious and its indirect communication. Either we have to say that Kierkegaard meant indirect communication to play a vital part in his thought concerning the ethico-religious, or we come to an impossible impasse. Certainly Kierkegaard realized that from his own personal point of view the deviousness which he employed in keeping himself out of the picture and his resort to indirect communication in this sense, was wrong. But we have to distinguish between this aspect of the case and the

place which it must necessarily have in his thought as a whole.

Nor can the question of communication be superimposed upon the thought of Kierkegaard. It is not a question of finding out what Kierkegaard has to say and then deciding how he considers communicating it. Communication is something which is endemic to the thought itself, something which it cannot do without. It is part of that thought, inescapably bound up with it. And even when Kierkegaard does speak of communication in relation to the "Stages" then we have to look far deeper than what is actually said in that context. We have to look far below the surface to find out just how fundamental it is, so that we may discover that even when the subject-matter appears to be very far removed from communication as such, yet it is of fundamental importance to the understanding of what Kierkegaard means by communication.

That Kierkegaard himself considered communication in this light is shown by the fact that he left behind in his Papirer a fragment called The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication.(1) It is indeed a fragment and not much more, but it says enough to give us some idea of how to approach communication in relation to the thought as a whole. It also says enough to let us know just how fundamental this whole thing is.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Sections 79-89
In the following references to this Fragment in this chapter the translations are my own.

The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication

First a word about the fragment itself. It might be thought that the existence of such a fragment would give a very clear indication of what Kierkegaard's views on communication were. But like so much of his writing this is far from being the case. One reads a passage which is ostensibly about some particular topic, but when one comes to the end of it on the first reading, it is sometimes difficult to see just how what he has been saying fits into the particular topic in question. One might get a clue here and there, but one has to be acquainted with much more of his thought in order to understand the inner references and so on. It is like reading the poetry of Milton: one can understand to a certain extent what is said on the surface, but there are so many classical and other references which he takes it for granted that the reader knows, which if the reader does not know, he is deprived of a great deal. It is something the same with Kierkegaard, only in his case most of the assumed previous knowledge comes from other writings of his own. And when reading the Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication this applies to a supreme degree.

But even if we compare what is written about communication in Kierkegaard's Samlede Vaerker, with what is contained in this fragment, then quite often there may appear to be little relationship between them. In The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication there are aspects raised which are hardly mentioned at all elsewhere, or at least not obviously in connection with the subject of communication.

Probably this is in part due to the fact that if Kierkegaard had eventually published such a work then more likely it would have been more specifically linked up with what he has to say elsewhere, although it is quite possible that it would still not have been ~~all that~~ very obvious. Again Kierkegaard is writing in the Papirer for his own benefit, and therefore there are many things which are quite familiar to him because they form an integral part of his thought, but which are not so obvious to anyone else. There is therefore no need in his particular case to expand them. It is obvious that in The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication there is a great deal more than meets the eye. And this great deal more occurs from a knowledge of his writing as a whole, and from a realization that the concept of communication cannot be separated off by itself as a separate unit, but is closely linked up with Kierkegaard's thought, in every aspect of it.

Of course it could be argued that the reason why there is this apparent discrepancy between the fragment and what is said about communication elsewhere is because what is written in the Papirer was never intended for publication, was indeed just an experimental attempt which came to nothing, an attempt at working out a dialectic of communication which came to nothing and was rejected. This, it may be argued, is the reason why the matter was not taken any further. In other words these notes in the Papirer were a kind of doodling which had not much more significance than just that. Why not, it may be argued, accept them at their face value and face the fact that they are really not much help in telling

us about ethico-religious communication? If we want to find out what Kierkegaard thinks about that then let us go to the Vaerker, where there is plenty of material to go on, and ignore this little attempt in the Papirer.

Having admitted that The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication leaves much to be desired, and that this fragment does not purport to be anything else than a rough outline of a possible book or series of lectures, nevertheless I maintain that they are of importance in understanding what communication meant for Kierkegaard. For one thing there are thoughts which do not occur with any great emphasis in the Vaerker, but which nevertheless help us to gain a deeper insight into what lies behind communication. And from this point of view alone it would be important to take notice of The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication.

The Structure of the Fragment

It must not be thought that The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication is a straightforward book on the subject of ethico-religious communication which Kierkegaard never got the length of publishing. It is more a series of notes on the subject which could quite well have been expanded into a book, or into a series of lectures, at some future date. Nevertheless these notes, some of which are extremely brief and cryptic, do appear to follow a definite scheme. That is to say they are not haphazard, but would appear to be the outline of some argument.

In the Papirer we can see the manner in which Kierkegaard wrote many of his words. He would begin with a series of notes which he would then expand. Perhaps he would devote a section to some particular topic, and then the next section would cover exactly the same material, only treating it in a slightly different fashion; or perhaps there might be a slight addition as some new thought occured to him in connection with this particular topic. Then it might well be that the next section is an expansion of the previous two and so on.

In The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication Kierkegaard gives us in the first section only the bare bones of an argument.(1) The rest of the work is devoted to giving this skeleton muscle and flesh. From the way in which the fragment concludes it is quite obvious that Kierkegaard has still a lot of revision to do, more expansion. In fact he never reaches the stage of dealing with some of the later points which occur in his first outline. In sections 82-84(2) some of the material of the first section is revised and expanded. In section 85(3) the material which is contained in section 83 is expanded. Section 86(4) contains what might be called a rough draft

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 81 pp.143-153

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Sections 82-84 pp.153-160

(3) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 85 pp.160-168

(4) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 86 pp.168-172

of an introduction, and here we see again much of the material and many of the phrases from sections 81 and 82. Section 87[1] is an expansion of some ideas which occured in sections 81 and 82. Section 88[2] is a rough draft of a first lecture, while the rough draft of a second lecture is contained in section 89[3].

It is not difficult to see why such an apparently important fragment of Kierkegaard has never been translated into English, but perhaps the structure of it as it is roughly indicated above may give some indication of the difficulty of such an undertaking. In the summary of The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication which follows I have used the first section as the basis, but I have filled in from other sections where necessary, being careful to add any new material which is omitted from the first section. I hope that the whole will present a coherant argument, but it must be understood that a considerable arrangement of the material is necessary before any such coherance can be obtained.

Before going on to the summary proper it is relevant to consider just how Kierkegaard considers that the question of communication should be dealt with.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 87 pp. 172-175

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 88 pp. 175-185

(3) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 89 pp. 185-190

How should Communication be dealt with?

We have seen above that most people consider communication from a purely objective point of view, and this is something which Kierkegaard also recognises about them. "One does not happen to dwell upon the thought of what it is to communicate, but one hurries straight away to the what one wishes to communicate...a philosopher, a dogmatician, a priest, etc. all begin straight away with the what they wish to communicate, with studies and preliminary work in the direction thereof."(1) He maintains that such an objective consideration of communication confuses the issue. It results in a fundamental confusion which pervades every sphere of life. The problem as he sees it is much more fundamental. Before we wish to communicate at all, we ought to be aware of what it means to communicate. After we have fully understood the significance of the latter, then will we be in a position to make and receive communication with some understanding of what is happening. It is not a question of what is to be communicated, or even of how it is to be communicated, but it is rather the much more fundamental question of what it means to communicate:"...what it is which employs me is: what it is to communicate".(2)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 89 p. 185

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 89 p. 185

That is to say what is implied by the very fact of communication. Communication is an art, and like every other art it must arise out of the inner recesses of the artist. It is an expression of something which resides within the individual. And just as the artist expresses himself differently according to inner vision and so on, so does the individual in his communication give expression to his own particular vision, if I may put it thus, which lies behind his communication. In other words, the kind of person which he is makes a difference in the communication which he makes. Even although two men may use exactly the same words for the expression of their communication yet it is possible for the communication to be entirely different, and to have a wealth of difference in meaning simply because they happen to be two entirely different people. It is the same when we come to consider the receiver of a particular communication. One individual may receive an entirely different meaning from some communication simply because he happens to be an entirely different individual who is living in entirely different categories.

In fact, as I have said, this question of what it means to communicate lies at the basis of all Kierkegaard's thought. For eventually it boils down to the question of what it means to exist. It is the question of what lies within the individual. It is a question of what Kierkegaard would call "subjectivity". In order to get communication into its proper perspective we must first of all find out what goes on in the inner recesses of the individual person who is communicating, or the individual

receiving the communication. In other words it is a question of his or her very existence. Kierkegaard's whole output is a communication, and he was not a little troubled to work out the significance of this fact in the light of what he had discovered about the nature of the individual himself. To the summary proper I now turn.

Primitiveness

In its whole approach to the question of communication this modern age of ours is dishonest, says Kierkegaard. Not only is it dishonest in regard to communication but in its whole approach to everything. For it considers everything to be a question of knowledge. Knowledge is the be all and end all of everything. "If one could concentrate in a single word what modern knowledge is getting at, or more correctly the error and confusion of modern times, especially since Kant's straight path has been forsaken...then one must say that it is dishonest."(1) It is dishonest, not so much in the sense that it is hypocritical, but in that it deceives itself. It practices self-deception. "To designate self-deception as dishonesty is certainly linguistically in order. The hypocrite can quite well give an account of his dishonesty, but the self-deceivers are in confusion, and when a man, never guiltless, is in the confusion resulting from self-deception with

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^{2} B Section 81^{1} p.143

himself and concerning himself, then it is quite right to use the word dishonesty concerning him".[1] Now in this modern day and age, says Kierkegaard, men deceive themselves in all sorts of different ways. But the root cause of all this self-deception (emphasizing self), the fundamental deception out of which all others arise, is what he calls: lack of simplicity, or naivity,[2] or yet again lack of primitiveness.[3] The word which Kierkegaard uses most is primitiveness.

By primitiveness Kierkegaard simply means ability to be oneself. In other words the fundamental dishonesty of modern times lies in the fact that men do not attempt to discover what constitutes their true nature, their true fundamental selves. Or to put it more specifically: the individual does not attempt to discover his true fundamental self. Everything he thinks or does is conditioned by what others think and do. Instead of being a self, an individual, he imitates others. He takes his cue, not from his own self which is unique, but from the masses, the others. "One becomes human by mimicking the other - not by one's primitiveness. One is not conscious that one is human , except by the help of a conclusion;

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 86 p.169

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 82^2 p.153
86 p.169

(3) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 82^2 p.153
86 p.171

because one is like the other".(1) The fault lies in the fact that he is a traditionalist. When we rely on tradition we do not need to think for ourselves; someone else or some other people have already done that for us in the past. "It is undoubtedly the most convenient and the safest everywhere to attach oneself to the traditional and do as everyone else does; believe, think , talk as everyone else, and the sooner the better grasp hold of the limited aim".(2) The individual in whom primitiveness lies does not mimic, does not rely on tradition, but gets right back to his own unique self, and it is this which forms the basis of his actions and attitudes, not common use and practice.

What then are the characteristics of the true primitive thinker? Since the primitive thinker does not rely upon mimicking others, or upon what is usually done, and so on, he is left very much to himself, to "go it alone" as we might say. Primitiveness is therefore associated with what Kierkegaard calls: "the pangs of sinking". (Sinkeriets Qualer) "Primitive thinking spends a long time in quiet preparation, isolated from the very beginning, without foothold in the given, often in dejection, next in despair, worriedly observing how easy it is for others to communicate and be understood".(3) In other words it has nothing to

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 82^4 p.154

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 89 p.187f

(3) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 88 p.176

hold on to except the original fountain head, basic foundation, call it what you will, of what is required to be an individual - the knowledge of the self. The primitive individual has always the feeling that he is sinking, the feeling that he has no sure foothold under him. He is always exploring the unknown, going forward where no-one else has trod, or at least he must discover the way for himself and it must be as if for him no-one had ever gone that way. He is not relying upon the maps and the charts of others, he has to find for himself. He is a: "poor godly sinking Peter".(1) (Stakkels Gudelige Sinkepeer) This is a reference to St. Peter walking on the waves to meet Jesus and crying out for help as he feels himself sinking.(2) This, says Kierkegaard is the kind of feeling which the primitive thinker has.

Moreover the primitive thinker is constantly dealing with fundamental questions. "It is a fate which hangs over primitive thinking that it becomes connected to certain fundamental questions which otherwise are usually to some extent so taken for granted that it does not occur to any man to deal with them."(3) And consequently in the eyes of the modern world it only makes a very poor showing. Naturally, since it deals with questions which most people regard as settled, self-evident, not worthy of any special attention. The really primitive, fundamental questions are

---

(1)S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 89 p.187

(2)The Gospel according to St. Matthew, Chapter 14, verses 28-31

(3)S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 89 p.186

passed by, they never really appear, and this is an example of dishonesty.(1) For the individual who is living according to his primitiveness there is always involved, not only a getting to grips with fundamental questions, but also a revision of the fundamental. "It is not so much to produce something obsolutely new, for there is nothing really new under the sun, as it is to revise the universal-human, the fundamental questions."(2) In other words the individual ought to be thinking everything out for himself, even although the particular question may have been gone over again and again. In contrast to this says Kierkegaard, the modern trend is to: "take everything without further ado as common practice and let it suffice that it is common practice." Consequently there is no need for such revision as primitiveness requires, and there is no feeling of responsibility for making such revision. And again this is dishonesty.(3) Even although a certain view may be taken by the majority as self-evident, the individual ought to think it out for himself, without recourse to the opinions of others, without seeking to be propped up by the majority vote. It does not matter if he comes to exactly the same conclusion as the rest of mankind, the important point is that he has made his own revision, and that his view arises out of his primitiveness and not as a result of the traditional.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 89 p.187

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 89 p.188

(3) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 89 p.188

How then has the modern age come to be in the state it is? And how does lack of primitiveness show itself? Kierkegaard gives a brilliant account of this which I quote in full. There was a time when primitiveness was by and large common practice. How then has it been lost? Here is what Kierkegaard says. I quote at length so that the reader may experience the "tone" of the fragment.

"Let us from a somewhat far off standpoint attempt to give some conception of this confusion, step by step, in crescendo.

There was a time when there was only one learned language in Europe. Even if this did have its irregularities, nevertheless it was a very good thing. First and foremost it made sure that not everyone could come into literature; next that mutual communication was made easy, that there was hope of a tolerably hard and fast terminology in which one was once more connected with ancient times, and ultimately that the years of a man's life, in which his primitiveness should be expressing itself, would not be too much overlooked by apparatus.

National characteristics came to the fore, native languages were established in their own right. But the idea of a European literature or a knowledge of European literature from that bygone age, had not been forgotten. This one would certainly not wish to abandon, but today the task is, at least to the 4th power, also 64 times as great. Firstly a section must be devoted to considering the best time of primitiveness for teaching someone 3 or 4 languages." We must remember that Kierkegaard is working out a scheme,

the preparation of a lecture, or something similar, hence the reference to a section and so on. To continue: "But such a man never learns a foreign tongue quite as he does his own mother tongue, whereas on the contrary, everyone believes himself entitled to deal with the language which is his own mother tongue, as he likes. (A common, learned, but dead language, on the contrary made everyone equal.) Today when anyone turns himself once more to follow through the shades of meaning which the concepts have in so many different languages, he is naturally enriched in a certain sense with an inordinate abundance of reflection - but it becomes very difficult because a constant terminology is from now on almost unthinkable. Whereas the communication increases to the 4th power, it only becomes an increase in confusion. Because the more there is communicated, when nothing is fixed, the more horrible becomes the confusion, the more inhuman and superhuman is the task which is set the individual.

This was the first step in developing itself extensively instead of intensively.

Now in Europe a glorious discovery was made: something must be done to exercise control. That is to say it was perceived that the confusion was under way, and it was hoped in this way, by some discovery or another which was in the service of confusion, to put an end to it. Imagine an office where, in the first instance, a journal is kept; but watch it swell up to such an extent that a new office must be established which keeps an index. In the meantime it is felt that what has been done is not enough, so a new office which keeps a register over the index, is established, etc. And

every time such a thing is done, it is done in order to exercise control, but it is not noticed that it becomes more and more impossible with every step.

Consequently the learned periodicals come to the rescue. The idea of the periodicals was to help with the control; but in this way the periodicals became an independent literature. Now this is from first to last the misfortune of modern times. The periodicals become more and more ephemeral. The requirement of the time becomes in the end the requirement of the moment. The daily press drags along such a mass of men with it that it stands in nothing but a hindering relationship to literature. But this mass is wilful, and really in the end literature must make concessions (it is the same clash as that between patricians and plebs). But with the periodicals comes the equally indeterminate loss of authors: from non-authors upwards the public as such understand everything to a certain degree, but all to no avail...The journal has certainly the power of the instant and the power of diffusion. Through the publisher's interest in money literature must inevitably make concessions. And so in the end the position of journal-literature is reversed: the role of the critic is surrendered and it writes for the multitude. The multitude understand nothing and the journalists understand that they must write for the multitude. It causes despondency in the true literary author. The author despairs of being accepted, sees what is paltry in the order of things, but has not the strength to hold out. He writes brochures. In order that

he too may come as near as possible to the instant, he produces his books in instalments. He intimates a long time in advance what he intends to do, in order to make sure of being noticed. Every protest in the name of true literature against this odious system helps not in the least. The journalist obstinately points to his thousands of subscribers, and his power in the instant. Neither is there prospect of salvation at some future moment, because the journalist has become a type. The individual dies but the journalist (type) never dies, he only becomes more and more prevalent. One imagines the superhuman task which the condition of the world as it has so far developed has laid upon an author so that in the light of it he might see how confused the present is. Everything becomes oppressive.

So much from the literary point of view. But from the social point of view it is the same. By increasing superficial refinement and culture men are forced together into the big towns. Right from tenderest years a man gets no impression of himself. In the big towns one has more impression of a cow than of a man, because in the country there are two or three cows to one man; but in the big towns there are 1000 men to one cow.

This is the confusion of modern times: in a horrible manner it drags along with it the mass of the traditional; the race is caught up in the confusion of the present which never ceases. This is the dishonesty of the time. If I were to put it more wittily then I would say: it is like scurvy. And what medicine is there for that? Only one:

the green vegetable of primitiveness. But the tremendous work involved in boring an artesian well is not so difficult as abolishing primitiveness and getting it accepted again in such a time (as the present). It will demand sacrifice, and it will be the most painful martyrdom. There have always been men of sophism near at hand; what is the use of an individual wishing what he might accomplish? O ye gods! this sophism has now got such a hold that without the least exaggeration it is in such circumstances like madness to persist in believing in God and the primitive. And surely it is precisely primitiveness which is required, as well as the individual. No haggling! For let us imagine that an emminent genious perceived it, but instead of believing that God wished him to bring the sacrifice to the extreme point, made a mistake, and wished in wordly wisdom to make only a little one; no-one could do greater harm than he, precisely because he was so close to the truth, and is among all the sophists the most dangerous. The individual who persists in being able to prevail must give the impression of being mad. And on the other hand the age will discover it, and will if possible use every means in order to choke him; except force - it has not passion for that purpose: but (it will use) stupidity, and envy, and indolence and disdain, etc."(1)

What I take this to mean is that there are one or two things in this life which prevent a human being from being a primitive thinker. There is in the first place the language barrier. Here I presume Kierkegaard is speaking

---

(1)S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 87 p.172ff

of primitive thinking is a more philosophical and professional sense, rather than about the ordinary man in the street. According to Kierkegaard's account of primitiveness it would seem as if it required a considerable amount of intellectual ability in order to undergo the process of coming to a knowledge of the self. But it must be emphasized that this process is for those who have been caught up in the contemporary emphasis upon knowledge. It is the intellectual who is most in need of a return to primitiveness. There are simple men and women who are already possessed of this primitiveness without the need for all this intellectual analysis, as we shall see in due course. To return to the argument. When such a thinker wishes to get down to basic concepts, fundamental ideas, then he has to get back to the language in which they were first expressed. This would be the "learned" language of Greece, and perhaps to some extent Latin. At one time these were the languages of culture and thought; people from all over Europe read Greek and spoke Latin, but with the rise of national languages and characteristics, acquaintance with the original concepts became increasingly difficult because it had to pass through the medium of another language, perhaps more than one. The individual had probably to learn Greek or Latin, or perhaps some modern language in order to arrive at the shades of meaning embodied in some particular concept. It stands to reason that a concept which was originally expressed in the Greek language will lose much of its significance when translated into Danish or English. For example, the original word

may have associations and syntactical affinities with other words in the language, all of which would contribute through overtones to the meaning of the word or concept with which we are dealing. But immediately that word or concept becomes translated into another language these associations and affinities vanish, because the new word (in the different language) will have a completely different set of associations and affinities.

In addition, the sheer mechanics (apparatus) of having to learn another language, grammar, vocabulary and so on, constitute an additional barrier to getting at the root of things. As Kierkegaard says: "A constant terminology is from now on almost unthinkable".(1) And at what age is someone to be burdened with this necessity? When he is a child and consequently less removed from primitiveness, less influenced by civilization? This is an important factor which prevents thinkers from becoming primitive.

But, says Kierkegaard, the difficulties involved in language and the need to overcome or get to grips with all the paraphenalia or apparatus of knowledge has been recognised. Men have tried to simplify the position, but in so doing have only added to the confusion, made things very much worse. There arose what he calls the "learned periodical" to try to counteract this tendancy.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 87 p.173

At the beginning their function was to bring together in a convenient form the different views and trends, so that a thinker would not have to be troubled with all this apparatus of knowledge. In other words they were to do the work for the man and present him with material which it might have taken him years to accumulate for himself.

But the trouble was that they became an addition to the apparatus. Instead of making things easier they only made them more difficult. For one thing they had to cater for the masses. In order to see they had to find out what the majority wanted. Newspapers began for example by summarising in convenient form what was going on in the world. This originally would be a help to anyone who wished to find out these things for ~~their~~ his own particular purposes, but they soon discovered that they had to cater for the masses. From an economic point of view this would be so. And so the lowest common denominator became the standard. The learned periodical and the newspaper in their original forms had to modify their policy and make concessions to popular taste. In their original form they performed a critical function, but now they write for, and in the interests of the multitude.

Now there are many authors who see quite well what has happened; just how shoddy and second-rate mass taste must be, but they feel that they cannot hold out against it. For one thing the publisher wishes the book to sell, so it has to appeal: for another the author himself all too often wishes to be quickly recognized, he wants to be taken notice of. And so he begins to write in instalments and to

announce in advance what he is going to produce. The thing is to be diffuse, to have the publication available for as many people as possible, and also to have "the power of the instant" - to be right up to date so that he may accurately reflect the mood, thoughts and so on, of the multitude, in order that they may be attracted by the expression of their own outlook.

But this is not the only way in which a person is hindered from becoming a primitive thinker. The very fact of living together in large cities - the mode of life of the majority of people - tends to make them have no impression of themselves. In other words they suffer from lack of primitiveness.

There are writers and thinkers, says Kierkegaard, who see all this quite well, but there is a kind of worldly wisdom which asks why they should do anything about it. What can one individual do? There is no need to make the world think that you are mad, no need to have to suffer simply in order to assert your belief in God and primitiveness. There is enough of a sacrifice involved already. This last hindrance is the most dangerous of all, says Kierkegaard, precisely because it is so near the truth.

Lack of primitiveness is shown in many different ways. In the world of books: "one remains exclusively author by being reader, instead of by the primitive; as though one is human exclusively by mimicking the other, instead of by the primitive".(1) "One nowadays becomes an author

---

(1)S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 81^4 p.144

by reading - not by one's primitiveness".(1) In other words the author or the writer gets his material from reading other people's books, not from within the recess of his own being. This is a kind of mimickry. And it is the same with the writer of brochures or the newspapers. They cater for "the masses".(2) They have to write what the masses want, not what they find within themselves, and the mass is: "one fantastic abstraction".(3) "Everywhere, instead of human beings there are fantastic abstractions".(4) Everyone is so busy imitating others, or starting out from presuppositions which are ready-made, that they are no longer fit to be called existing human beings. Instead the writer who writes for the masses, giving expression to what is in fashion at the moment is not a single human being, not at least speaking from the point of view of primitiveness. For: "as soon as a man writes he is not himself a single human being, and neither does he consider himself a reader, who is an individual human being".(5) It is a vicious circle because: "the

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 82^4 p.154

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 82^5 p.154

(3) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 81^4 p.144

(4) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 82^9 p.155

(5) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 81^4 p.144
82^9 p.155

multitude understand nothing and the journalists that they must write for the multitude".[1]

Moreover lack of primitiveness has led to a tremendous amount of hurry and scurry in life. Everything must be right up to date, up to the minute. Authors and thinkers must be understood right away. There is almost a sense of panic. Here is how Kierkegaard puts it:

"If I might imagine a man who was brought up in such a way that he never got any impression of himself, but always lived by way of comparison and afterwards lived thus; then this man is an example of dishonesty. The history of the generation goes its way, it is true, but every single individual ought surely to have his primitive impression of existence - in order to be a human being. And as with every man, so also with every thinker - in order to be a thinker. But the thinker who sacrifices his primitiveness or stifles it in order quickly to be understood by his contemporaries and quickly acquire a little influence, and so immediately be included on the generation's band-wagon which is at this very moment starting off, is like someone inducing an abortion. He is worse than a young girl who offers her virtue for easy gain. He really sins against God and is equally as detestable and just as inhuman as the mother who induces an abortion...

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 87 p.174

Since Hegel it is especially become horrible, for he adopted the historical method which completely destroys all primitiveness and really only organises. What waste! What confusion! Just like an earthquake! Young men, children almost, are more aware of how deceptive everything is, and how negative a thing it is to be a man, and how this applies to everything which is connected with the generation which is incessantly in a state of flux. Thus the life of the generation continually seethes and fizzes. Although the whole thing is in a whirl, the starting gun is heard, the clang of a bell, which means for the individual that now, this very second, you must be quick; throw everything away from you, meditation, tranquil composure, the reassuring thought of eternity, otherwise you will be late and so do not get coming with the generation's expedition which is starting off right away - and then, then what a tragedy! Ah yes, what a tragedy indeed! And surely everything, everything is intended to cherish the confusion, the unholy haste of the savage hunt. The means of cummunication which can be carried out more and more with incredible haste, become more and more excellent, but the communications become more and more busy, and more and more confused. And if anyone dares, both in the name of primitiveness and in God's name to raise his voice against it, woe betide him. As an individual is seized by a whirl of impatience in order to be understood at once, so is the generation imperious in wishing to understand the individual right away.

See how it produces dishonesty. The concepts cease, the question is confused, one struggles with another in all directions. No happier condition can ever be given for every drivvler, because the common confusion covers their confusion. It is the golden age for drivvlers."(1)

Now all this lack of primitiveness has an influence upon communication. Everything is made a matter of knowledge - it is objective. Authors want to be understood as quickly as possible. The emphasis is upon what it is which is to be communicated. "One hurries straightaway to the what one wishes to communicate...a philosopher, a dogmatician, a priest, etc., all begin straight away with what they wish to communicate, with studies and preliminary work in that direction. And then there is, as I have said, over everything a huge apparatus, overwhelming it almost, and at any rate they soon get a huge amount to communicate."(2) The important thing for the modern mind is that it must produce results in order to be understood quickly.

All this hurry and bustle leads further to something which Kierkegaard finds quite distressing: authors and writers resort to saying the truth in a less true form. They wish to win over as many people as possible, so they cannot afford to be too uncompromising. "Everyone will agree with me that a man is bound by God to express the truth in its truest form. Good! But now it will apply

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B. Section 86 p.171f

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 89 p.185

to every man that in proportion as he has the ability to make the form of the truth more real - then, when he does so, to that same degree will he win fewer (adherants)... Now if a man has not fundamentally a relationship to God, does not have it daily, right now, then he allows expediency to be the measure of his wisdom. He says: 'This cannot lead to anything; knowledge of practical life teaches me that I must compromise.' So he compromises, employs a less true form - and wins many (adherants). If on the other hand he has a fundamental relationship to God, then it will appear to him as if God said: Stupid man, what are you thinking of, would you pretend to be providence; you are required only to do your duty, that is all! Every knowledge of the truth which has been misunderstood, severely judged, well nigh beaten to death, has met with this collision, (namely): he has had it in his power to give the truth in a less true form, apparently saying the same thing in order to be a success in the world, in order to win men; or in absolute obedience to God give expression to the fact that he wills to be guided by the providence of God, and not by his expediency acting as providence. So that it (i.e. the truth) is misunderstood and judged. Consequently he does not compromise: he braces himself. And so he is able (to act) powerfully. Obviously he wins as good as no-one, and is accused of pride."(1)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 88 p.177f (my brackets)

Perhaps an author or anyone who wishes to communicate can see quite well what the truth is, and, the world being what it is, that this would be most unpalatable to the majority of people, so he waters it down, he coats the pill with sugar, so that it will become more acceptable. The result is that it is acceptable along with many other things: it does not have the impact which it ought to have, and although what has been expressed may have been the truth, yet it is passed over by the world, and almost ignored as if it had never been said. It has not had the impact which opposition would have given it. The truth has been expressed, but in a less true form.

Naturally this lack of primitiveness with its direction away from the self towards tradition, mimicking others, relying upon books which other people have written and so on, has led to an emphasis being placed upon the importance of knowledge, and this in turn has tended to place an unnatural emphasis upon intellect. It is no longer a matter of simple knowledge or simple learning. Knowledge has become fantastic, says Kierkegaard. We are faced with the concept of "pure knowledge", something which is for intellectuals only, something which lies within the realm of possibility, of the mind, of fantasy. "Knowledge has become fantastic (pure knowledge) and into the bargain erudite". And so, says Kierkegaard, we come across the ridiculous situation of someone: "in the same book dealing with pure thought sub specie aeterni and (dealing with) the little treatise of some privat-docent".(1) He is thinking

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 81^2 p.143
82^8 p.154

of Hegel as we shall see.

This lack of primitiveness also has the consequence that this emphasis upon knowledge leads to the anomaly that the modern age has forgotten what it means to be human. This, says Kierkegaard, was something which the Greeks never forgot, not even the most high-flown Sophist. We have now become theocentric, and this fact of being human is something which is very much taken for granted. In Hegelian fashion God and man become identified. "It has been forgotten what it is to be human. The Greeks - how humanly they remembered it - and with regard to God, no sophist, not even the most high-flown, was theocentric - what now we are to a certain extent by habit, so that no one thinks about such things."(1) (Remember that much of The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication is in extremely sketchy note form.) There is no account taken of the existing ethical individual. For Kierkegaard, the ethical and the primitive are almost identical. The ethical, the awareness of the self, and the outlook resulting from such awareness, is something which is completely neglected by modern knowledge. For modern knowledge the communication of results, conclusions, other people's ideas, constitutes the highest seriousness. If knowledge is the thing then the question of communication of knowledge becomes of supreme importance. But, says Kierkegaard, in

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 81^3 p.144

order to become an existing ethical individual a certain amount of seriousness is also required. And when a man becomes serious for such a purpose then there occurs within him a self-revelation, a knowledge of himself which he did not possess before; he is awakened from dreaming. But of course to modern knowledge this is all mere tomfoolery. According to the modern way of looking at things the ethical is not a matter of self-revelation or anything else like that, but it is a question of objective knowledge. Says Kierkegaard, it is horrible to think of all the printers, booksellers, journalists, authors who are engaged in perpetuation of this confusion, namely, that the ethical is a matter of knowledge, and they all fail to realise that for the purpose of being a human being very little knowledge is required. That is to say knowledge in the accepted sense. If it is the case that we need very little of that then we do require so much the more self-knowledge, which is something quite different.(1)

Now suppose then an individual accepts that this kind of knowledge (self-knowledge) is the highest for a man, and in accordance with ethical demand he strives towards the highest self-knowledge which it is possible to have, then we are very soon presented with a difficulty with regard to the dialectic of communication. Supposing a man, in the course of becoming aware of himself, realises for the first time what immortality is, what it is to be

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 81^5 p.145

immortal and so on. This is a part of himself of which he has become more and more aware as he strives towards self-knowledge. But, says Kierkegaard: "we are all immortal. If someone therefore completely immerses himself in this thought, lives in it, he does not become more immortal than anyone else."(1) In other words, applying the same principle to any other aspect of self-knowledge, the more we know and understand about ourselves does not make us any more of a human being than anyone else. We are discovering within ourselves something which exists in every human being. The only difference between the man who knows himself and one who does not is that the first is now conscious of what it means to be a human being and the other is not. So much for primitiveness and the knowledge of the self.

The Distinction between Skill or Ability and Knowledge

The modern age, with its emphasis upon the importance of knowledge has left out of account that there are many fields of human activity which could only be classified under the heading of ability or skill. Of course it recognises that these fields of activity exist, but it fails to give them their proper significance. When it comes to the question of communication the difference between what is skill and what is knowledge is vital. Communication of knowledge and communication of skill are

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard *Papirer* VIII^2 B Section 81^8 p.147

quite different. And a confusion arises if what should be communicated as skill is communicated as knowledge and vice versa. As we shall see, this is what has happened with regard to the communication of the ethical. Kierkegaard classifies ability under three different types. Aesthetic ability, ethical ability, and religious ability. The last two he calls ability to "feel duty bound" (Skullen-Kunne).(1)

Aesthetic Ability - Ability in Dexterity

Certain things are more a matter of skill than of knowledge. In such a case no matter how much a man knows this cannot give him the requisite skill. There is far more to the teaching of a skill or of ability than merely academic learning. A person may know all there is to know about dancing, its history, theory, different schools of thought and so on, but this does not make him an expert dancer. He has to have the potentiality for that. Certain people will never ahieve skill in dancing simply because "they have not got what it takes" as we say. It is not in them. Others become good dancers because they have the sense of rythm, agility, and other inherent qualities which make them capable of becoming good dancers. Dancing, musical ability, dramatic art, painting, indeed skill or ability of any kind, come under the same category.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 83 p.158f

They are not a matter of knowledge only but of skill. From an academic point of view it is possible to know all there is to know about these things, but yet to lack the inherent ability necessary for a successful practitioner.

What I have just been saying, Kierkegaard brings out very well in the following illustration: "The army accepts the fact that every farm worker who comes into military service is in possession of the requisite capacity for being able to endure. Therefore first of all he is assuredly examined to see that there are no difficulties in this respect...The corporal explains to the, as yet, recruit what drill is etc. He communicates that to him as skill; he teaches him to use the skills which he already possesses."(1) In other words although the farm worker is not yet a soldier, he must possess the potential for becoming a soldier. It must be <u>in him</u> to become a soldier. He must have what it takes. As Kierkegaard says: "The corporal begins essentially by looking on the farm-hand as a soldier, because he is that κατα δυναμιν."(2)

The kind of skill or ability about which we have been talking is of a general nature, and this use of skill or ability in the commoner sense Kierkegaard calls: "aesthetic ability".(3) Skill or ability is usually thought of in

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Papirer</u> VIII^2 B Section 81^5 p.145

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 81^5 p.145

(3) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 85^6 p.162

terms of aesthetic categories, in terms of beautiful art, good workmanship, craftsmanship and so on but even here there is an element of knowledge attached. For the corporal, or whoever it is, there for the purpose of teaching the farm-hand, by bringing out something which is latent within him. The emphasis is upon the communication, the teaching. In other words it is objective, or at least the direction is towards a communication of knowledge rather than a communication of ability. Certainly: "a feeling on the part of the recipient is assumed, a susceptibility, but the accent falls not upon what he has, but upon what he receives: the object".(1)

A person who is wanting to learn some skill or another, who wishes to be educated in it, must already possessit κατα δυναμιν . Now all these considerations are of importance for communication. If we are dealing only with a question of knowledge then the communication can only be direct because we are thinking on <u>what</u> it is to be communicated. But in the case of skill or ability only indirect communication can be used, for we must assume that the pupil is in possession of what it takes already, and this has to be brought out of him. "...the corporal, because he saw the soldier in the farm-hand, must say: I

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Papirer</u> VIII^2 B Section 85^2 p.161

shall probably make a soldier out of him. Whereas, perhaps coming across a little book on fieldcraft, he might say: yes, that must be knocked into him."(1) Again: "Scientific knowledge can perhaps be knocked into a man, but already in relation to aesthetic ability...it must be knocked out of him. The corporal sees in the farm worker the soldier κατὰ δύναμιν and says therefore I shall make a soldier out of him. Thereupon the soldier learns a little book called Fieldcraft, which if he understands it, the corporal might well say: I shall surely knock it into him."(2)

Now with regard to the communication ofaesthetic ability it is of importance that the teacher have authority. And in order to have that he must have dexterity in whatever skill it is which he is teaching. It cannot be a matter of knowledge; the pupil is assumed to know κατὰ δύναμιν. It is not knowledge which is to be <u>instilled into</u> him, but skill or ability which is to be <u>brought out</u> of him. The teacher in the realm of aesthetic ability must be able to do what he teaches: It is this which gives him the authority. It is not that the teacher possesses the skill and the pupil does not, for they are both in possession of the same skill. Only the pupil has it κατὰ δύναμιν, whereas the teacher possesses it with dexterity. The difference between pupil and teacher is that the latter

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Papirer</u> VIII^2 B Section 81^8 p.146

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 85^{11} p.163

knows how to use the skill, has more dexterity in it, which the former lacks. "The law for the communication of ability is: immediately to begin by doing it. The pupil says: I cannot. Thus answers the teacher: nonsense, do it as well as you can. Therewith begins the education. The goal is: to be able. But knowledge is not communicated."(1)

Ethical Ability - Ability to Feel Duty-bound.

We have been talking about skill or ability as something which is inherent, or assumed to be inherent in the pupil. It is something which is possessed by both teacher and pupil. But it is quite within the bounds of possibility that there are many people who do not possess this particular skill, in fact this is the case. Now what would happen asks Kierkegaard, if there existed some object which had the quality that it was universally known? "Let us now make an experiment, and accept the fact that there was an object which had the quality that everyone knew it. What in that case would be the consequence for the dialectical in communication? The result would be: 1) That the object would be annulled, because when everyone knows it, one man cannot communicate it to another: 2) The concept of communication is annulled: and 3) The receiver is annulled. The one communicator who is left out would be he who had given this knowledge

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 85^4 p.161

to all mankind, and insofar as everyone is the receiver the concept of the receiver is thereby cancelled."(1)

We have seen that the ethical has this quality of being known by all men, of being something which exists within all men. So it would appear that by the "experiment" quoted above Kierkegaard has led us from the realm of aesthetic ability into the ethical. He asks the question: is not that about which we have been talking precisely the ethical? "What exactly is the ethical? Surely if I ask the question thus, I enquire unethically about the ethical. Thus I ask the question in the same way that the confusion of modern times asks it, and so I cannot bring it (i.e. the confusion) to a halt."(2) What does Kierkegaard mean by this? Just that by asking <u>what</u> the ethical is one is treating it as an object, a <u>what</u>, a substantive, and therefore a matter of knowledge in the modern sense. Certainly the ethical assumes that every man knows it. And why? "Because the ethical surely demands that every human being at every instant should carry it out. But in that case he must know it. The ethical begins, not with ignorance which will be transformed into knowledge, but it begins with knowledge and demands a realisation."(3) There could be objections to the above argument, says Kierkegaard. Thus someone could say: surely there are quite different conceptions of the ethical in different countries. Or

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Papirer</u> VIII^2 B Section 81^9 p.147

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 81^{10} p.147 (My brackets)

(3) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 81^{10} p.147

again someone could say: surely I must first know what the ethical is. Both these objections, says Kierkegaard are trying to maintain that the ethical is a matter of knowledge, something which has to be acquired. But the only answer which the ethical itself gives in such a case is: "Scoundrel! you are wanting to make evasions and are seeking a quibble." And again: "...thou shalt do the ethical in every instant and are responsible for every moment you waste."(1) To ask questions concerning the ethical is simply to evade the issue. For the ethical is within the individual and demands that it be carried into practice. To ask about different codes of morality in different lands and at different periods of history is to objectivise the ethical; to deflect it away from the self, from what I at this very instant ought to be doing. The ethical cannot be treated as a matter of knowledge.

So when we deal with the ethical, the recovery or discovery of primitiveness within the individual, then we have to consider it under the category of ability or skill. For the ethical is something which demands more than merely academic knowledge. It is something which every person has within ~~them~~ him, something which needs to be brought out, just like any other skill. Everyone has "got what it takes" to be ethical. To return to the illustration of the

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^{2} B Section 81^{10} p.147f

corporal and the farm worker, Kierkegaard says: "To the corporal...would correspond an existing ethical individual who is himself conscious and comes back in himself to be just that. He learns and assumes that every human being is that κατα δυναμιν".(1) Again: "One can perhaps instil knowledge into a man, but the ethical must be extracted out of him" in the same way that the corporal elicited the inherent skill from the farm-hand.(2) And when it comes to communicating the ethical, then it must be communicated as ability or skill is communicated: not by trying to implant something into the individual, but by enticing it out of him. If the former is attempted then: "The communication is never ethical and the relationship is confused from the beginning."(3)

This is exactly where the modern age is so confused. It attempts to communicate the ethical as knowledge not as skill. In at least one respect, says Kierkegaard, knowledge has ousted what properly belongs to the realm of skill or ability, and that is in respect of the ethical. "But there is a whole aspect of the matter which knowledge has taken over, and that is the skill which belongs to the ethical."(4) Now the ethical, which for Kierkegaard is the infinite concern of the individual for his self, primitiveness, is something which is in possession of every man. It is something which is there whether we are conscious of it or not. If we wish to live in the category of the ethical then we have to

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 81^5 p.145
(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 81^6 p.146
(3) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 81^5 p.145
(4) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 81^5 p.144

EX 1818 UNIV. EDINBURGH

become conscious of it in order to become what we already are κατὰ συγχυσιν. Therefore the ethical is related indifferently to knowledge because it assumes that already it is a matter of knowledge for every human being. Every human being knows it. So it is ridiculous to try to communicate the ethical in the form of knowledge. It ought to be communicated as skill. It is confusing, to say the least, that what should be communicated as skill is communicated as knowledge.

So far so good. The ethical comes under the category of skill, not of knowledge, and what applies to aesthetic ability applies so far to ethical ability. It cannot be treated as a matter of knowledge, so it cannot be communicated directly. The communication must be indirect. Whereas with aesthetic ability only those who have what it takes to be considered proficient in the particular skill or ability in question can be considered in relation to the communication; with ethical ability on the other hand, everyone has what it takes. And this leads Kierkegaard one step further. In the communication of the ethical the position is as follows: "1) The object is annulled because everyone knows it. There is no object to communicate: 2) The communicator is annulled because when everyone knows it, one man cannot communicate to another: 3) The receiver is annulled - because when the communicator is annulled the receiver also goes." All this we have already seen, but Kierkegaard goes on: "There is only one communicator: God."(1) For if

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^{2} B Section 81^{11} p.148

everything is annulled then the one communicator who is left out would be he who had given this knowledge - in this case the ethical - to all mankind, that is to say, God.

Now in the communication of the skill which belongs to the ethical as opposed to aesthetic ability, this last consideration makes a considerable difference. Certainly: "the ethical should be communicated as skill just because everyone knows it", and just as in the case of the aforementioned corporal and the farm worker: "the object of communication is not a (matter of) knowledge but a (matter of) realisation."(1) But in the case of the ethical there is a difference when it comes to communication. For with regard to the ethical the teacher can have no authority: "because ethically God is the teacher and every man a pupil."(2) There is no question of dexterity here. Only God has complete dexterity in relation to the ethical. Every man, no matter how skilful in the ethical, has still much to learn from God. Therefore before God we are all equal when it comes to the question of authority in communicating the ethical. Proficiency in the ethical can never give a man authority to teach it. As Kierkegaard says, "In a human skill certainly a man can be efficient in a manner that is worth remarking upon, but ethically every man is

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^{2} B Section 81^{13} p.148

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 81^{16} p.149

related as a pupil to God who is the teacher, and he has always responsibility for his own development".(1) To speak of education in the ethical as we would with regard to any human skill would only bring the dialectic to a halt once more.(2) So although the ethical comes under the communication of ability it is something more than that involved in communicating aesthetic ability. "Ethical communication is communication of ability, and more: ability to feel duty-bound, but the communication is not in the direction of knowledge but of ability."(3)

"Education in aesthetic ability is communication of dexterity..."(4) The corporal and the gymnastic instructor assume a certain latent ability on the part of the pupil, and they are able to bring this out of him because they can demonstrate by means of their own acquired dexterity. But education: "in ethical ability is essentially upbringing."(5) That is to say the nearest analogy which can be found for the communication of the ethical comes from the realm of upbringing. For: "by upbringing a man becomes what he is considered essentially to be", in the same way as a horse which is trained by an intelligent teacher does not become anything different by being trained

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 81^{17} p.149

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 81^{18} p.149

(3) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 89 p.189

(4) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section.85^{10} p.163

(5) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 85^{10} p.163

but remains precisely a horse. Upbringing begins by contemplating him who is to be brought up as κατὰ δύναμιν, being that which he is to become, and by aiming this consideration at him. He hauls it up (Literal derivation of opdrage)[1]. Upbringing must be communicated as skill not as knowledge. The minute we try to communicate it as knowledge then: "one never acquires upbringing but constantly only something to know."[2] This is the case with the ethical. It is the universal-human, something which everyone possesses, and the only way in which it can be communicated is through indirect means, in much the same way in which skill is communicated. Not however, like aesthetic ability which involves a communication of dexterity. This cannot be the case with the ethical for before God we are all pupils and none have authority by reason of proficiency or anything else. The nearest analogy to ethical communication would not come from the corporal, but from parenthood, upbringing.

We have seen that the way in which skill is to be communicated is by indirect means. What is involved in the communication of the ethical? If one man does not have any authority over another when it comes to the question of communicating the ethical, because both are pupils in relation to God, and if one cannot speak of

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 82^{12} p.156

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 82^{12} p.156

educating another in the ethical, how then is the ethical to be communicated? What is the nature of ethical communication?

The communication must first of all be <u>indirect</u>. What is meant by this? We have already seen the necessity for it, but we now consider its implications. We must always keep in mind the fact that: "the object which is known is not knowledge, but a skill, a realisation." Then Kierkegaard proceeds: "The communicator dares to work only indirectly because: 1) He would then express the fact that he himself is not a teacher but a pupil; on the other hand God is his and every man's teacher: He should express the fact that the receiver himself really knows it: 2) Ethically the task is just this, that every man will have to stand alone in relationship to God." And if we are to think of the receiver of the ethical communication then we must remember that he also can never be a pupil of the communicator: "because he knows it already; neither can he be an adherent because this is ethically an abomination."(1)

The next mark of ethical communication is that it must employ <u>double reflection</u>. When there is a communication of skill in any form, whether it be aesthetic ability or ethical ability there is always involved a "situation" between communicator and receiver. That is to say there is the medium to be considered. When

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Papirer</u> VIII^{2} B Section 81^{20} p.150

knowledge is communicated, or something is communicated in the form of knowledge then the communication takes place in the realm of fantasy or possibility. "All communication of knowledge is in the medium of fantasy (possibility)".(1) "Already in respect of the communication of aesthetic ability, the teacher and the learner form a situation. In relation to knowledge, where everything is objective there is no situation."(2) What Kierkegaard means by fantasy and possibility is more fully dealt with later on. Meanwhile suffice it to say that he is thinking of Hegelian philosophy.

The "situation" which occurs in aesthetic ability communication concerns the fact that the medium of <u>reality</u> is involved. Although strictly speaking as we have seen aesthetic ability tends more in the direction of knowledge than of ability, and this being the case there cannot in the strictest sense be any question of situation: "Aesthetic ability is not in the strictest sense in the realm of reality, provided that the ability may not be realised in the daily existential living of the self."(3) In other words there can only be any question of reality in the communication of aesthetic ability when the very existence of the self in daily life is involved. With

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Papirer</u> VIII^2 B Section 83 p.159

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 85^{13} p.163

(3) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 85^{15} p.164

this proviso we continue. A situation is something which requires an active response, we are somehow involved in a situation. In the distinction between reality and possibility, Kierkegaard is again thinking of Hegel, of which more anon. In ethical ability the communicator and the receiver are both under obligation at every instant to carry out the ethical in their lives. "Thou shalt", ethical communication, is absolute. "If the accent should fall absolutely upon 'thou shalt'" as it does in the communication of the ethical, "then here there can really be no communication of knowledge; for if I have first to know something, then this 'shalt' is not the first, not absolute."(1) Before there can be any thought of ethical communication there must first of all exist the situation of reality which: "essentially is the conditio sine qua non of ethical communication. The ethical cannot be taught, because to teach it is to communicate the unethical."(2)

What then is reality? Kierkegaard defines it thus: "Reality is the existential reduplication of the speaker. In reality to teach that truth is scorned, etc. is oneself to be scorned and mocked in order to deliver it. In reality to teach poverty is oneself to be poor in order to teach it...To a certain extent all education ends in the art of being silent, because when I existentially express

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^{2} B Section 85^{9} p.162

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 85^{16} p.164

it then my speech is not necessarily the audible."[1] We are here introduced to the important concept of reduplication. In the communication of aesthetic ability the teacher has to have dexterity, he must be able to do what he teaches: "docendo discimus". But something much more is meant by reduplication.[2] The ethical concerns the medium of reality and: "communication in the ethical can only be given in such a way that the communicator himself exists in it, and in the situation of reality."[3] With regard to the ethical reduplication means that the communicator must not only do what he teaches as is required in the communication of aesthetic ability, but he must be what he communicates. Reduplication involves double reflection. "Since the ethical is no straightforward relationship, all communication must go through a double reflection. The first is that in which it is communicated; the second is that in which it is taken back."[4] In the communication of aesthetic ability the principle of docendo discimus holds good, but we cannot apply it to the communication of ethical ability. If the communicator is not practicing what he teaches, it is because he is not really a teacher, but is on a par with the pupil, or because the only real

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII² B Section 85¹⁷ p.164

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 85²⁰ p.165

(3) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 81²⁸ p.152

(4) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 81²¹ p.150

practitioner is God to whom both master and pupil must give account. "But in the ethical God is the only teacher and therefore the so-called master must practice what he teaches."(1) Double reflection involves not only the communication but being what one communicates. There is a communication in the direction of the receiver but there is also a communication in the direction of the communicator. It is taken to himself. In ethical communication, as well as the outward aspect there is also the inward appropriation. The reflection is double-edged. One edge goes outward in the direction of the receiver and the other goes inward in the direction of the communicator.

The third mark of ethical communication must be that it is maieutical. There is a deliberate deception involved in indirect communication as it concerns the ethical: "precisely because to wish to communicate the ethical plainly was to deceive".(2) In the margin Kierkegaard writes: "This deception means that the communicator first and foremost does not look like a serious man, something which no man really desires to be except when it comes to imitation. An ironist can never be imitated, because he is precisely a Proteus, who incessantly alters the deception."(3) The receiver of the communication of the ethical must not suspect that there is a communication

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 81^{21} p.150f

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 81^{22} p.151

(3) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 81^{22} p.151

aimed at him. So anyone who is serious in the communication of the ethical must not appear serious. "To appear serious is certainly serious, but it is not seriousness in the deepest sense."(1) Deception therefore forms an essential part of ethico-religious communication, for it prevents the receiver becoming a pupil of the communicator. In ethical communication the receiver is deceived into the truth. "That there is a deception is also the expression for reduplication in which the teacher and the learner are separated from one another in order to exist therein. The ethical communication in character always begins by placing a deception between them, and the ability consists then in believing the character of the deception, and in ethically believing, which endures everything."(2)

There are two entries which seem to throw additional light on the nature of the maieutical and the deception involved therein. "The dialectical in the communicator must counteract itself."(3) Again: "The dialectical in the communicator must have eyes in the back of the head concerning the actual appropriation of the communication."(4) I take this to mean that in the communication of the ethical, where the communicator is using every conscious means, that is to say using indirect communication, the maieutic art, and when there is a process of double

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 85^{23} p.166

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 85^{24} p.166

(3) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 81^{31} p.152

(4) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 81^{32} p.152

reflection and reduplication involved, then all this must not be apparent to the receiver of the communication, otherwise the whole thing will defeat its own purpose. It must appear that there is no such process taking place in the communicator. "To have eyes in the back of the head" could mean to be looking the other way. Let me use an illustration. It is a common trick for someone to tap another person on the shoulder and then look unconcernedly the other way, so that it would appear that he had nothing whatever to do with it. The last person whom the victim is meant to suspect is the one who actually did it. Or perhaps he wonders if it might not have been his imagination. So it is with the communication of the ethical. The communication is made and the communicator immediately turns away as it were, looks in the other direction, so that the receiver has the peculiar feeling that what he is now aware of has been communicated to him by someone; perhaps the person to whom he is talking, or the person in the room beside him, but he cannot be certain. Indeed he cannot be sure that the whole thing was not coming from within him and that this new awareness came to him without any outside assistance. "To cancel itself out" simply means that it must be as if it had never been.

Religious Ability - Ability to Feel Duty-bound

In addition to the two types of ability with which we have just been dealing, aesthetic ability and ethical ability, Kierkegaard mentions a third distinct type of ability: religious ability. And when he speaks of

religious ability in this fragment he is meaning Christian. The Christian lies within the realm of ability also and must be communicated to a certain extent in this way. Like the ethical it is also ability to feel duty-bound. But with regard to the Christian there is a further point to be noticed. "The ethical is without further ceremony the universal-human"; that is to say, every man is in possession of it. "Ethically a human being as such is aware of the ethical." There can therefore be no question of communicating knowledge. Such a method is completely out of place, and it is precisely because of the fact that the modern age has tried to communicate the ethical as knowledge instead of skill, that there has been so much confusion. "But the religious (Christian) teacher must first communicate a knowledge", for: "...from a Christian point of view (Christeligt) a human being as such is not aware of the religious; here there must first be a little communication of knowledge."(1) There has to be a communication of knowledge first of all because from the Christian point of view the individual is not in possession of the religious. This is the difference between ethical and religious communication in the Christian sense: "Ethical communication is communication of ability, and more: ability to feel duty-bound, but the communication is not in the direction of knowledge but of ability. When

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^{2} Section 82^{13} p.156

the ethical has a moment of knowledge in it from the first, we have the ethico-religious, in particular Christian communication. By this moment of knowledge it separates itself from ethical communication in the stricter sense, but principally it classifies itself not under the communication of knowledge but under the communication of ability, the knowledge which is communicated in the communication is of a temporary nature."(1) In Christian communication: "there is a moment of knowledge and as far as it goes, an object. But it is only a beginning. The communication is surely not essentially of knowledge but a communication of ability. That there is a moment of knowledge applies in relation to the Christian, which must for the time being be communicated as a knowledge of Christianity. But it is only a stop-gap."(2) As Kierkegaard puts it again: "The education, the communication must not be as if it were a piece of knowledge, but upbringing, practice, instruction in skill."(3) We have to have some instruction in the facts of the Christian faith before we can become Christian.

The kind of communication appropriate to Christian ability is what Kierkegaard calls: "direct-indirect communication."(4) As far as the imparting of knowledge

---

(1) S, Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 89 p.189f

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 85^{29} p.167

(3) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 82^{13} p.157

(4) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 85^{27} p.167

is concerned, then the teacher has authority, and the whole thing must be communicated directly, but with regard to the indirect part, the appropriation which follows this direct communication of knowledge then the position is the same as in the ethical communication. That is to say, both are equal before God. "...The teacher has authority - with reference to the moment of knowledge which is communicated."(1)

Kierkegaard does not say very much more about specifically Christian communication. It must be remembered that The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication is only a fragment and that if it had ever been fully worked out probably much more would have been said.

To sum up what has been said. We have to distinguish between knowledge and ability. But when it comes to the question of what ability is and its communication we find that there are three different classifications of ability. (1) Aesthetic ability. This is ability to do something, ability in dexterity. In communicating aesthetic ability the method is indirect as befits the communicating of a skill. But the emphasis or the direction of the communication is more towards knowledge than ability. (2) Ethical ability. This is something more than dexterity; it is ability to feel duty-bound. In the communication of

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^{2} B Section 85^{28} p.167

ethical ability, indirect communication is absolutely vital. The direction or aim of the communication lies unequivocably in favour of the ability. (3) Religious or Christian ability. This again is different from the ethical because there has to be a moment of knowledge in it. It is nevertheless ability to feel duty-bound, and although the communication is direct-indirect; direct for the communication of the moment of knowledge, indirect for the communication of ability; the communication is in the direction of ability.(1)

Communication Directly Concerning Indirect Communication

There is a section of this fragment which I have not mentioned and do so only briefly here. Kierkegaard was well aware of the difficulties and the apparent contradiction of trying to give lectures on Indirect Communication, or for that matter writing about it in his works. To speak directly about what can only be communicated indirectly, even with the purpose of finding out what indirect communication is, involves a contradiction. But yet it may be necessary to make some yielding in the form of an experiment, so long as the speaker is not seeking after quick results and so on in the manner of the man who lacks primitiveness. It may be necessary in order to communicate at all, to speak the truth in a less true form; in this case to speak about indirect communication using direct communication to do so. But the important thing is the reason behind it. If it is to gain disciples or to treat

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 89 p.198f

it as a matter of knowledge, then it is all wrong, but if it is to make the hearer or the reader more aware of the problem and more conscious of his own lack of primitiveness, then, says Kierkegaard, it might possibly be permissible. "If someone were to ask me how I consider these lectures in relation to the whole of my exertions as an author, I would answer: I consider them to be a necessary yielding, for which I mean to bear responsibility. You will remember....that every man is under obligation to God, with regard to the truth he has understood, to communicate it in the truest form. If it seems to him that he brings about no effect thereby, then it can perhaps be his duty, at least experimentally, to choose another form...With regard especially to the ethical, partly also in relation to ethico-religious communication of truth indirect communication is the strictest form. Yet a more straightforward communication, which is apparent on the surface (der gaaer ved Siden deraf) can also be necessary for upholding what in another sense has been understood...But in the stricter sense I am not a teacher; that would really be far too satirical: a teacher in...that which neither can nor will be taught because it must not become knowledge, but should relate itself to existence. If I should call myself anything, I would sooner say that I was a sort of teacher in the ancient style; and if an auditorium were available for the purpose, I would not have anything against sometimes transforming the deliverance into a conversation."(1)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 88 p.183f

Kierkegaard seeks to get over the difficulty by trying to make his listeners or readers have some part in the discourse. His address will adopt he says: "about a middle tone between the stricter classroom lecture (Catheder-Foredrag) and what in the strictest sense relates to ethical communication."(1) The seriousness of the class lecture in the proper sense relates to the communication of knowledge: "it...relates to e.g. the communication of mathematics, philology, history, philosophic knowledge and the like; in short quite rightly in relation to that which is wont to be delivered ex cathedra."(2) Although the lecture is about indirect communication yet it will be delivered as a class lecture. But if I might anticipate an expression which Kierkegaard uses elsewhere, it is to serve as the occasion whereby the listener is brought into existential contact with what Kierkegaard is saying. In other words, if this does not sound too complicated, the direct communication about indirect communication, will itself be an indirect communication in the direction of the ethical. The idea is to make the listener attentive: "...more straightforward communication it will be; whereas the subject for discussion for a great part deals with indirect communication, or with that which can, or only partly can, be communicated by means of indirect communication. What in the strictest

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 88 p.182

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 88 p.181

form can only be communicated in the situation of reality ...concerning that I shall in a more straightforward form show you here how it happens; make you attentive by means of a straightforward communication concerning indirect communication."(1)

Kierkegaard wants his hearers to be partakers in the ethical or to be made aware of the ethical through this direct utterance about what is essentially indirect. This so-called direct utterance will arouse, so he hopes, tensions and frustrations within them, but it will make them attentive. It will be to that extent an indirect utterance. "The exposition will seek as far as possible to make everything present; if possible to convey to you the impression that you have the most contrary thoughts at one and the same time...what...can contribute to making the listener attentive, but also what perhaps can disturb and weary, sometimes almost making him angry."(2)

In other words the aim of the whole effort is not to impart knowledge in the style of the usual class lecture. It is the communication of ability, ethical ability, and for this to be successful the self-activity of the listener is required. His hearers are expected to bring to bear on the exposition what has been said before, and also, says Kierkegaard, there will be references to points which have

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 88 p.181

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 88 p.180f

not yet been dealt with. "The deliverance will constantly be tormented, if I may dare say so, by a memory of what has been said at another point. Reflections will constantly criss-cross the matter under immediate review (gjennemkrydse det beregnede) by calling to mind the past and the future, in order if possible to maintain the impression of everything being present at one and the same time."(1) This might appear to be asking the impossible from those who listen, but certainly not impossible for those who read. Indeed this is the principle which must be adopted when studying Kierkegaard as a whole, and does not just apply to this fragment. As Kierkegaard says: "Every point, if possible, will bear the mark of what has been said at the other point, as far as possible to establish the contemporaneousness of the present. Nothing, after having itself found its more elaborate expression, will be considered so completely finished with that no more mention or remembrance is made of it. On the contrary, in a straightforward manner, or by contrast, references will exert themselves to bring it to mind, and anyhow the manner in which the next point is spoken of will, if possible, be a commentary indirectly upon that which has been dealt with."(2) In this way there is, besides the direct utterance of the deliverance whether spoken or written, an invisible process going on between the lines so to speak, which is doing far more than the actual

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer VIII^2 B Section 88 p.180

(2) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. Section 88 p.181

matter in hand. This is the indirect communication. In any study of Kierkegaard's work, this very important point must be borne in mind. We neglect it at our peril. Kierkegaard is a most consistent thinker: he does not contradict himself. And what he says at one point has a direct bearing on the meaning of what he says at another.

This is what I have been most careful to do in this study. There is much in The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication which may seem unfamiliar even to someone who has read through Kierkegaard's works, but if we take into account and apply what he says in other places, then we begin to understand this fragment. But this fragment itself must be held in mind when we are thinking of communication in the works as a whole. This will contribute to: "make everything present". In Kierkegaard we do not take anything at its face value, not even when he is supposed to be speaking directly; we look for references from other parts. Everything is continually criss-crossing.

Even from this account of The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication it is apparent that the question of communication involves many other factors: primitiveness; aesthetic, ethical and religious categories; and much else besides. The whole of this study is an attempt to discover what are the factors involved in Kierkegaard's concept of communication as revealed in his writing in toto. In the analysis which follows it will be necessary to traverse seemingly irrelevant paths, but in the end it will be seen

that they play a vital part in our understanding of the dialectic of communication. Of necessity there are many things in this chapter which can only become clearer as we proceed. The ideal way to read this study would be to re-read every preceding chapter before proceeding to the next one and so on. In this way the inter-relationship of the many aspects of Kierkegaard's thought concerning communication would become more apparent.

CHAPTER 2

FUNDAMENTAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

The Field to be Studied

Before proceeding to a consideration of the nature of existence as it is and as it should be found in a particular individual, I would like to take note of some of the presuppositions which Kierkegaard considers to underlie this existence. These are nowhere set down in order as such, they are not characterised as the presuppositions of existence or anything like that, but nevertheless they are to be found in Kierkegaard's writings as a whole in relation to different topics, and they are clearly discernible. They "set the scene" so to speak for the working out of existence as it concerns the particular individual according to Kierkegaard's terms.

Accordingly, in this chapter the existing individual is first characterised in relationship to various underlying conditions, and the implications of this relationship are demonstrated. These fundamental presuppositions which form the background to the existence of the particular individual are brought together and we can see how he is related to them in a general way. The more particular characterisation of the existing individual as he is to be found in himself, that is to say, the nature of a particular existence itself is left to the chapters immediately following.

The Existing Individual and Existence - Abstract Thought

One's own existence is something which is very much taken for granted by the majority of people, and this includes thinkers and scientists. Only those perhaps

whose job it is to probe deeply into the physiological, and to some extent the psychological, nature of our being might think of existence as anything of much importance. We are engaged in all kinds of activities as human beings - with living and thinking, with working and playing - yet the fact that we do exist is something which is for the most part largely ignored. Most people would regard any discussion on the subject of our existence as quite superflous. Of course we exist! Existence is something which belongs to being a human being. It is the one postulate necessary for being a living person. Without existence we cease to be. It is as necessary to us and a axiomatic as the air we breathe. No one would ever think of trying in everything we do or at all times to concentrate on breathing or upon the nature of the atmosphere which we breathe. So it is with our existence. It is something which is there, necessary for life as fresh air is, but which is forgotten about or indeed not thought about, as, indeed, we do with regard to breathing. Such is the general attitude towards existence.

Kierkegaard maintains, and I think his assertion is still valid for the vast majority of people today, that: "men have forgotten what it means to EXIST."(1) Here is something which is basic and fundamental but which is completely ignored. We are concerned with all kinds of

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.216; cp.240

problems in the business of living, but with our knowledge and with all our problems we need to learn once more: "what it means to be a single individual man, neither more nor less."(1) Our activity, whether mental or bodily, is directed outwardly away from ourselves so that the existing individual eventually becomes lost in the crowd, is dominated by the collective idea.(2)

So it is that one of the underlying presuppositions which the existing individual almost always takes very much for granted is existence itself. Yet because he exists he must perforce be related to existence. If man has forgotten what it means to exist and ignores his own existence or takes it for granted, but yet in the nature of the case cannot help having a relationship to existence, what is the nature of this relationship? This question and its implications ~~is~~ are discussed in some detail by Kierkegaard.

The tendency to ignore existence is found in practically every sphere of activity, but Kierkegaard finds that this whole tendency is aided and abetted by the philosophy of his day, the Hegelian System, which would seek by the process of complete abstraction to nullify all that has to do with existence.

For Hegel all that had to do with reality as we know it constituted a hindrance to "pure thought" and had to be

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Point of View Pp.44ff

(2) Op. Cit. Ibid.

got rid of. Logical thought could not be attained as long as we make no effort to attain it. It is therefore necessary to sweep aside all presuppositions or preconceived ideas in order to get back to the start of the logical process. When we know that we have reached the true beginning then working out from that by logical deduction we should be able to think truly and avoid the mistake which might result from personal considerations and so on.

Accordingly, in order to reach this Beginning a process of abstraction must be carried out, which leads back to complete nothingness. There is a whole section of The Science of Logic devoted to expounding this thesis.(1) According to Hegel, in order that there should be a true Beginning to logical thought there must be no antecedents, no presuppositions. The Beginning must not rise out of anything or be the result of anything.(2) In other words, it must not be mediated. On the contrary, it will have to be un-mediated, that is to say, immediate. So this pure Beginning is simple immediacy which is Pure Being: "Being and nothing else, without any further determination of filling."(3) Furthermore, this Being is pure vacuity.(4) Hegel ends the section on the Beginning by saying that

---

(1) W. F. Hegel The Science of Logic II pp.79-90

(2) Op. Cit. p.82

(3) Op. Cit. p.81

(4) Op. Cit. p.87; cp.94

absolutely the beginning of philosophy is: "this simple vacancy without further meaning."(1)

There is really no need to go any further for there is enough material in Hegel's doctrine of the Beginning for Kierkegaard to launch a full blooded attack. In the first place, supposing Hegel's theory of the necessity of going back to the beginning to have validity, can he in his System be said to have carried out such a process of complete abstraction as he describes? No, says Kierkegaard, for even when Hegel apparently has reached nothingness there is still a question to be answered, a question of which Hegel apparently is not aware: "How does the System begin with the immediate?"(2) It is all very well to assert or even to prove that it is reached by the method of abstraction, but such a method requires a process of reflection(3) and there is no such thing as a process of reflection without an individual to carry it out. In other words, it requires a thinker.(4) In fact really hard intellectual activity is required if Hegel's terms are to be met: "a most strenuous act of thought."(5) So, for a start, <u>before</u> Hegel's pure immediacy can be reached there is required this activity on the part of the

---

(1) W. F. Hegel <u>The Science of Logic II</u> p.90

(2) S. Kierkegaard <u>Concluding Unscientific Postscript</u> p.101

(3) Op. Cit. p.102; cp.134 (note)

(4) Op. Cit. p.169

(5) Op. Cit. p.104

thinker. In other words, this has preceded the ultimate immediacy so-called. It arises not out of nothing, as Hegel asserts, but out of considerable mental effort, and this latter factor is something which is not abstracted from.

Connected very closely with this mental effort there must, of course, always be considered the existence of the thinker himself. Here is something else which is not abstracted from in Hegel's effort to reach a true Beginning. Throughout the course of his Logic he betrays this fact through the number of notes which indulge in polemics against certain points of view and against certain people, even going so far as to mention them by name. This in itself proves that there is a thinker who thinks the pure thought: "...a thinker whose speech mingles with its immanent movements, and who even speaks with another thinker, thus establishing relations with him."(1) Hegel pays unwitting court to the existence of the individual thinker, but this is something which is ignored in the working out of pure thought. Hegel is thus seen to fall short of his own requirements.

But supposing all these requirements were met, that it was right and proper that there should be a process of complete abstraction in order to reach the Beginning. What would transpire? Kierkegaard shows clearly the

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.297

implications of complete abstraction: that is to say, an abstraction which leaves nothing to presuppose or antecede the Beginning. When Hegel reaches his true beginning there is still something which is not abstracted from, namely, the effort of thought and the existence of the thinker himself. What happens if this is included in the process of abstraction? What happens when the thinker attempts to take his own existence into account as a factor in the process of abstraction? The only way, says Kierkegaard, in which he can take account of his existence in such a process must be in precisely the same manner in which he takes account of anything else, namely: "as a presupposition from which he seeks emancipation." And he goes on to point out: "but the act of abstraction nevertheless becomes a strange sort of proof for his existence, since if it succeeded entirely his existence would cease."(1) Abstract thought in the true sense, or when carried to its logical conclusion, is therefore thought without a thinker. The thinker has been got rid of in the process of abstraction. "Abstract thought ignores everything except thought, and only the thought is, and is in its own medium." In other words: "the individual would have to be able to think himself out of existence, so that he would really cease to be."(2) An abstract

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.281

(2) Op. Cit. p.296

thinker in the true sense, that is to say, one who abstracts from his own existence in the process, really cuts a comic figure because if he is thorough in his process of abstraction he must in fact be proclaiming that: "he is in process of ceasing to be a human being."(1) Most people would assume along with Decartes that because they think therefore they exist, but Kierkegaard has shown that for an abstract thinker to try to do this involves a contradiction(2) for the fact that he has got back to pure immediacy must prove precisely that he does not exist.

The impossibility of abstracting from everything is thus clearly shown, because no matter how assiduous the thinker may be in his process of abstraction, even to the point of seeking to annul his own existence, there is always the fact of his existence to confound the process. In all his preoccupation with pure thought the abstract thinker either ignores his own existence, as Hegel does, or, if he is more consistent, he must attempt to abstract from his existence and so annul it, but whichever way one looks at it: "The abstract thinker pays his debt to existence by existing in spite of all abstraction."(3) The abstract thinker has a certain distrait appearance. While he is undoubtedly a human being he does his best to

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.268

(2) Op. Cit. p.281f

(3) Op. Cit. p.170; cp.282

ignore or annul this fact. He: "has forgotten in a sort of world-historical absent-mindedness what it means to be a human being."(1) The reference to the world-historical in the above quotation concerns Hegel's idea of the history of civilisation as the unfolding and expression of immanent thought. As the individual is immersed in this living process of the world he can only find his freedom and worth by participating in the universal process as expressed in society.(2)

There is only one conclusion compatible with the facts and their implications as stated. Abstract thought or, indeed, any objective reflection which ignores the existence of the individual causes the individual to become a mere appendage, something accidental, and his existence is something which is constantly being ignored or annulled and therefore vanishing. It does not matter whether the individual exists or does not exist. He who engages in abstract thought or objective reflection is led away from his own existence, which is a matter of complete indifference.(3) The concrete and the temporal which make up the very stuff of existence, the predicament of the existing individual, are all ignored.(4) An abstract thinker will never explain

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.109

(2) Cp. Reidar Thomte Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion p.210

(3) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.173

(4) Op. Cit. p.267

life: "He merely makes an attempt to cease to be a human being."(1) Hegelian philosophy, and that includes objective reflection of which it is but an example, "confounds existence" by failing to define its relation to the thinker.(2)

Now all these criticisms may appear to be a little unfair to Hegel who would deny that in his System he ignores existence. In fact, because of the identity of thought and being thought has the power to bestow reality and existence. Existence is a factor which is included in his System. Reality can be reached within the realm of pure thought. The System is all-inclusive. Kierkegaard recognises this quite well. In the System: "whatever is thought is real, ...thought is not only capable of thinking reality but of bestowing it..."(3) He can see that when pure thought, which is completely detached, tries to explain existence it does so within the realm of pure thought itself.(4) But this would mean, says Kierkegaard, that pure thought would also be able to take away existence as well as bestow it. But existence, his own existence, is the only reality to which the individual maintains a real relationship, so that if pure thought could not only bestow existence but also take it away:

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.85

(2) Op. Cit. p.275

(3) Op. Cit. p.283

(4) Op. Cit. p.273

"the individual would have to be able to think himself out of existence, so that he would really cease to be."[1] But here again, even if such a thing were possible, the individual persists in existing in spite of every effort of pure thought to the contrary. It might be possible to annul the existence of the individual within the realm of pure thought but any such success is a deception for the fact remains that he exists.

But apart from this there is obviously a vast difference between existence as postulated within the bounds of pure thought and the concrete, temporal existence of a particular existing individual. The latter is: "something quite different from the conceptual existence of the Idea."[2] To exist within the terms of the definition of pure thought is certainly not the same as to exist as a particular human being. A human being who exists is something more than a mere postulate in the System. Such human existence can never be pure, ideal existence.[3] It may be perfectly valid to define existence in the way in which Hegel does as a concept within pure thought, but by no stretch of the imagination can this be the same as concrete, temporal existence of a particular human being.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.295f

(2) Op. Cit. p.293

(3) op. Cit. p.294

The confusion in Hegel arises from the fact, says Kierkegaard, that he fails to recognise that we are here dealing with two media - the medium of pure thought and the medium of reality or actuality.(1) We need to distinguish between the realm of thought, whether "pure" or otherwise, and the realm of reality in which the concrete existence of a particular individual occurs. Thought relates to the sphere of the possible, the disinterested, the objective, whereas existence which relates to the sphere of action and reality must be related to the sphere of the actual, the subjective.(2) Hegel fails to make this distinction when he attempts to explain something which belongs to the realm of reality, namely, existence, within the realm of possibility or thought. In other words, he raises the question and answers it: "in a medium in which it cannot arise."(3) The question of existence, the concrete, temporal existence of an existing individual cannot be raised in the realm of pure thought, which is essentially objective and eternal. "The answer offered by pure thought is an answer to a question which cannot be raised in the sphere of the answer."(4) True, both possibility and reality are

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.278

(2) Op. Cit. p.302

(3) Op. Cit. p.287

(4) Op. Cit. p.293

considered by abstract thought, but reality can only thus be considered within the realm of thought or possibility, not within its own medium. When the question of existence is taken up into the realm of abstract thought then this gives rise to a: "false reflection".(1) It is possible to think about reality, to reflect objectively concerning reality, but all such thought and reflection can be nothing more than possibility. It would appear as if existence is the one thing that cannot be thought: "for if I think it, I abrogate it, and then I do not think it."(2)

So it would seem then that existence and thought must forever remain apart. They can never meet except in a false reflection. But there is one fundamental exception to this, namely, the relation which an existing individual has to his own existence. This is something: "more than cognitive".(3) They do, in fact, meet and intermingle in an existing human being. Thinking is a function which is a part, and a vital part, of the existence of a human being. In him, an existing individual, thought and reality are combined. These two entirely different media come together in him.(4) He is a synthesis of soul and body, temporal and eternal.(5) For Kierkegaard the

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.279

(2) Op. Cit. p.274

(3) Op. Cit. p.280

(4) Op. Cit. p.274

(5) S. Kierkegaard The Concept of Dread pp.39; 76; 79

thinking part of the synthesis, the thought part, is eternal.(1) So, if the part that belongs to the temporal, the real existence is somehow ignored or left out we are left only with the eternal, the infinite. And precisely because it is eternal and infinite and is left to itself it can never cease. The eternal has no beginning and no end, but if possibility or thought has to be transferred to the realm of reality or make itself felt in the existence of the individual, that is to say, if there is to be any decision or decisiveness this infinite process must be brought to a halt. Now, this is exactly what it cannot do if left to itself. It can only continue in its own medium without ever reaching the realm of reality. What happens therefore with the abstract thinker is that: "In so running wild in his reflection....he loses more and more the decisiveness that inheres in subjectivity."(2) There is nothing to stop it so it runs amok, runs wild, in something the same manner as an incurable disease.(3) The only way in which it can be halted is by a conscious resolve or decision on the part of the thinker.(4) And a resolve on the part of the thinker brings himself in his existence into play. So if thinking is to be translated into reality the bodily element of the synthesis has to be brought in, that is to say, the existence, the real, must play its part as well as the thinking and infinite. So,

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.274

(2) Op. Cit. p.105; cp.262

(3) Op. Cit. p.102

(4) Op. Cit. p.103

once more Kierkegaard shows the folly of ignoring the existence of the individual.

The most fundamental presupposition which underlies the existing individual is the fact of his own existence. This is something which is always there whether he ignores it, forgets it, tries to annul it, or whatever he does with it. Kierkegaard has shown just how absurd is any view of life which does not consciously take it into account as a positive factor. If this absurdity is to be avoided then there must be a conscious effort to include existence, that is to say, the concrete existence of the individual himself within his own thought. Existence constitutes the highest interest for the existing individual, not thinking.(1) It is his primary underlying ground in contrast to thought, which is only secondary. Before he can think he must perforce exist. This brings us to the all-important concept of subjectivity.

Subjectivity:-

If the absurdities resulting from too great a concentration upon thought to the exclusion of his own existence by the existing individual are to be avoided then the task is consciously, by an act of will, to relate thinking and existence, possibility and reality, that is to say, his own existence, his own reality. In fact, he must: "concentrate his entire energy upon the fact that

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript pp.278; 279

he is an existing individual."[1] "In all his thinking he therefore has to think the fact that he is an existing individual."[2] That is to say, he must by a deliberate act of will include his own existence in all his thinking. He must always remember and be conscious of the fact that he is an individual man.[3] Of course, this does not mean to say that just because the existence of the individual is being consciously taken into account his thinking must recede more and more into the background (a kind of turning round of the Hegelian tendency). "He certainly thinks, but he thinks everything in relation to himself, being infinitely interested in existing."[4] Or, to quote again, he is: "essentially interested in his own thought; existing as he does in his thought."[5] This inclusion of his own existence in his thinking by the existing individual is called subjectivity. That is to say, subjectivity is the state resulting from the successful conclusion of such a fusion of thought and existence, but a completely successful relationship of the two is no easy matter. Therefore, the task of the individual who is seeking to bring his own existence into

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.109

(2) Op. Cit. p.314

(3) S. Kierkegaard Sickness Unto Death p.193

(4) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.281

(5) Op. Cit. p.67

relationship with his thinking is to become subjective. This is: "the highest task, and one that is proposed to every human being."(1) A person who, in contrast to Hegel with his objective reflection, tries to bring his own existence into relationship with his thought is a subjective thinker. That is to say, one who always takes the subject of the thinking into account. Naturally, every human being possesses the attribute of being a subject. We are all subjects after a sort, whether we do or do not accord our existence its proper place. It is this last consideration which leads Kierkegaard to make the seemingly curious statement that it is the task of the subjective thinker to strive consciously: "to become what he already is."(2) In one sense every human being is: "in essential possession of what essentially belongs to being a man;"(3) we have all the quality of being subject, just as we have all the presupposition of existence, but if we want to become subjective or obtain subjectivity then we have to consciously strive after it by relating our existence and thought.

It follows therefore that when the individual's own existence is brought into play a certain amount of emotion and feeling must enter into his thinking, using these

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.146

(2) Op. Cit. p.116

(3) Op. Cit. p.318

words in a very general and wide sense. When I have a personal interest in a project, when I am involved in some way, then there is concern generated within me which is not there when I am being coldly objective, and this is the sense in which Kierkegaard uses the word Passion. The more subjective I become the more intense does this passion become, the more involved I become. Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary defines the word passion as: "strong feeling or agitation of mind"; and Thomte says that: "Kierkegaard uses the word "passion" in the Aristotelian sense as intense emotions..."(1) I agree that Kierkegaard's use of the word in all probability has a lot more of its original Greek connotation attaching to it than is usually the case, as happens with so many of Kierkegaard's words, but to say that he always uses it in the sense of intense emotion is surely to deny the gradation of passion which occurs in Kierkegaard's thought. As we shall see later in this study Kierkegaard maintains that passion reaches its highest pitch in Christianity. The more subjective the individual the greater the passion. When he speaks of existence interpenetrated with reflection generating passion(2) it is difficult to see how this could signify without exception intense emotion. This would be to make the task of becoming subjective a most

---

(1) R. Thomte Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion p.60

(2) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.313

nerve-racking experience, from which the existing individual would be well advised to stay away if he wished to preserve his psychological stability. Certainly for Kierkegaard there are times when intense emotions are involved and Thomte would be quite right in his definition in such a case, but to imply that such is always the case whenever the word is mentioned is, to my mind, quite wrong. Like so many of Kierkegaard's terms it has to be taken into account in relation to its context, for example, passion as used in the general sense which is here implied, when Kierkegaard is only concerned to delineate the subjective as opposed to the objective way: "...it is impossible to think about existence in existence without passion"(1), is a much weaker thing than when it is used as a culmination of inwardness or subjectivity(2) which for Kierkegaard occurs only in Christianity. Compare the quotation above with the following: "The contradiction first emerges in the fact that the subject in the extremity of such subjective passion...has to base this upon an historical knowledge which at its maximum remains an approximation."(3) In the first quotation "passion" is obviously being used in a much weaker sense than in the last when there is talk of extremity or culmination of passion. There must, of course, be lesser degrees leading up to these heights. This is illustrated by the following quotation: "Christianity is spirit; spirit is inwardness,

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.312f

(2) Op. Cit. p.177

(3) Op. Cit. p.510

inwardness is subjectivity, subjectivity is essentially passion, and in its maximum an infinite, personal, passionate interest in one's eternal happiness."(1) And when Kierkegaard talks of an individual who by a deliberate act of will brings his existence into relation with his thought as having passion, even although he may just have come to the point of making a start upon the task of becoming subjective, he means that there must be generated a certain emotion which may be a comparatively weak thing but which the further he progresses in this task of becoming subjective becomes progressively more intense.

Whenever an existing individual relates his existence to his thought, in contrast to the abstract thinker who fails to consciously relate it, and passion is as a result generated, then the existential is posited. "All existential problems are passionate problems, for when existence is interpenetrated with reflection it generates passion."(2) The word "existential" refers to existence in this specialised sense, namely, when existence and thought interpenetrate each other in the subjective thinker. It is a word which combines both existence, the particular existence of the individual and his thought, the thought as it reflects and moulds his existence. It pertains to

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.33

(2) Op. Cit. p.313

existence as it is wrought out in the subjectivity or inwardness of the existing individual. I speak only of Kierkegaard's use of the word. This would not apply to those thinkers of the present century who are called "Existentialists".

The Truth:-

Kierkegaard therefore cannot consider that the question of truth is an objective one. The individual who leaves his existence out of account and attempts to relate himself objectively to the truth, that is to say, to the truth as something objective, whether it be pure thought or simply a sum of propositions, ends up by becoming a fantastic being. His existence becomes something which is accidental and vanishing and thus the objective truth can have no meaning for him, qua existing individual, since precisely his existence must be annulled. In other words, when truth is considered objectively the relationship of the individual to the objective truth is not taken into account. The only question which is of concern in such circumstances is as to whether it is the truth to which the individual is related: that is to say, the independent validity of the truth. It is a matter of indifference whether it has any significance for the existing individual. What does matter is that it is the truth.(1) This is what happens in the Hegelian System, as

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.178

we have seen. For Hegel truth is the identity of thought and being. Being is something which exists within the domain of pure thought, but this cannot have validity because the existence of the thinker who thinks the pure thought is left out of account.

When Kierkegaard speaks of being, on the other hand, he means the particular being, that is to say, existence of the individual. Diem puts it well: "...it is clear that by 'being', we can now understand nothing other than the concrete existence of the individual, who as a concrete ego thinks the universal abstract ideal and at the same time exists through his thinking of it".(1) When therefore there is any talk of identifying being with thought it can only be with reference to Subjectivity. Existence must be an expression of my thought. My thought must be consciously tempered with my existence. The task of the individual is to bring this about, to become subjective. He must take cognisance of his own existence in every act of thought.(2) So the question is no longer whether what I am related to is the truth, or whether the truth is a body of objective propositions to which I am related, it is rather a question of the relationship between my existence and my thought. When I do not take my existence into account and I view the truth as object,

---

(1) H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p.38

(2) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.176

then this relationship is ignored. But when I begin to think of the truth as it affects me, or take into account my own existence, which is what Kierkegaard would have me do, then obviously concern begins to play an important part.

What is important is not so much whether it is the truth to which I am related but rather how I am related. This constitutes the truth for me.(1) It is: "...the 'how' of man's inwardness which determines the significance, not the 'what'".(2) When truth is considered as a set of propositions which have to be demonstrated to be true then it is immaterial whether I give assent or not, whether it has any significance for me or not, but when truth is considered from the point of view of subjectivity then the only thing that matters is how I am related to it. What I am related to may from all accounts be mistaken and so on, that is to say, from the point of view of objectivity, but if there is on my part an inward appropriation of that mistaken proposition which is shown in my existence then the relationship which I have to it constitutes the truth for me.(3) It is: "the mode of apprehension of the truth" which matters.(4)

Thus, it is the inwardness or the subjectivity (I hold the terms to be synonymous) of the individual which

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.181

(2) Op. Cit. p.442

(3) Op. Cit. p.178

(4) Op. Cit. p.287

constitutes the truth for him. Hence, Kierkegaard arrives at his famous thesis Truth is Subjectivity. This thesis is not annulled when the individual wrongly considers truth objectively, á là Hegel. It is not something which happens to be true for the subjective individual alone as a result of his subjectivising process. Its validity is demonstrated if we consider how it holds good with respect to the objective thinker. As we have seen, he considers the truth objectively, disinterestedly, always pointing away from himself, from his own existence. Within his own subjectivity or inwardness or from the point of view of his appropriation, the expression is nil. This is the truth for him, the existential truth, not the sum of propositions or whatever it may be. His inward appropriation or his subjectivity expresses very truly the situation, the truth, namely, that there is no relationship. When, on the other hand, inward appropriation, subjectivity is involved, when his relationship has significance for him then this is also expressed inwardly and is the truth for him. The subjectivity of the individual is thus the expression of the truth. This must always be so, for it expresses most accurately the relationship or lack of relationship towards his thought-content.

When the truth is considered objectively there is always the possibility of error, for example, generations of people grew up in the firm conviction that the world was flat. For them that was the objective truth until Galileo showed that this was false. But when the subjectivity of

the thinker is the gauge of the truth then there can be no possibility of falsehood for it expresses precisely the relationship existing between the individual and his thought-content. It is therefore the truth for the particular existing individual.

Kierkegaard expresses the definition of his thesis that Subjectivity is Truth by saying that truth is: "An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth, the highest truth for an existing individual".(1) When the existing individual begins to take his existence into account, which he must do if his thought is to have validity, then: "the truth becomes a matter of appropriation, of inwardness, of subjectivity, and thought must probe more and more deeply into the subject and his subjectivity".(2)

The Leap:-

We have seen above(3) that if thought is to be transferred from the realm of the possibility to the realm of reality then there must be a halt in the infinite process of reflection and this halt must take place by a conscious resolve on the part of the thinker himself. With this halt in the process of reflection we come to one of Kierkegaard's most characteristic concepts, the Leap. Before the possible can be translated into the real there

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.182

(2) Op. Cit. p.171

(3) Cp. Above p.86f

must be a halt in the process which is brought about by an effort of will on the part of the thinker. The concept of the Leap developed from Kierkegaard's study of the German philosopher Lessing.(1) To put an end to reflection decision is needed, otherwise the existing individual becomes infinite in reflection, which in fact means that he remains essentially objective.(2) This leap is thus a resolution of the will whereby possibility is transformed into actuality, non-being into being.(3)

The leap is a decisive break, not a causal relationship. In objective thought actuality follows on naturally, logically from possibility, but Kierkegaard asserts that this cannot be true as the two factors of actuality and possibility belong to two entirely different media, therefore a jump or a leap from one to the other is needed. But this does not mean to say that it has no connection with what has gone before, or what comes after. In the physical act of jumping there is always the constant factor of the jumper himself. The leap involves an effort of will and this in turn assumes an existing individual. By the leap is not meant a journey between two totally unrelated points in thought but a transition between what was merely a possibility in thought to a reality in the existence of the individual. The leap from possibility to actuality

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.90ff

(2) Op. Cit. p.105

(3) Op. Cit. p.38 (Note)

involves the same "what", namely, the existing individual. As Diem says: "It is a question of the impulse which enables the ego to accept the responsibility for its vital existence in order that it may, by an act of conscious choice, become in reality what it is in possibility, the problem of the transition from possibility to reality".(1) The leap is accordingly a transition, not a transposition. It involves a movement from something to something. In the physical act of jumping the individual has to travel through the air over the gap. It is not a question of saying a few magic words and finding oneself where one wishes to be.

The Existing Individual and Time

Whenever the existing individual attempts to bring his existence and his thinking into relationship in the subjectivity, in contrast to the opposite process indulged in by the abstract thinker, he is brought into contact with the second fundamental presupposition which underlies his existence, namely, time. It is in the existence of the individual that the existential is manifested and that existence takes place in the temporal order. We have seen that Kierkegaard considers the individual to be a synthesis of soul and body, the eternal and temporal. His thought corresponds with, and indeed is, the eternal part, while his existence is the temporal part.

---

(1) H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p.25

The decisiveness which inheres in subjectivity and is given expression by the leap therefore takes place in time. But it will not do just to say this without any further qualification, for time is a process of: "infinite succession".(1) It is always in movement and it cannot be stopped in order that we may study it, or in order to consider it as a whole. Thus the existential is always posited at a particular point of time. Now, because subjectivity is inseparable from passion or concern the greater the subjectivity the more intense the passion. It therefore follows that the particular point of time at which the thinking and the existence of the individual coalesce comes to have a significance for him which other points not similarly defined cannot have. Kierkegaard therefore attaches great importance to the category of the Moment, this decisive point in time where the temporal (existence) and the eternal (thought) meet in a single individual.

The Instant:-

The concept of the instant is nothing new in philosophy, for it had been recognised by Plato and Aristotle. In fact, in dealing with time Kierkegaard recognises that much of his thinking comes from the Greeks. Especially is he indebted to the Greek concept of κίνησις, movement or becoming.(2) But whereas Aristotle had been much more

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard The Concept of Dread p.77

(2) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.306

concerned with the spatial aspect of becoming, the transition from the state of rest to the state of motion, Kierkegaard is much more interested in the temporal aspect, the existence of the individual human being or the becoming involved in the transition from thought, possibility to actuality in the existence of the individual.

Kierkegaard accepts the argument of Plato in the Parmenides[1] which is as follows: Between the state of rest and the state of motion there is a transition (κίνησις). The point at which this transition takes place is called by Plato: the Moment (τὸ νῦν). This moment in which something comes to be while not itself being in time nevertheless makes it possible for something to enter the time stream and so to be. Whatever comes into being cannot avoid this moment, but whenever it arrives at this point it is no longer becoming, it is. Its potentiality is realised in actuality. This means that the moment becomes the present instant in the time stream, while not itself being a point in time, simply by distinguishing the point at which becoming enters time. Kierkegaard considers that Plato never gets beyond the point of considering the moment as: "a mute abstraction"[2], but for him, Kierkegaard, it is in the instant that not only does the "was" stop in the process towards "will be" but

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard The Concept of Dread p.74 (Note)

(2) Op. Cit. p.75 (Note)

also the infinite merges with the finite and eternity is given its proper significance.(1) That is to say, the instant for Kierkegaard has the category of decisiveness of the decision whereby the existing individual has brought a halt to his process of reflection in order to bring it into his existence. — In other words, the category of the leap. It is thus that the eternal meets the temporal. When this happens: "we have reached the instant."(2)

Just as for Plato, so for Kierkegaard. The instant cannot be said to be the present. Time keeps moving and cannot by any means be stopped. It does not stop to let the instant become the present, so to speak. As soon as the instant is posited it is carried onward, it is already past, consequently it is wrong to think of it as the present. "...the instant as such does not exist, it is merely the confine between time past and time future, it <u>is</u> when it <u>has been</u>."(3) In fact, every moment has the same characteristic of the large element of time of which it is a part: "...every moment like the sum of moments is a process (a going by), no moment is a present."(4) If one could really analyse a moment of time it would not be

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>The Concept of Dread</u> p.75

(2) Op. Cit. p.78

(3) S. Kierkegaard <u>On Authority and Revelation</u> p.130

(4) S. Kierkegaard <u>The Concept of Dread</u> p.77

seen as a point but as a series of factors making up one point and each of these factors, because it is subject to time, would be infinitesimally divided up into further units and so on ad infinitum. If I might illustrate, supposing someone were trying to squeeze a single drop of oil on to a very fast moving object, such as a wheel or conveyor belt, although the drop may appear to come from the can as a single spot, yet when it touches the belt or wheel it becomes elongated, so to speak. The first part of the drop is carried away before the last part reaches the belt. It would rather seem as if it were poured, not dropped. So with the instant, because of the movement of time it has more the characteristic of a pouring rather than a single drop. The first part of the so-called instant is already past before the whole is complete. The successiveness of time dictates that such must be the case.

To return to the subjective individual, whose task it is to realise his thought in his existence and also his existence in thought it can now be seen that as soon as he manages to do this in the moment or instant of existential unity in time it is already past. The instant as such is not in time, it simply distinguishes the point at which the eternal enters time or thought enters existence with regard to a particular existing individual.

Incidentally, this means that when the individual momentarily in subjectivity achieves a unity of finite and infinite this instant of achievement is outside time.

He therefore at such a point: "transcends existence"[1], but he cannot be said to have become subjective for as soon as the existential moment is posited it is already past. Thus he must begin all over again so that subjectivity will be realised once more and this must go on because he is living in the time process. In other words, he is always striving. He is always one step behind, so to speak. Consequently, he thinks, and we must remember that the thinking refers to existential thinking: "...before and after"[2], that is to say, his thinking can occur only intermittently. When the thought is as yet a possibility, before the decision whereby the leap is posited is taken, he thinks before. The action is not yet. But as soon as the decision is taken and the leap accomplished, and the thought is translated into reality, then because of the successiveness of the time stream he thinks after, that is to say, it is already carried into the past by the instant.

His problem is to gain continuity for his subjectivity, and the only way in which there is any hope of attaining this is by continual striving. "He strives infinitely, is constantly in process of becoming."[3] If this is so then the truth which is subjectivity can never be something final for the existing individual. He can never be at one with his subjectivity, he is always just that bit too late, that little step behind. He does not strive to reach a particular goal but he has to strive because of the very nature of the dimension in which he lives. In existence: "the watchword

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.176
(2) Op. Cit. p.293
(3) Op. Cit. p.84

is always forward."[1] He can only strain after or approximate to subjectivity. In subjectivity it is not a question of the what as we have seen, but of the how. This how now becomes transformed into a striving which receives: "its impulse and the repeated renewal from the decisive passion of the infinite, but is nevertheless a striving."[2] The subjective thinker can never arrive; he can only seek to renew his decision, and the how of subjectivity insists that he must keep on renewing it. "Even if a man has attained to the highest, the repetition by which life receives content....will again constitute a persistent striving; because here again finality is moved on, and postponed."[3]

So the thesis Truth is Subjectivity comes to have the further implication that this truth is always a striving and approximation, but it has also a further implication still, namely, for the existing individual truth is always a paradox. Kierkegaard recognises that from the point of view of the eternal the truth which relates to existence is clear and unequivocal, it is eternal, it is, and this in itself is not paradoxical, but for the existing individual living in time and so in process of becoming, and for whom truth is subjectivity, it must in the nature

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.368

(2) Op. Cit. p.182

(3) Op. Cit. p.110

of the case become paradoxical because the eternal comes to light in the temporality of his existence in the instant. The truth: "becomes paradoxical by virtue of its relationship to an existing individual."(1)

It is therefore impossible for the existing individual to gain a foothold in the time stream. As soon as he attempts to do so in the instant it has moved on. Thus there cannot be said to be for him such a division as past, present and future. This division is entirely artificial and could only be justified if the successiveness of time could be brought to a halt, which is an impossibility. If such an impossibility could be accomplished then it would be legitimate to call the point at which it was actually halted, the present. All that had gone before this static moment would be the past and all that was yet to come would be the future, but the fact is that there is no such thing as the present in such an artificial sense. The instant as soon as it is posited is past, taken up into the time stream. We can only talk of past, present and future, says Kierkegaard, because we bring the process of time to a halt artificially. Instead of thinking time we visualise it or: "spatialise" it.(2)

Again, when we attempt to spatialise or visualise eternity instead of thinking it, this is an artificial process and it appears to us as: "a going forth".(3)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.183; cp.187

(2) S. Kierkegaard The Concept of Dread p.77

(3) Op. Cit. Ibid

But as existing individuals we are also in process of becoming[1] and it is from this standpoint that we indulge in any thought of the eternal. Accordingly, we always see it as the future: "...eternity is for an existing individual not eternity, but the future...eternity is only eternity for the Eternal, who is not in process of becoming."[2] In point of fact, however, the eternal: "never budges from the spot" if we could think of eternity it could only appear as: "annulled succession" and in such a case there would be seen to be a true division of past and future in the eternal.[3] That is to say, the eternal <u>always is</u>. There is no process here, only the static. Accordingly, the true present can only be characterised by the eternal, not by the instant, for it is present whether the time be past or future.

In subjectivity, therefore, the instant has decisive significance, the truth is seen to be a striving and a paradox through the category of the instant, but for Kierkegaard there is still a further implication involved: "the historical sphere and all the knowledge which reposes upon an historical presupposition has the category of the instant."[4] To this we now turn under the next heading.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Concluding Unscientific Postscript</u> p.273; cp.79; 84; 271; 368

(2) Op. Cit. p.271

(3) S. Kierkegaard <u>The Concept of Dread</u> p.77

(4) Op. Cit. p.75

The Historical:-

Kierkegaard's views about the instant and the nature of time being what they are it is inevitable that his view of the historical in relationship to the existing individual must be influenced. What he has to say about history and the historical is very complicated and difficult to grasp and is contained mainly in the Interlude in the Philosophical Fragments.(1) Nevertheless, it is of extreme importance for an understanding of his position as a whole, especially with regard to Christianity. A good exposition of Kierkegaard's position is given by Søren Holm, the Danish scholar, in his book "Søren Kierkegaards Historiefilosofi.(2) I shall be referring often to this work and where I quote from it I use my own translation.

We have seen in the previous section that the relationship of the individual to the so-called present is always tinged with the category of the instant, but with regard to the past the relationship of the individual may appear to be simple by comparison. The present may be fluid, the existing individual in his here-and-now situation is in a process of becoming, but surely the past is something fixed, congealed, unchangeable. It is surely that part of the time stream which is fixed and reliable. The past it would seem has happened and there

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments pp.59-73

(2) Søren Holm Søren Kierkegaards Historiefilosofi pp.30-47

is nothing more that we can do about it. With regard to the historical, the study of history, even if nowhere else, it must surely be said that we are on hard ground, the firm rock of incontrovertible fact which nothing can now alter.

If we look on the past in this way then there is a great temptation to introduce the concept of necessity into it. It could quite well be said, as Holm points out, that the totality of history or even single events: "are stamped by the same hard necessity which is to be found in a series of physical events."(1)

When the realm of nature is studied there is to be discovered a law of cause and effect. An event of natural science is seen to be the result of something. There is a predetermined cause. We can therefore predict what certain effects will be because they arise as a necessary result or effect of a certain cause or causes. We can do this because scientists throughout the ages have discovered and formulated certain "laws" from the observation of physical facts. Natural science is believed to work in accordance with such laws which are taken to be the basis underlying the whole of nature. It is admitted that there may be still many such "laws" to be discovered and that many of the existing ones are inadequate to explain the existing phenomena, but they are there nevertheless, even although their true nature may never be discovered.

---

(1) Søren Holm Søren Kierkegaards Historiefilosofi p.30

Could the same attitude not apply to the apprehension of history, where as Holm says: "the operative factors are men's actions."(1) History is composed of the actions of human beings which when they are studied appear to be fixed in the changelessness of the past. Are they there in the same sense as physical factors are there? Do they exist in the same way, arising out of what has gone before and conditioning what comes after? Or, to quote Holm: "Are these actions free or do they express a necessity of the same kind as the physical?"(2) If such is the case then we must believe that human behaviour is in the end attributable to such "laws" which underlie it in much the same way as the laws of nature do in natural science. Then it would only be the fact that no one has yet been able to discover such laws underlying human behaviour which prevent us from being able to deal with history in the same way as with physical science. On this view a trained historian should eventually be able to discover such "laws" and so prove that human actions, like natural events, are not determined by free choice, but by predetermined causes or, in other words, by necessity. If we knew something about these "laws" then we ought to be able in certain cases to tell how things will work out, just as we can in physics, e.g. when we apply certain laws.

---

(1) Søren Holm Søren Kierkegaards Historiefilosofi p.30

(2) Op. Cit. p.30

There are occasions in life when we see or think we see that: "It had to happen this way." In other words, we assume that no other possible result could have transpired. At such a time we seem to be vaguely aware of some necessity underlying the course of history or of our own life in this particular instance. And this would seem to point to some underlying "law" of cause and effect. The fact that we could not tell beforehand would, on such a view as the above, be due wholly to our failure to see deeply enough below the surface. "It is often asserted," says Holm, "that things have developed and events have transpired as they necessarily must happen, and when they have not been able to tell in advance how the development would come about, this is entirely due to our imperfect insight, and not to the fact that the development could take place in a 'freedom', which lies outside physical necessity or logical calculation."(1) Of course, as Holm points out, the ordinary man in the street does not see any connection between regarding the past as firm and fixed and thereby possibly denying the right of free choice to the individual. According to the man in the street we have an absolute freedom of choice among many possibilities, but once the choice has been made and become fact then that becomes fixed and unchangeable.

---

(1) Søren Holm Søren Kierkegaards Historiefilosofi p.31

Here let me quote Holm at some length for he puts it so clearly: "...we all have 'the choice' among a series of different possibilities, of which we can realise some, or perhaps only a single one. Only extremely rarely are we in a position where only one possibility is offered for our action. As a result the possibilities of life are legion, whereas actual reality, in the sense that it has actually happened...is only single. Conversely, when we turn to the past we can deduce that the only thing which cannot be said to change is fact and consequently the past is an expression of necessity, which we have to respect by letting it remain what it is...The man in the street will describe the passage of the present time by saying that there happens herein a transition from possibility to necessity. As long as the line of the present is not passed, there is still a possibility of human intervention being able to change the course of events...The past does not allow of change and is therefore stamped by an inexorable necessity."(1)

For the ordinary man the present is a kind of dividing line between the past and the future. Whatever lies beyond or in front of this dividing line is still fraught with many possibilities and is subject to whatever choice a human being may make. Whatever lies behind this dividing line is fixed and cannot be changed, and nothing that human

---

(1) Søren Holm Søren Kierkegaards Historiefilosofi pp.31-32

choice or will can do is able to change it. In other words, the transition that takes place in history is a transition from possibility to necessity.

Holm further points out that many "learned philosophers" would regard the past as necessary and subject to underlying "laws", particularly someone writing about the year 1900. He gives a summary of his views as follows: "Everything in existence is subject to the law of cause which says that all events are necessary effects of what has gone before and so are necessary causes. Every event or change is such an effect and the effect cannot contain anything more than the cause for otherwise a new insertion would have appeared...; but this would be inconsistent with the axiom concerning the unchangeability of energy, which not only is an extremely fruitful working hypothesis, but also in no small degree must be said to have found its physical vertification through physical and chemical experiment... The learned philosopher would further assert that no reasonable ground exists for believing that this causality should only have its validity in the sphere of physics; because in mental life it is likewise impossible to imagine the appearance of a new insertion. Where would it come from? If such an emergence of something new took place, existence would lose its security and reliability, and the firm course of things would be superseded by pure change, which would make life a risk which cannot be run."(1)

---

(1) Søren Holm Søren Kierkegaards Historiefilosofi p.33

Holm has done well to set out the background against which Kierkegaard is contending. When we understand how the past comes to be considered necessary and see the possibility of thus denying to the individual any freedom of choice then the discussion of Kierkegaard concerning freedom and necessity begins to appear clearer. We begin to understand the heading in the Interlude in the Philosophical Fragments: "Is the past more necessary than the future? or, When the possible becomes actual, is it thereby made more necessary than it was?"(1)

What is the necessary? It is something which is fixed, unchangeable, and in this the man in the street is entirely correct. "Necessity stands entirely by itself."(2) The idea of change involves the notion that what is must have come into being. If we think of something as at one time not having been then we must assume that a transition or a change has taken place, whereby it has come into being. If we think of something as having been, having once existed, then we must assume that a transition or a change has taken place from existence to non-existence. In either case a change is involved and this means that it cannot be subsumed under the category of necessity changelessness, which excludes all change. The necessary can neither come into existence nor go out of existence for this would introduce the category of change, but:

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.59

(2) Op. Cit. p.61

"the necessary cannot undergo any change since it is always related to itself in the same manner."(1) That is to say, we can never say that anything exists because it is necessary. That would mean that it had come into being. All we can say is: "the necessary is because it is necessary, or because the necessary is."(2) If we say that all change is excluded in the necessary then there can be no exception to this. It is excluded: "in every moment."(3) So that anyone who regards the past as necessary must regard it as incapable of change, even the change by which it came into being. The past, by coming into being: "proves precisely by coming into being that it is not necessary; for the necessary is the only thing that cannot come into being, because the necessary is."(4) So, when the category of transition, becoming κίνησις is involved then we cannot apply the concept of necessity to it. "All becoming takes place with freedom, not by necessity."(5) That is to say, it is not subject to the law of cause and effect contained in a logical system. There is no question of a logical ground but only of the operation of a cause which in turn:

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.60; cp.63

(2) Op. Cit. p.61

(3) Op. Cit. p.63

(4) Op. Cit. p.60f

(5) Op. Cit. p.61

"terminates in a freely operating cause."(1) In other words, there are a number of possibilities of which only one becomes reality and this happens through freedom in the case of an individual and even in the case of a law of nature.(2) In the System of Hegel, Being is considered as necessary being for it does arise from the strict working of his logical method and within its own realm this is quite valid, as we have seen.(3) But this is not the same thing as the concrete existence of the particular individual of what constitutes reality. We have to distinguish between the two kinds of being.(4) Holm points out, and we have seen for ourselves, that: "Kierkegaard forcibly points out that change, becoming, and coming to be are concepts which belong solely to the setting of factual becoming, not to timeless being or Eternity, and this factual or empirical becoming is called, in the sphere of human life, Existence."(5)

Becoming involves the change from possibility to actuality.(6) Both possibility and reality are subject to change, the former to the change whereby it goes over from non-being to being (in reality), the latter to the change whereby it has come into being. Neither of them can have therefore anything to do with necessity, which

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.61f
(2) Op. Cit. p.62
(3) Cp. Above p.84f
(4) Cp. Above p.95
(5) Søren Holm Søren Kierkegaards Historiefilosofi p.35
(6) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. p.60; cp. above

excludes all change. They belong, as Holm says: "to the level of change or becoming, and change...does not express the logical-ideal or the eternal, but factual reality, and within these limits the transition from possibility to reality always happens by freedom."(1)

Kierkegaard does not deny that the past is immutable. "What has happened has happened, and cannot be undone; in this sense it does not admit of change."(2) But this does not make it necessary, it merely means: "that its actual 'thus' cannot become different, but does it follow from this that its possible 'how' could not have been realised in a different manner?"(3) Or, as Holm says: "it does not by any means follow that its possible 'how' could not become an Otherwise."(4)

When Kierkegaard speaks about the historical he usually refers to the historical in relationship to the existing individual. History is essentially made up of human actions and these, as we have seen(5), are bounded by the category of the instant. The uncertainty of becoming is inherent in every human act but he also recognises that: "Everything that has come into being is

---

(1) Søren Holm Søren Kierkegaards Historiefilosofi p.37

(2) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.63

(3) Op. Cit. Ibid.

(4) Søren Holm Op. Cit. p.39

(5) Cp. Above pp.101ff

eo ipso historical." Thus, nature as well as the existing individual has a history.(1) But this is to be distinguished from the historical as associated with the existing individual. The history attaching to nature is a purely natural becoming, whereas that attaching to a human being: "the historical in the stricter sense" Kierkegaard calls historical becoming.(2) The becoming of nature is comparatively uncomplicated. Its whole reality is constantly being realised in new becoming throughout time: "the becoming of nature is a possibility, a possibility which for nature is its whole reality."(3) But the existing individual is surrounded by nature, indeed is part of it, and thus his historical becoming has to take place within this natural becoming. Historical becoming is therefore limited by this fact and to some extent conditioned by it. As Diem so astutely points out: "there is an aspect of necessity about it."(4) Therefore, in the case of historical becoming we can only speak of a relatively freely operating cause: "which in turn points ultimately to an absolutely free cause."(5) Nature always stands over against the existing individual as the present, immediately present.(6) Thus, historical becoming always has a duofold aspect about it.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.62
(2) Op. Cit. Ibid.
(3) Op. Cit. Ibid.
(4) H. Diem Kierkegaards Dialectic of Existence p.26
(5) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. p.63
(6) Op. Cit. p.62

The historical becoming of the individual has the category of the instant attached to it, and we have seen how this has led to the uncertainty. The instant of becoming can never be the object of immediate knowledge because it is, as it were, a step ahead of the knower, thus transforming his "knowledge" into a striving or approximation.(1) But now we are in a position to see that the very nature of becoming itself lends itself to uncertainty. This inherent uncertainty is of a twofold nature, firstly, due to the nothingness of non-being and, secondly, due to the possibility which is destroyed the instant it passes over into reality, thereby destroying every other possibility. In Kierkegaard's words: "... the uncertainty of becoming...is twofold: the nothingness of the antecedent non-being is one side of it, while the annihilation of the possible is another, the latter being at the same time the annihilation of every other possibility."(2) Every event, whether natural or otherwise: "even if it happens...in front of our very noses"(3) has this uncertainty of becoming attached to it. What appears to our immediate sense is: "only the presence of some content".(4) Our <u>immediate</u> cognition can never deceive.(5) It is our <u>apprehension</u> of the immediate which brings in the element of doubt for in that is

---

(1) Cp. Above p.106f

(2) S. Kierkegaard <u>Philosophical Fragments</u> p.67

(3) Op. Cit. Ibid.

(4) Op. Cit. p.66

(5) Op. Cit. p.67

involved the category of becoming. Something which is immediately apprehended is not subject to error but we cannot in the strength of that draw conclusions. We: "cannot know, as a matter of immediate cognition that (our) fact has come into being, but neither can (we) know it is a matter of necessity; for the very first expression of becoming is a breach of continuity."(1) That is to say, the breach involved in the leap.(2) The fact that an event has come into being renders it doubtful whether that event is a human action or a natural phenomenon. What is given immediately cannot be doubtful. We sense its content as given but whenever we attempt to apprehend it it becomes doubtful for us since we are involved in the process of becoming. "I cannot sense or know immediately that what I sense or know immediately is an effect, since for the immediate apprehension it merely is."(3)

So much for our knowledge of the immediate. What our senses tell us cannot deceive but as soon as we begin to think about antecedents or effects then we are introduced to the realm of the historical, of becoming the uncertain. But what about the study of the past? We are not in possession of even the immediate knowledge which was available to the contemporary. We study the information given by the contemporary and bring <u>that</u> into focus as a

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Philosophical Fragments</u> p.68f

(2) Cp. Above p.98f

(3) S. Kierkegaard Op. Cit. p.69

factor in our own contemporary situation. The historical therefore has as it were two existences, the existence which is experienced in the present instant and that which is past and can thus be no longer experienced in the same way as the contemporary, but is nevertheless brought to light in the experience of a later individual. "Everything that admits of a dialectic with respect to time is characterised by a certain duality in that, after having been present, it persists as the past."(1) There is always a conflict between certainty and uncertainty in our apprehension of the past. The fact that it has happened is certain and dependable but this very same fact is also the ground for an uncertainty: "by which the apprehension will always be prevented from assimilating the past as if it had been thus from all eternity."(2)

The difference between one who is contemporary with a historical event or event of history and one who is not contemporary but looks back upon that event is that whereas the first was an eye-witness the second has to rely upon the information which is given by the eye-witness, but the later individual relates himself to the information in exactly the same way in which the contemporary relates himself to the event, which to him is immediate. In the one case it is the event which is immediate, in the other it is the information concerning the event which is

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.64

(2) Op. Cit. p.65

immediate. The uncertainty which is present in becoming, which exists for the contemporary in relationship to his event exists in the same way for the successor in relationship to his information regarding the event. So that: "no contemporary can believe by virtue of this immediacy alone, and neither can any successor believe solely by virtue of the testimony to which he has access."(1)

Our apprehension of the past, in company with our apprehension of the present, is therefore inherently fraught with the uncertainty of becoming. How can this unsatisfactory state of affairs be remedied? The only way, says Kierkegaard, in which the inherent uncertainty of becoming can be counteracted, is through the certainty of Faith.(2) Where knowledge is uncertain then faith can achieve certainty; the only way of regarding the past as, indeed, we regard the future, is through the medium of faith. The faith of which Kierkegaard here speaks has to be distinguished from Christian faith although there may well be a connection, as we shall see when we come to deal with Christianity much later in this study.

When an object is given immediately to the senses, as, e.g., when an observer sees a star, then all that he can know is what is given. He cannot know or sense immediately the becoming involved but only the presence of some content. But the moment he applies the category

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.70

(2) Op. Cit. p.66f

of the historical to the star or: "seeks to become aware of its having come into being" he is involved in doubt. "It is as if reflection took the star away from the senses."(1) The only way of negating the uncertainty which is thus posited is by <u>believing</u> that the star has come into being, and the same holds true of an event. "The 'what' of a happening may be known immediately, but by no means can it be known that it has happened."(2) One who is contemporary with an event may: "safely use his eyes and so forth but let him look to his conclusions."(3)

This faith which is used in the apprehension of the historical is not an act of knowledge but of free will. A decision is taken. "The conclusion of belief is not so much a conclusion as a resolution, and it is for this reason that belief excludes doubt."(4) In faith conclusions are not arrived at as a result of studying the facts of certainty but decisions are made whereby the uncertainty in becoming and the resulting doubt are abolished. As Holm puts it: "when faith therefore concludes that in such and such a manner something must nevertheless have developed, it is not a conclusion which is undertaken, but a decision is taken which excludes all doubt."(5) Once this decision has been taken, once doubt

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Philosophical Fragments</u> Ibid.

(2) Op. Cit. p.67

(3) Op. Cit. p.68f

(4) Op. Cit. p.69

(5) Søren Holm <u>Søren Kierkegaards Historiefilosofi</u> p.43

and uncertainty have been abolished by an act of will then there is posited a certainty of a new kind.(1) When doubt enters in then this is the expression for a protest against every conclusion which would attempt to go beyond knowledge or immediate sensation. If we wish to go beyond this doubt then it is only by means of the will that we can do so, and this implies belief. As Kierkegaard says: "Belief is a sense for becoming, and doubt is a protest against every conclusion that transcends immediate sensation and immediate cognition."(2)

With regard to the future, it is easy to understand how faith could enter in. Everyone knows that the future is uncertain, doubtful, fraught with possibilities. Anyone who looks to the future must employ the organ of faith in order to dispel doubt and uncertainty. But now we see that exactly the same applies to our apprehension or the past. The past is no more necessary than the future. It is involved in the uncertainty of becoming, along with the present and the future, so that: "whosoever apprehends the past, historico-philosophus, is therefore a prophet in retrospect (Daub). That he is a prophet expresses the fact that the certainty of the past is based upon an uncertainty, an uncertainty that exists for the past in precisely the same sense that it

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.69

(2) Op. Cit. p.69

exists for the future, being rooted in the possibility... out of which it could not emerge with necessity..."(1)

Belief is something which applies to the contemporary in relation to the apprehension of the immediate historical present, just as much as to the later individual who is considering that event as something which happened in the past. Whether it is past, present or future which is being apprehended by the individual it can only be believed through faith, never known through knowledge.

With regard to the relationship of the existing individual to the historical, which is a fundamental presupposition underlying his existence, it is evident that everything centres upon the fact of κίνησις or becoming, which is inherent not only in the historical process but also in the existing individual himself. This process of becoming is in the individual in which the categories of the leap and the instant are also involved, prevents him from having any knowledge of past, present or future. He can only have belief.

Concluding Comment:-

It would appear from all that has been shown that Kierkegaard has given to faith and, consequently, the apprehension of the historical a certain "timeless" quality. Faith is a subjective category and it seems to me that when it comes to the question of the apprehension of anything in time, which involves faith,

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.65 (Italics mine)

Kierkegaard has lifted such apprehension out of the process of infinite succession and brought it into a sphere where time does not apply, that is to say, into the sphere of the eternal. Where faith is employed with regard to the apprehension of the past, and for Kierkegaard thus it must be so, then the relationship of the individual to the past is precisely the same as his relationship to the future.

Now if we choose any very important event in history, e.g., the coming of the Messiah, and examine the relationship of those who existed before it with expectation and ourselves who exist afterwards, that is to say, if we assume that there are two generations separated by many thousands of years from an intermediate event, the one generation before and the other after the event, it would seem to follow from Kierkegaard's reasoning that the relationship which both have towards that same event is the same. An ancient Jew looking forward to the coming of the Messiah and an existing individual living at present looking back to the advent of the Messiah are at one in their relationship to the Messiah, at least from the purely historical point of view. The time at which the event took place or takes place is not now seen to be so important. It is the relationship to what takes place in history which is important. Even if it could be proved that the event had not taken place in the past, that is to say the intermediate event, we could still have the same relationship to it if we believed that it was yet to take place in the future. I am only using this as

an illustration. The problem of Christianity is discussed in a future chapter.

CHAPTER 3

THE AESTHETIC SPHERE

We have seen in the previous chapter how Kierkegaard, in opposition to Hegel and Speculative Idealism, came to formulate a general concept of what it means to exist: a concept based upon the Greek idea of the Instant, and requiring a Leap or break if it is to be removed from the realm of the possible, which has its being solely in the mind and in the category of ideas, to the realm of the actual or real which has its being in the existence of a concrete individual. The existence of the individual thinker, from which one can never get away, means that truth can only be defined as Subjectivity.

Existence is characterised in quite general terms and considered in relation to certain basic presuppositions. From the interaction which takes place between existence and these presuppositions Kierkegaard formulates some very important concepts which are absolutely fundamental to understanding him as a whole; Freedom and Necessity; Time; History; The Leap; The Instant; and so on.

Much of the difficulty which many people find when they read Kierkegaard arises from the fact that they fail to realise that these basic concepts underlie the whole of his thought, in every aspect of it. They are in themselves by no means easy to grasp, but a slow and painstaking study of them, going over them again and again, is amply repaid by a much clearer apprehension and appreciation not only of Kierkegaard's position, but of one's own. The existential appropriation which Kierkegaard would require from his reader requires also some understanding of these basic concepts. It is necessary to keep these fundamentals

in mind when dealing with any aspect of Kierkegaard. They are axiomatic, and he who ignores them or fails to take them into account runs the risk of completely misunderstanding Kierkegaard.

All the material dealt with in the preceding chapter might quite well be described as Kierkegaard's general philosophy of existence. But, of course, it cannot be left at that, because such a general statement, which cannot be anything other than "objective", would contradict all that is said there about subjectivity and so forth. Kierkegaard is bound in the very nature of the case to examine how all this formulation works out when applied to an existing individual. The whole thing must be transferred from the realm of the general to the realm of the particular: from the realm of the possible to the concrete realm of the existing individual. We have seen that it is the task of the existing individual to become more subjective. How is this task to be accomplished, and what does it mean in terms of the existing individual? The bulk of Kierkegaard's writings seeks to answer these questions.

Up to this point the formulation of the analysis might be said to be philosophical. But when we go over into the realm of the concrete existing individual, the analysis as it is characterised in his subjectivity, then the formulation might be said to be psycho-philosophical. That is to say, although the power of reason is necessarily presupposed in this more specific characterisation there is nevertheless a certain psychological bias. Kierkegaard

describes in far greater detail than we have so far seen what it means to exist, as it affects a particular existing individual. And in so doing, he delves deeper and deeper into the inwardness, further and further away from the external. "The more deeply an individual in dealing with his task plunges into existence the more he goes forward, even if the expression goes backward. But since the deliberation means 'going back to fundamentals' so to recall the task back to a more concrete expression means precisely a deeper absorbtion in existence."(1)

The purpose of this chapter is to show how Kierkegaard starts this process of delving more deeply. In order to do this it is necessary to see clearly what he means by Self, for it is in the self that this process of digging has to take place. Kierkegaard considers that there are different levels or stages in the process, so we shall have to consider what is meant by the Stages. Next we deal with the first of these: the Aesthetic. And finally, having dealt with the inner significance of the aesthetic as it is contained within the existing individual, we turn to the expression which this generates in Communication. This might be called the question of the Content of the aesthetic within the existing individual, and the Form or expression which this content produces in the communicating or external aspect of the existing individual.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.469

The Self

We have already seen that Kierkegaard considers that man is a synthesis of soul and body and of infinite and finite.(1) He also describes the self in the same way. In the above references the application is to an existing individual, but another way of describing the existing individual is as a self. This latter description emphasises more the inwardness, the inner aspect of the individual rather than the outward. And when dealing with the process of subjective striving Kierkegaard makes much use of the word self. The self is also a synthesis of finite and infinite(2) as is the existing individual. I assume therefore that "existing individual" and "self" are used synonymously.

The popular mind thinks of the self as a simple entity, something pure and simple so to speak, something which is a unity, a single unit which exists in toto for all to see. But a little thought will reveal that this cannot possibly be so. For within the self there is a relationship involved: there is a distinction between the self which is being described and that which is describing. Whenever one attempts to become conscious of oneself, as is required in the task of becoming subjective, then this fact becomes apparent. One must look at oneself or examine oneself. This implies that there is a self which does the examining and a self to be examined; yet both can be spoken of as the self. We

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concept of Dread pp.39; 76; 79

(2) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death pp.43; 45

have to distinguish between the defining and the definitive self, and when we examine our own particular self we are at one and the same time the defining and the definitive self. But neither of these when taken by itself can be said to be the self proper. In order to become aware of oneself as subject, the self which is the individual deliberately has to concentrate upon the self. When I begin to think about my self, then there are at least two entities involved, the "I" and the "self".

The self is therefore not simple, but is at the very least duple. In fact the recognition of the many-sided aspects of the single personality, which Kierkegaard's use of the pseudonyms would seem to imply, could well point to the fact that he considers the self to be very much more than a duple entity. Kierkegaard constantly denies that he is the author of the pseudonyms, or at least that the views of any particular pseudonym should be ascribed to him. Quite so; but this does not mean to say that each particular pseudonym does not represent some particular aspect of himself. The modern psychologist recognises that there are many aspects of the self and he would refuse to say that even the dominant pattern of the individual's thought or behaviour represented his whole self. We must take into consideration every aspect, even contradictory aspects, before we can speak of the true self. The trouble arises when these different aspects of the self fail to relate to one another. When they do relate to one another in a harmonious way then the self is said to be integrated. Of course, Kierkegaard does not speak in these terms, but

his use of the pseudonyms and the way in which he thinks of them, as well as the way in which he seeks to define the nature of the self, seem to point to the conclusion that he has discovered this truth. If we substitute for the word "pseudonym" the phrase "aspect of Kierkegaard" then I think that it is easier to understand his authorship. Thus for example the pseudonym "Climacus" and all that is attributed to Climacus, would be the "Climacus aspect of Kierkegaard" and so on. Price puts it well: "The authenticity of the self lies in its web of inner relationships and the degree to which they are fully integrated."(1)

To return to the self. If there are at least two entities involved, the "I" and the "self", then we might be justified in thinking that the only definition of the self which fits the case is that it is a synthesis of the two: again, this is a popular way of regarding it. A synthesis involves a relationship between two entities, a relationship in which the two come together. Could we not say therefore that the self consists in the relationship between the defining and the definitive, or the examining and the examined self? But if we do this we are still no better off. We leave out something fundamental to the definition if we think solely of the one to the exclusion of the other, but neither is the

---

(1) G. Price <u>The Narrow Pass</u> p.40

problem solved if we think of the self simply as a combination of the two, for there is still an examining self, an observing self which is thinking about this relationship, therefore there is still something left out of the definition. It can never be true to say that the self consists in a combination of the examining and the examined. Any definition of the self must also include the fact that there is a process of relationship being constantly realised. Any definition of the self must be able to transcend either the examining or the examined. The definition cannot be realised in terms of one or the other or of a simple synthesis of the two. We therefore have to look elsewhere, to something which certainly includes these two, but also is something more. The self is not the relationship between the "I" and the "self", nor is it the relationship which is set up when "I" attempt to relate myself to that relationship, for then there are still two entities involved and the self cannot be thought of as a totality. But it is the relationship which that relationship has to its own self. That is to say, it is a relationship to a relationship. The self consists in the successful relationship which "I" as the synthesis between I and self has towards the "self" as the synthesis of self and I. One cannot be the examining self without taking into account the fact that the self to be examined is also included. Equally it is not valid to talk about the self to be examined without also taking into account that part of the self which is doing the examination.

Now perhaps we can understand more clearly Kierkegaard's definition of the self. "The self is a relation which relates itself to its own self, or it is that in the relation (which accounts for it) that the relation relates itself to its own self; the self is not the relation but (consists in the fact) that the relation relates itself to its own self."(1) Much of the difficulty in trying to decipher such a definition arises from the fact that the word to be defined is used in formulating the definition. Also the word "self" is used in three distinct senses. Firstly: "The self is a relation..." Here it is used to denote the whole, total self, the whole personality. This is the important one. Secondly: "The self is a relation which relates itself..." Here it is used to denote the examining self. Thirdly: "The self is a relation which relates itself to its own self..." Here it is used to denote the self to be examined, or to be brought into relationship. Although the whole self is constituted by the relationship it is something other than the relationship. It is not the relation between the self and itself which defines the self, it is the relation which the relationship has to its own self which is the definition of the self.

We have seen that in the task of becoming subjective, the existing individual consciously must attempt to relate himself to himself. He must consciously become aware of

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.17

himself. From what has been said above it is apparent that where there is no consciousness of self there must be something lacking in the self. There is a failure in relationship, or there is a failure to relate. Kierkegaard says that: "Consciousness of self is the decisive criterion of the self. The more consciousness, the more self..."(1) It follows therefore that where a person is not conscious of himself, or is only in process of becoming conscious of himself, he cannot be said to be a self. In other words the definition of the self which has been given above cannot yet apply to him. Only the person who has become subjective can truly be called a self. Any other must have something lacking. There must be a deliberate choice in the matter. The individual must deliberately choose to become himself, or to examine himself. In other words, the will is a decisive factor in the constitution of the self.(2) Although an individual who is not conscious of himself is a self after a sort yet he cannot be considered to be truly a self until he has become aware of himself. As Price puts it: "A man <u>is</u> and yet <u>is not</u>, until he is 'synthesised!."(3)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Sickness unto Death</u> p.43

(2) Op. Cit. p.43f

(3) G. Price <u>The Narrow Pass</u> p.174

When the individual is not related to himself, either through being unaware of it, or for some other reason, then he is said to be in Despair. Despair is therefore not to be thought of in the popular sense, as despair over something, or because of something, it is a psychological state inherent in the fact that the self is not related to itself.(1) In fact, despair which is of this nature may well be the most dangerous form.(2) As Kierkegaard puts it: "Despair is the disrelationship in a relation which relates itself to itself."(3) There is no need to be conscious of the fact that one is in despair, or that all is not as it should be within the self, the very fact that there is not sufficient consciousness of the relationship of the self to itself, means that there is a break in the relationship, and this in itself constitutes despair. Of course, the more consciousness there is the more intense the despair.(4) When the individual begins to become conscious of himself in the process of becoming subjective then he also begins to be conscious of the despair which exists in a self which cannot be more than a potentiality. But despair is something which is there already. We shall discover more of the nature of despair as we proceed. It is: "a kind of frustration, insinuating and unappeasable, coiling and uncoiling below the surface of consciousness."(5)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.33
(2) Op. Cit. p.69
(3) Op. Cit. p.21
(4) Op. Cit. p.65
(5) G. Price The Narrow Pass p.52

The Stages

In order to formulate a more precise definition of existence as it applies to the self within the existing individual; existence as it involves the existing individual in the process of becoming subjective, Kierkegaard detects three "stages" or levels which are reached as he plunges deeper and deeper. These are the Aesthetic; the Ethical; and the Religious.(1)

As Lowrie points out in a note in the English translation of the Concluding Unscientific Postscript, and in another in the translation of Stages on Life's Way, "Spheres of Existence would be a much more accurate term to use than 'Stages'."(2) The word "stages" suggests a progress through time, passing from one to another as one gets older. It is not a: "prescribed curriculum which one must pass through in advancing from youth to age."(3) There is no progressive development: "The movement is not by evolution but by choice, by The Leap."(4) They are not sharply defined, so that it could be said that an individual existence was entirely characterised by one or other of them. They overlap. There are boundary zones between them(5) and it is significant that

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript pp.261; 448
Stages on Life's Way p.430

(2) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.570 (Note 19)

(3) W. Lowrie Note in Stages on Life's Way p.9

(4) G. Price The Narrow Pass p.159

(5) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.448

Kierkegaard never talks of the aesthetic sphere being superseded, but only "dethroned".(1) Again, when choosing absolutely, that is to say in choosing the ethical, it does not follow that the aesthetic is excluded, in fact in a relative way it is still left.(2) Or when he is talking about having an absolute relationship to the absolute telos, Kierkegaard concedes that the individual whose life has like others the various "predicates of existence" does not "divest himself of the manifold composite garment of the finite."(3) The whole difficulty is to be at the same time related absolutely to the absolute telos, and relatively to relative ends.(4) Again, although this absolute relationship may require the renunciation of relative, the individual may very well exist in relative ends, "precisely in order to exercise the absolute relationship in renunciation."(5) Finite satisfactions are "relegated", not abrogated or banished, to what may have to be renounced in favour of an eternal happiness.(6)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.190; cp.192
Cp. Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.348 (Where aesthetic is referred to as something "accidental")

(2) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.150

(3) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.367

(4) Op. Cit. pp.364f; 371; 386

(5) Op. Cit. p.363

(6) Op. Cit. pp.350
Cp. Either/Or 2 p.212 (Where aesthetic is "transfigured")

As we shall see, the relative is inextricably bound up with the aesthetic, so that even when the existence of the individual is directed away from the aesthetic towards the ethical or ethico-religious, there must of necessity still be something of the aesthetic there, but in an inferior place. In fact, as Kierkegaard digs deeper and deeper into the meaning of existence within the self there are further spheres uncovered which are not destroyed but are put back one in the class so to speak. That is to say, they are not put out of the class altogether, but remain in it, only in a subordinate position. They may even assume new meaning. As Price puts it: "What is discarded in the Leap from one level to another is not the content of experience but the mood, the existential attitude, in which we hold it. What is changed is the quality, not the content of the self."(1)

Perhaps a better word than any we have so far considered would be "Dimension" in the sense in which this is defined in D. Lamont's book Christ and the World of Thought.(2) In the relationship of one dimension to another there are three persistent characteristics: Independence, where the old and the new go hand in hand. For example, a blind man is quite aware of a definite physical world. His idea of it is bound to be different

---

(1) G. Price The Narrow Pass p.159f

(2) D. Lamont Christ and the World of Thought p.64ff

from that of one who can see, yet it is just as definite. If this blind man receives his sight then he comes to realise that up till the present he had quite an independent view of the physical world, none the less a definite view. The new dimension of sight which has dawned upon him invests all that he knew of his old world before with new meaning. "In one sense nothing is changed; in another sense everything is changed...His new world gathers up the old into itself, making everything new while annihilating nothing."(1) The second characteristic of dimensional relationship is Polarity. This means that although they are independent, yet they imply one another, just as the inside implies the outside of the cup.(2) The third characteristic is Paradox. And this means that an event which is explicable from the point of view of one dimension may appear paradoxical when viewed from the point of view of another.

This seems to me to be a good way of thinking of the Stages. Dimension would be a better word to describe Kierkegaard's meaning, but I shall continue to use the words Stages or Spheres in deference to common use and custom.

---

(1) D. Lamont Christ and the World of Thought p.65

(2) Op. Cit. p.66

THE AESTHETIC

(i) Superficial Definition

What does Kierkegaard mean by "The aesthetic", "The Aesthetic Stage" of existence? When the word is used today it normally refers to beauty, order, design, pattern, the love of these things. "Aesthetics" is defined in Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary as: "The feeling of beauty in objects, the principles of taste and of art: the philosophy of the fine arts". Therefore according to this definition the aesthetic stage of existence would mean an artistic existence-sphere; a poetic life, either considering the individual as a creative artist of one kind or another, or as one whose life is governed principally by canons of good taste and artistic appreciation...as, for example, an enthusiastic amateur who "lives" for his music, and so on. When Kierkegaard speaks of the "aesthetic" his meaning is far wider and deeper than that,[1] although such an idea is included in it. He himself seeks to show this aspect of the aesthetic by some of his writings which, while seeking to show the meaning of aesthetic existence in its more obvious form, at the same time is an example of literary and poetic authorship of the highest quality. The preface to "Either/Or", while depicting someone who has a typically aesthetic attitude to life (in the modern sense), nevertheless by its imagination and descriptive and

---

[1] D. Patrick, Pascal and Kierkegaard 2 p.179

evocative power, is also a poetic production in its own right.(1) The same is true of "In Vino Veritas" in "Stages on Life's Way",(2) and "The Diary of a Seducer" in "Either/Or".(3) They not only depict the aesthetic life but are themselves aesthetic and poetic productions of the highest order, showing that in addition to being a great philosopher and thinker Kierkegaard was also a superb literary artist. These descriptive essays are dramatic presentations(4) where not only is the aesthetic existence described but the reader is, as far as possible, made to feel what it is like.(5)

The preface to "Either/Or" purports to describe how the editor came upon these papers. He describes how he took a great fancy to a writing desk in the window of an antique shop. The description of his feelings as he admired this piece of furniture day by day, till finally he made up his mind to buy it: the picture of the pleasure which it gave him when he did bring it home...how he walked round about it in admiration:(6) all this aptly describes what he would expect an aestheticist to be like according to the dictionary definition given above. But when we

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 1 pp.4-6
(2) S. Kierkegaard Stages on Life's Way pp.27-93
(3) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 1 pp.251-371
(4) R. Thomte Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion p.16
(5) Op. Cit. p.17
(6) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 1 pp.4-6

read "In Vino Veritas" and "The Diary of the Seducer" there is something more than "a feeling of beauty in objects, the principles of taste and of art" involved. There is a taste of the demonic...more than a hint of pleasure for pleasure's sake; what is described is of the very essence of sensuality and eroticism. The Seducer is only interested in the pleasure experienced within himself by his relationship with a young girl. The details of the process of seduction, from the first moment he saw her to the last; the planning of the whole thing "artistically"; gives him pleasure, and he is not in the least interested in her feelings except in so far as they affect him, nor with the consequences to her. His outlook is well portrayed by the description of a Sunday afternoon's outing in the Frederiksberg Park: how he engages in conversation with "Marie", and the thoughts which accompany this conversation. This is The Seducer in a nutshell.(1) Even in translation one can sense the literary artistry, and certainly one is made to feel something of this particular attitude to life. The "Diapsalmata", which occur at the beginning of "Either/Or", are short, sharp, brilliant bursts of thought upon unconnected subjects. There seems to be little or no relationship between them, yet each one in itself expresses some aspect of the aesthetic outlook on life. Thomte says that "They express the emptiness,

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 1 pp.343ff

despair and split existence of such a mode of life."[1] The Aestheticist jumps from one thing to another; he is easily bored; he might be aptly described as a dilettante. Apart from his immediate relationship to it, life has no meaning for him.[2] There is no question of religion or ethics entering in.[3] True enough, there are definite choices in this life, but whichever you choose you will regret it.[4] From all these essays in "Either/Or" we get the impression of an individual set in the midst of a world of myriad phenomena, indiscrimately without rhyme or reason, picking up and laying down, turning from one thing to another, like a poor man in Aladdin's cave. His is an "accidental world".[5] The Aesthetic culminates in despair.[6]

(ii) Characteristics

But in addition to the dramatic presentations of the aesthetic existence-sphere, Kierkegaard also tries to formulate general principles of the aesthetic mode of life. What does such an attitude to life in any one, or all of its manifestations presuppose? This, to my mind, is where he shows an almost prophetic insight into his

---

(1) R. Thomte Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion p.27

(2) Op. Cit. p.29

(3) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.143
Cp. Thomte. Op.Cit. p.36

(4) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 1 pp.30f

(5) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript pp.120f

(6) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.163

contemporary generation, or indeed into any generation. The goal of all the different manifestations of the aesthetic described in "Either/Or" or in "In Vino Veritas" in "The Stages" is enjoyment. There are, as we have seen, a great variety of different conceptions of enjoyment, but the universal expression is "That one must enjoy oneself".(1) And Kierkegaard writes in italics: "But he who says that he wants to enjoy life always posits a condition which either lies outside the individual or is in the individual in such a way that it is not posited by the individual himself."(2)

(a) Outwardness

With this last quotation the boundaries of the aesthetic are considerably extended. So far we have considered the aesthetic enjoyment, and so on, but now it is evident that Kierkegaard considers that all conditions which are posited as lying outside the individual, or to which the individual is immediately and externally related, belong as well to the aesthetic existence-sphere. (With the exception of the edifying in the paradoxical religiousness.)(3) Thus enjoyment, sensuality,

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.152

(2) Op. Cit. p.152

(3) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.498

good taste and so on, are not the only things which define the aesthetic mode of life. Whenever an individual has his "dialectic outside himself",[1] the aesthetic interpretation is present. Whenever he externalises in such a way that his inwardness is not affected, in such a way that there is no change in the individual himself, then this belongs to the category of the aesthetic.[2] Whenever thought or action is directed away from the individual...from within to the outside...so that the individual inwardness is less and less concerned, this is aesthetic thinking.[3] There is thus no room for existential pathos in the aesthetic realm. Lowrie defines "Pathos" as Kierkegaard uses the word, as follows: "The Greek word denotes first passivity; then suffering (passion in the passive sense); and then passion in an active sense. This last is the pathos of the 'subjective existential thinker' because the theme of it so deeply concerns him. The first expression of his pathos is enthusiasm for an absolute aim (telos); the essential expression of his pathos, however, is suffering."[4] True, there is often a certain amount of enthusiasm attached to the aesthetic attitude, and a person's

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.507

(2) Op. Cit. pp.347; 386; 388

(3) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.213

(4) W. Lowrie Life of Kierkegaard pp.629f

inward self can be partially affected when he relates himself absolutely to a finite end, as, for example, when he concentrates upon making money to the almost practical exclusion of everything else. But "it is a contradiction to will something finite absolutely, because the finite must have an end, so there comes a time when it can no longer be willed; to will absolutely is to will the infinite".(1) The enthusiasm of the aesthetic is the abandonment by the individual of himself in order to lay hold on something which he considers to be great which lies outside himself.(2) When the enthusiasm is directed inward to the subjectivity of the individual then existential pathos is present.

(b) The relative Relationship - Relativity

So it is that the aesthetic lies essentially in the relative relationship as opposed to the absolute. "The aesthetic individual views himself in his concretion and then distinguished inter et inter ...This distinction...is exceedingly relative...one thing belongs to him as accidentally as another."(3) This does not apply only to pleasure, enjoyment and so on, but to every distinction "inter et inter".

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.353

(2) Op. Cit. p.350

(3) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.217 cp. Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.347; cp.350

> When he distinguishes between any kinds of goods, even the highest good of all...the absolute telos, eternal happiness...and places it at the top of a list,(1) considering it to be one among others, he is making a relative distinction: it is a picking and choosing, even although it is considered to be the "highest". When this happens a process of comparison and distinguishing takes place. It makes what is absolute, something among others...something relative and comparative. The same thing happens when the attempt is made to bring in mediation, whether in the Hegelian or any other sense.(2) The very idea of mediation implies "between"; a higher unity of opposites; it implies relativity. When the age attempts to mediate...to find the middle way....it takes a bit of this and a bit of that...accepting some things, rejecting others... until what is considered a suitable result is arrived at.

From the point of view of existence, what is all important is the relationship between the individual and his world. Relationship implies an inward attitude. When the individual is not related to his world existentially, or when his self has been negated by the process of externalisation: or, to put it in another way, when the individual is related

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript pp.350ff

(2) Op. Cit. pp.367; 358ff

in such a way that there is no existential change involved, then this is aesthetical, which is essentially disinterestedness.(1) In the aesthetic existence-sphere there is no subjective passion.(2)

As is apparent from the previous Chapter, the backbone of Kierkegaard's criticism of Hegel is precisely this; and we discover that he does indeed include Speculative Philosophy in his analysis of the aesthetic...when he can say in the one breath "aesthetically and intellectually"(3), or speak of the Hegelian principle as being an "aesthetic-metaphysical" one.(4) It is not difficult to see why. In Speculative Philosophy the individual thinker is ignored, knowledge is made objective;(5) and this is exactly the same thing which happens in the aesthetic view. It is an attitude which is being described, and it is an attitude which applies equally well to practical every-day affairs, so to say, as to the more refined atmosphere of intellectual activity. Expressed in the terminology of Speculative Idealism, the core of the aesthetic attitude is that reality cannot be conceived or understood until *esse* has become *posse*: whereas the existential attitude is the

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* p.350

(2) Cp. Previous Chapter p.90f

(3) S. Kierkegaard *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* pp.286; 287f

(4) Op.Cit. p.264 (Note)

(5) Cp. Previous Chapter p.79f

opposite...reality does not exist for the individual until *posse* has become *esse*.[1] The nature of this last *esse* is that it should be of significance to the individual in such a way that he is changed: it does not even need to be external.[2] Kierkegaard reconstructs the parable of the Good Samaritan to illustrate this. Supposing the Levite had repented of his attitude after he had passed by on the other side, and after he had gone on a bit further, turned back in order to help the traveller. Even although he was too late, the fact that he had changed his attitude constituted an existential act which had significance for him, even although nothing happened outwardly.[3]

But whether we like it or not we live in a world where it is impossible to escape the aesthetic; we live in a world of relativities; by virtue of the fact of time alone, life is one thing after another, and thus relative.[4] But it is the relationship which counts. How do we stand related to all this relativity? If we manage to avoid an absolute relationship to it, that is to say, being entirely caught up in it, or unable to see beyond it; if we can maintain a relative relationship to all that is relative ...a volatile, ambivalent attitude...then all will be well.[5] But for those who desire to be related to an absolute *telos*, for example, eternal happiness, then with regard to that

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* p.288
(2) Op. Cit. p.302
(3) Op. Cit. p.303f
(4) Op. Cit. p.349
(5) Op. Cit. pp.364f

there can be nothing but an absolute relationship.[1] The moment we try to have a relative relationship to an absolute telos, regarding it as the highest among a number of things, and so on, then the whole relationship becomes aesthetic.[2] Thus the task is simultaneously to relate oneself relatively to relative ends, and absolutely to the absolute telos.[3] But the trouble with the aesthetic individual is that he is absolutely related to relative ends, i.e., he is entirely caught up in them.

It is so easy to confuse the issue, to bring down the absolute into the sphere of the relative, to have an aesthetic relationship towards it. And in fact this is constantly happening. Even clergymen in their sermons are constantly confusing the issue, as for example, when they attempt to describe the glories of paradise;[4] or hymn a hero of faith;[5] or when they talk in terms of fortune and misfortune in such a way that they appear to be outside the individual...immediate;[6] or even when describing the narrow, stoney way as the better of two ways.[7] In many ways, what should be regarded as absolute is brought down to the level of the aesthetic. When Christianity is treated objectively we reach out for a "glittering somewhat" and the individual becomes nothing.[8]

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p. 352
(2) Op. Cit. p. 350
(3) Op. Cit. p. 371; cp. 386
(4) Op. Cit. p. 352
(5) Op. Cit. p. 348
(6) Op. Cit. pp. 388ff
(7) Op. Cit. pp. 361f
(8) Op. Cit. p. 249

It is therefore apparent that Kierkegaard regards the aesthetic as something much more than a dilettante attitude to pleasure: it is something which permeates every relationship of the individual to what lies outside him. The aesthetic is the immediate attitude to life, and because as human beings we are living in immediacy the aesthetic is always there. But the spheres must be kept apart: when we desire to go deeper than a merely relative and comparative attitude to life then we must be careful to see that the aesthetic is kept in its proper place, or rather that our attitude towards it remains relative, and that it is not allowed to take precedence in the realm of the absolute, whether ethical or religious; thus reducing everything to its own level. We must be constantly watching the aesthetic; and it is exactly because the age has not done that that it has gone wrong. Everything has been reduced to the aesthetic sphere of existence, even Christianity.

The Aesthetic Stage leads to despair

In The Aesthetic Stage Kierkegaard depicts from the inside what a self which is not really aware of itself is like. Everything, including the self, is thought of as being external, objective. "But every life-view which hinges upon a condition outside itself is in despair."(1) There can be an awareness of the self in a certain limited sense, but only as something which coheres with the other. "The self is in the dative case...its dialectic is the

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.198

agreeable and the disagreeable; its concepts are: good fortune, misfortune, fate."(1) The aesthetic individual recognises that he has a self only by means of externals. "There is no more ludicrous confusion, for a self is just infinitely different from externals."(2) We have seen that where there is a failure to relate the synthesis of the self with its self, to itself, then there cannot be said to exist a self in the true sense of the word, and when such a condition exists then the self is said to be in despair. The aesthetic individual either unconsciously or even deliberately does not wish to become aware of himself. Therefore all forms of aesthetic despair can be subsumed under the formula: "despair at not willing to be himself."(3) In other words the despair is characterised by the fact that the individual is unwilling to be aware of himself.

Now it can be said that the despair which attaches to the aesthetic is not yet entirely conscious, although some inkling of it is possible when some misfortune occurs which brings the individual to despair in the usual sense of the word. When such a misfortune occurs to the aesthetic individual then he is forced to contemplate himself for a time; he is sorry for himself, but after the misfortune is past he goes back to the old way of self-forgetfulness. But this is not really despair in the

---

(1) S, Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death pp.80f

(2) Op. Cit. p.84

(3) Op. Cit. p.87

true sense. Here there is: "no infinite consciousness of self...the despair is passive, succumbing to the presence of the outward circumstances, it by no means comes from within as action."(1) Despair in the true sense is: "to lose oneself in the eternal...and of this he does not speak, does not dream. The loss of the earthly as such is not the cause of the despair, and yet it is of this he speaks, and he calls it despairing."(2) When misfortune overtakes the aesthetic individual he despairs after a fashion, but he does not realise that despair is a part of his very being. He can only think of it as something temporary, transitory, exceptional. In other words, for him it is thought of as something finite, whereas in reality it belongs to the category of the infinite.

It might be said that the aesthetic individual does attempt at times in his objective fashion to come to terms with himself, but whenever this happens he ends up in despair. He may attempt to acquire a self through learning and knowledge, but if this knowledge is not paralleled by a corresponding degree of self-knowledge then he can only end up in frustration; for merely to become a walking encyclopaedia is not to obtain selfhood, and he who hopes to find it in such a way is doomed to frustration and despair.(3)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death pp.79f

(2) Op. Cit. pp.81f

(3) Op. Cit. p.47

He may try to become truly himself by immersing himself in material activities of one kind or another. He attempts to become a success in business, or to become famous; in this way he hopes he will become somebody. He will carve out for himself a self. He is really what could be called worldly acquisitive. But the self which he is seeking for through these activities and interests, self-realisation, eludes him. No matter how successful he may be it never quite satisfies him. His multifarious activities become sour on him and he is left with an emptiness which can only be described as despair.(1)

Then there is the man who chooses what kind of self he would like to be, and as he tries one line of approach after another he may feel that he is progressing towards a true self. But the more he does this, the more does his true self recede from him, and this brings about despair.(2)

Another way in which the aesthetic individual attempts self-realisation is through the kind of fatalistic acceptance of himself as he is. This is the way he is and he will never change. He tries to imagine himself as the average and so he observes people whom he considers to be such and attempts to mould himself upon them. He does not struggle to get above the average; there is no will needed to be what he already is. The trivial is the goal for him.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death pp.51f

(2) Op. Cit. pp.54ff

But there is still the self that he ought to be dangling before his nose, and this causes him intense frustration. There are situations which arrive in life where such a conception of the self is totally inadequate. He is the subject of despair.(1)

There is the man who attempts to avoid anything disagreeable by attempting to live in the most pleasing circumstances possible to him. He imagines that this is the only way in which he can achieve self-realisation. But then along comes misfortune and wrecks the whole scheme. When that passes he is prepared to start again. He very soon finds that life cannot be organised in terms of the pleasant and the agreeable, and that it has a nasty habit of putting a spanner in the works. He is very vulnerable, and when misfortune overtakes him he is lost, that is to say, his self is gone. Nothing he can do will avoid this so he is led to despair.

But sometimes the aesthetic individual is aware of a deep unrest within himself, that all is not as it should be. So he attempts to do something about it. He selects the kind of self that he would like to be. But this is determined out of the twistedness which arises from the fact that he is not in true relationship with himself. He fails to recognise the self which he already is and elects to be one which he is not and can never be, and so

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death pp.62ff

he despairs, for he can never attain what he sets out to be.(1)

Whatever way the aesthetic individual seeks to find himself in self-realisation, whether consciously or unconsciously, he is "conscious of having been defrauded of what is (his) by right."(2) The trouble is that he is looking at himself in an objective fashion, and as such cannot become aware of his self as it should be.

When the individual comes to a point of conscious despair then he is ready, if he so chooses, to enter the ethical, existence-sphere. But, of course, it is possible to continue in the aesthetic without ever reaching an absolute choice, without there ever being a question of an either/or. In such a case the self has been so lost or forgotten in aesthetic categories, in: "a wild passion of annihilation",(3) that it has become too dissolute... to grasp what is implied in a dilemma. The personality is so taken up in relativity that it lacks the energy to say with pathos either/or.

Communication in the Aesthetic Sphere

The subject of this study is "Communication and Subjectivity" and this is also Kierkegaard's primary interest in dealing with the dialectic of communication.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death pp.86ff
(2) G. Price The Narrow Pass p.57 (Brackets are mine)
(3) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.136
(4) Op. Cit. p.133

For him subjectivity is truth, and it is the communication of this which interests him. However for the sake of completeness it would be well to see what he has to say about communication in the aesthetic sphere as we have had to delineate it in order to make clear what is meant by the Ethico-Religious.

We have seen what is involved in the inwardness of the individual who is living in largely aesthetic categories. In relating himself to himself there is a disparity. He does not will to be himself in the true sense. The aesthetic existence sphere tends to the negation or even the annihilation of self-hood. There is a break in the relationship. "The immediate man does not recognise his self, he recognises himself only by his dress...he recognises that he has a self only by externals."(1) His attempt to relate himself to himself is a failure which is evidenced by despair. For either he has a wrong conception of the self, or no conception at all. For there to be a right relationship within the self there must be a communication. So much for the communication of the self with its self, considered from the point of view of the aesthetic. What about the attempt of such a self to communicate with another? That is to say, communicate in the more generally accepted sense of the word.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.84

The characteristics of such outward communication are parallel to the inward communication which takes place in the aesthetic sphere. As Swenson says: "Kierkegaard writes as one aware of the dialectic of the process of communication, understanding this as a reflection of the dialectic that is grounded in the very existence of the individual."(1) The outward expression is appropriate to the inner content.(2) This being the case, it would appear that there is in fact a failure to communicate in any true sense. Just as the aesthetic individual may recognise after a sort that he has something which he calls a self, so there is a communication after a sort when it comes to relating the self to another. The aesthetic individual assumes that his self is something which is whole and total, which he naively takes for granted, to which he has a direct simple relationship. So much so that he often ignores it altogether. So in communication with another he naively assumes that the communication is direct and unequivocal. There is nothing more involved than just the communication. All he has to do is to influence the other into his way of thinking. Just as he considers himself as a simple entity, so he considers his communication with others as something quite simple and direct. "Ordinary communication between man

---

(1) D. Swenson Something about Kierkegaard p.114

(2) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.68

and man is wholly immediate, because men in general exist immediately. When one man sets forth something and another acknowledges the same word for word it is taken for granted that they are in agreement, and that they have understood one another."(1) Of course, such immediate direct communication need not be easy to understand. Just because it is direct does not mean to say that it is self-evident. Hegel after all employed direct communication which is far from easy to understand. For the immediate or aesthetic individual communication has been achieved when: "the thought has received a suitable expression in the word, mediating a meeting of minds in something objective."(2)

And just as the attitude of the aesthetic individual to his self in the true sense is one of indifference, so is his attitude to the existence of the other one of indifference. All that matters is that he should be understood, that the communication may be understood. He is out to make it clear, whether it goes any further than that he does not care. He is not interested in how it may affect the existence of the other, if at all. It is expressed with little thought as to its effect. There is none of: "The godly and humane solicitude in communicating itself, which belongs to subjective thinking."(3)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.69

(2) D. Swenson Something about Kierkegaard p.114

(3) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.70

In an outburst of anger the communication is wholly aesthetic and immediate. All that interests the individual at such a time is to give expression to his feeling; there is little thought as to form that expression should take. It does not matter if it wounds or hurts. There is lacking: "an awareness of the form of communication in relation to the recipient's possible misunderstanding."(1) All that interests the aesthetic communicator is that he should be understood; what happens afterwards is immaterial to him.(2)

If it is true that the outward communication of the individual reflects the inner communication which he has with himself, then we would expect to find that in direct communication, which is the expression of the aesthetic, there is a failure of relationship, just as there is within the self itself. And this is so. The aesthetic individual presupposes that his communication impinges upon the other in the form of a certainty. But it is just as much an object outside of himself, as any other object, and is therefore subject to the same drawbacks which apply to his apprehension of anything which is outside him.(3) "Direct communication presupposes certainty, but certainty is impossible for anyone in process of becoming, and the semblance of certainty constitutes for such an individual

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.70

(2) Op. Cit. p.289

(3) Cp. Previous Chapter p.120f

a deception."[1] At the most it can only be an approximation. From the point of view of subjectivity, of becoming subjective, a direct communication can never be more than a possibility, however direct and clear it may be in every other respect. For a communication to have its impact upon the existence of the individual it must itself be existential: "understanding it is merely an evasion of the task."[2] Direct communication tends to prevent: "the self-activity of personal appropriation."[3] The direct communication of the aesthetic existence sphere comes from a self which is broken, and this is reflected in the communication itself.

We have seen that the aesthetic has a place in the life of the individual. (Remember it is only "dethroned" in the task of becoming subjective.) So it is the case that direct communication, communication of results, of knowledge, has a part to play, but it is not the most important part. It becomes of secondary importance. There is a place for direct utterance even although subjectivity and appropriation are not involved on either side. "When objective thinking is within its rights, its direct form of communication is also in order, precisely because it is not supposed to have anything to do with subjectivity."[4] Kierkegaard recognises that such objective impersonal knowledge may sometimes be

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.68(Note)
(2) Op. Cit. p.332
(3) Op. Cit. p.217
(4) Op. Cit. p.70(Note)

necessary before appropriation can be effective. Speaking of The Concept of Dread he says: "Perhaps the author has thought that on this point a communication of knowledge might be needful, before going on to engender inwardness; which latter task is relative to one who may be presumed essentially to have knowledge, and hence not in need of having this conveyed to him, but rather needing to be personally affected."(1) Understanding of a doctrine or of a scientific fact has its place. Everyone who has ever been profoundly influenced by some great work of literature or philosophy and so on must first have learned the alphabet in order to read. Such learning by rote, as Kierkegaard would call it, is in this case a necessary preliminary to the inner appropriation which now takes place. Indeed a similar case can be put forward for Kierkegaard's own writings, from the purely aesthetic point of view. Although they are direct in utterance, that is to say they make use of words and sentences and paragraphs which are capable of being understood as a direct communication, and perhaps some such objective understanding is necessary before what he says may be appropriated by the individual. But, of course, this is only the beginning of the matter with Kierkegaard. The direct understanding of Kierkegaard can never be the end of the matter, there must also be existential appropriation, which is impossible through direct communication, direct understanding of Kierkegaard is precisely misunderstanding.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.241

CHAPTER 4

THE ETHICO-RELIGIOUS SPHERE

It is true to say that the aesthetic existence-sphere is constantly a choosing, but the individual living in such a state does not have before him one either/or but "a multiplicity". Moreover, he chooses for the moment only; the next moment his choice may be different. This choice is an aesthetic choice and is really no choice at all.(1) In the ethical existence-sphere, on the other hand, it is the question of an absolute choice which is involved, not choice in general.

The moment of this absolute choice is reached when the aesthetic individual comes to realise that his life-view can only lead to frustration and despair. He sees that this is not good enough and groans for an alternative. The choice before him presents itself as an absolute one, and as such, a choice between good and evil, an ethical choice. For Kierkegaard the absolute choice is a question of salvation: on the decision arising out of the either/or depends the individual's salvation.(2) It is more than just a question of choosing between the aesthetic and the ethical existence-spheres; the choice is between choosing and not choosing, and with this latter choice the choice between good and evil comes into being. When the individual is brought to the point where the necessity of choice is made manifest, he is contemplating existence under ethical categories.(3) The ethical is involved

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.141

(2) Op. Cit. p.136

(3) Op. Cit. p.150

wherever "in a stricter sense there is a question of either/or". The only absolute choice is the choice between good and evil, but that is also absolutely ethical.(1) Moreover, it is a choice which is absolutely decisive for the personality, for it is existential: if the personality does not immerse itself in the thing which it chooses and does not choose at all then it "withers away in consumption".(2)

To the man in the street the word ethical has a very vague connotation; it is connected with a relationship to duty; it is the field in which the battle between good and evil is fought out. But Kierkegaard is very precise in his use of the term, and as in the case of the aesthetic his definition goes far beyond the normal use of the word. And his deeper understanding arises out of what he understands by the aesthetic.

(i) Self as the Absolute Alternative to the Aesthetic - Choosing Accordingly

Just as the mark of the aesthetic is relativity, outwardness, objectivity and so on, so the mark of the ethical is absoluteness, inwardness and subjectivity. And this can only be found in the self: "For a study of the ethical man is assigned to himself...this is the only sphere where he can study it with the assurance of certainty."(3) If the individual wishes to choose the alternative once he sees it then the only alternative which he can choose, which does not land him back in aesthetic categories, is himself.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.141

(2) Op. Cit. p.138 cp. Concluding Unscientific Postscript: p.348f

(3) Op. Cit. p.217 cp. Concluding Unscientific Postscript: p.127

The only thing which is not external to himself to, or outside himself, must be that which is within him, that is to say, himself. Naturally the aesthetic is not entirely excluded by this absol ute choice; it is only excluded as an absolute while remaining in a relative sense.(1) Personality is the absolute for him.(2) Even if he does not choose the ethical as opposed to the aesthetic, yet by virtue of the fact that he is aware of an either/or, the ethical exists as a possibility for him. He is already hovering on the brink of the ethical.

Accordingly, the ethical individual has no alternative once the decision has been taken but to choose himself. The expression "Know Thyself" was used by the Greeks to denote a specific self-knowledge, but Kierkegaard deliberately substitutes for the Greek concept the expression "Choose Thyself"; because this goes a bit further than mere knowledge or contemplation of oneself. He who has chosen himself "has seen himself, knows himself, penetrates with his whole consciousness his whole concretion...he knows himself...but this knowledge is not mere contemplation...it is a reflection upon himself which itself is an action...so when the individual knows himself he is not finished; on the contrary, this knowledge is in the highest degree fruitful, and from it proceeds the true individual."(3)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.150

(2) Op. Cit. p.221

(3) Op. Cit. p.216

Such a choice is existential, transforming "the individual's entire mode of existence in conformity with the object of his interest."(1) The ethical is thus much more than self-knowledge; there is an action involved which is related to this knowledge.(2) When there is no existential pathos involved in the choice of the self, then there occurs an abstract interpretation of what it is to choose, and the ethical choice is taken in vain for it is taken aesthetically.(3) The self is chosen in an aesthetic manner. The individual who chooses himself thus has "chosen himself maybe, but outside himself".(4) The choice then must be existential; that is to say, the existence of the individual must be transformed, and when it is so, then does he come to exist in the ethical sphere.

(ii) The Nature of the Choice

Granted that the individual, having understood the nature of the choice, and having made the absolute decision has now chosen; how is the choice brought about? How is it accomplished? In the book Either/Or Kierkegaard speaks as if the very act of despair itself led to a choice, the absolute choice. He speaks as if there was something in despair itself which carried the individual forward to the

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.350

(2) Op. Cit. p.143

(3) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.194

(4) Op. Cit. p.194

choice. "One cannot despair without choosing. And when a man despairs he chooses again....and what is it he chooses? He chooses himself, not in his immediacy, not as this fortuitous individual, but he chooses himself in his eternal validity."(1) Here Kierkegaard talks as if in the very act of despair the individual wins through to himself. But in The Concluding Unscientific Postscript he has second thoughts. He says there that there is a difficulty raised by speaking as if the choice arose out of something which was immanent in despair; because in despairing the individual uses himself to despair and can despair of everything, but he cannot by himself come back to his self. "In the moment of decision the individual needs divine assistance, while it is quite right to say that one must first have understood the existential relationship between the aesthetic and the ethical in order to be at this point; that is to say, by being there in passion and inwardness one will doubtless become aware of the religious....and the leap."(2) Thus right at the very moment of choice between the aesthetic and the ethical, the religious is present. So there is not any question of the ethical being immanent in despair which is the outcome of the aesthetic life-view, and which, if this were the case, would constitute a continuous movement from the one to the other. The journey from the aesthetic to the ethical involves a break, a leap; a leap, moreover, which requires divine assistance.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.177

(2) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.230f

(iii) The Ethical Task

But before the leap is made, before the ethical can become a reality, the choice as such must be presented to the individual; he must be aware of it. That is to say it must be for him a possibility. But this latter word, associated as it is with the System and Hegelian terminology, is far too aesthetic and intellectual for Kierkegaard's liking. The aesthetic view sees only possibilities and unlimited possibilities in the content of the future. A much better word than "possibility" for Kierkegaard is "task". The ethical individual chooses himself in his concretion and "sees this actual concretion of his as his task, his goal, his aim".(1) In other words, selfhood has become not just something which an individual possesses as part of his humanity, but it is something to be striven after, something to be attained.

(a) Self-Revelation

This thought is expressed in different ways. Thus it is the task of the individual to reveal himself; that is to say, to make his self in all its concretion more and more evident to himself. The ethical is carried back to "the determination of self-revelation: that it is a man's duty to reveal himself".(2) Of course,in the external sense the ethical individual also reveals himself, as does the aesthetic individual, because they both express

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.211

(2) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.446 (Note)

themselves in the reality of the environment in which they live. But the difference with the ethicist is that he deliberately sets his outward life in juxtaposition with the infinite requirement of the ethical by a movement of the spirit inwardly, and this is not something which can be seen.(1) The ethicist abolishes concealment, that is to say, aesthetic self-destruction, concealment of self, in self-revelation.(2) He is an actor in a little private theatre, where as well as being occasionally a spectator, he is essentially an actor "whose task is not to deceive but to reveal."(3)

(b) Becoming Subjective

Another way of expressing the ethical task is to say that the aim is to become subjective. It is the task of the individual to become a subject, or to become subjective.(4) This links up more directly with existence as a whole, with the thesis "Subjectivity is Truth". Subjectivity is something which permeates every characterisation of existence, and not merely the ethical or ethico-religious. Admittedly in the first general characterisation of existence and in the aesthetic existence-sphere which is a denial of the self, the individual may not be aware of his self; but whether

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.450
(2) Op. Cit. p.230
(3) Op. Cit. p.141
(4) Op. Cit. p.119

consciously or unconsciously a self is still there, even if it is negated, or forgotten and so on. There is subjectivity there even although there may be a denial of subjectivity in the existential sense. An individual cannot deny or negate, whether "absent-mindedly" or otherwise what is not there to deny. If the task for the ethical individual is to become subjective, it is to become something which he already is: "Every human being is a bit of a subject". And in the same place Kierkegaard says: "The development or transformation of the individual's subjectivity...constitutes the developed potentiality of the primary potentiality which subjectivity as such presents".(1) The task of becoming subjective is certainly an ethical task, but subjectivity does not begin or end here. As the individual digs ever deeper into the meaning of existence, so does his subjectivity attain new significance. Subjectivity in the religious sphere is something more profound than in the ethical. And even when the individual reaches Christianity, or to be more precise, when Christianity is posited, which for Kierkegaard is existence in all its fulness as nothing else is, it is still subjectivity which is its (Christianity's) concern;(2) even although, of course, it is revealed as something deeper than either the ethical or the religious existence-spheres.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.116 (My Italics)

(2) Op. Cit. p.116

(c) Realising the Universal - Human

But the task of the ethical individual is further referred to as "realising the universal-human"; transforming himself into "the universal man".(1) At first sight this would seem to be almost a contradiction to what has just been said regarding subjectivity, and it must be admitted that it does seem strange to hear Kierkegaard of all people speak of the universal-human. The expression has a distinct Hegelian ring about it, and in fact Thomte and others consider that Kierkegaard is thinking of the ethical here, and in "Fear and Trembling" and "Repetition", in an Hegelian sense. I shall discuss this in some detail later on. What does Kierkegaard mean by such terms? Not, I think, anything resembling Hegel.

The fact is that the Judge in Either/Or did not have any such conception, and categorically refuses to allow that this universal man is situated outside the individual in the world-historical or in anything else. To view the ethical as "outside the personality and in an external relationship to it" is to abandon everything; it is to fall into despair.(2) If the individual believes that then he is disorientated. It is an abstract conception and as such is an "abstract annihilation of the original self".(3) Contemplation of the world and humanity is not

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.218

(2) Op. Cit. p.213f

(3) Op. Cit. p.217; cp.p.218f

an ethical, but an aesthetic contemplation: "There is only one kind of ethical contemplation, namely, self-contemplation".(1)

(i) The Universal and the Particular

Nevertheless there is a problem involved in the whole idea of a task, aim, goal, and so on, because all these things involve the idea of striving. Becoming is something inherent in the ethical. While the expression for the aesthetic is that the individual in his immediacy is what he is, the expression for the ethical is that the individual becomes what he becomes.(2) The words "task", "aim", "goal", "telos", "teleology" and so on, all imply striving towards something, which means that the task, or whatever one wishes to call it is not yet accomplished, and it is therefore not yet within the individual; it is outside him by virtue of the fact that he has to strive. But when the goal of the individual is himself, as is the case in the ethical existence-sphere, then the situation arises where the individual has his self posited as a task to attain outside himself and yet in himself as something which he already possesses. Kierkegaard puts it like this: "By the individual's intercourse with himself he impregnates himself and brings himself to birth. This self which the individual knows is at once the actual self and the ideal self which the individual has outside

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.284

(2) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 pp.150;189

himself as the picture in likeness to which he has to form himself and which, on the other hand, he nevertheless has in him since it is the self".(1) This is the same as saying that the individual has his teleology in himself. By ethical striving towards himself personality is manifested as the absolute which has its teleology in itself.(2) Kierkegaard will not allow that the task is something which is outside the individual himself, far less the universal in the ordinary sense of the word.

But what the individual is striving after, namely, the ethical which for Kierkegaard is the self, is something which every man possesses, and hence in that sense it is a universal. So ~~that~~ from what has just been said in the previous paragraph, it is evident that in this instance at any rate the individual has within him at the same time the universal and the particular. But it is not only in this instance. In every case the same thing occurs. Take the performance of duty, for example. Duty is the universal. What is required of the individual is the universal; but the individual as such can only perform the particular. Our way of speaking emphasises this fact: "I never say of a man that he does duty or duties but I say that he does <u>his</u> duty....this shows that the individual is at once the Universal and the Particular. Duty is the universal which is required of me; so if I am not the universal I am unable to perform duty. On the other hand,

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Either/Or 2</u> p.217

(2) Op. Cit. p.220

my duty is the particular, something for me alone, and yet it is duty and hence the Universal...as a particular individual I am not the Universal, and to require that of me is absurd. So if I am able to perform the Universal I must be the Universal at the same time that I am the particular; but then the dialectic of duty is within me".(1) In The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication he writes: "What exactly is the ethical? Surely, if I ask the question thus I enquire unethically about the ethical, thus I ask the question in the same way that the whole confusion of modern times asks it, and so I cannot bring it to a halt. The ethical assumes that every man knows what the ethical is, and why? Because the ethical surely demands that every human being at every moment should carry it out. The ethical begins, not with ignorance, which will be transformed into knowledge, but it begins with knowledge and demands a realisation."(2) The ethical individual can only transform himself into the universal man because he already has the power within him. The existing ethical individual is one "who is himself conscious and in reflection comes back in himself to be just that, he learns and assumes, that every human being is that κατὰ συναμιν. The whole of modern thought concerning the ethical is ethically understood an evasion."(3) If it is the task of the

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.220f

(2) S. Kierkegaard Papirer Volume VIII²B Section 81¹⁰

(3) Op. Cit. 81⁵

cp Either/Or 2 p.216

ethical individual to become an entire man it is also the ethical presupposition "that every man is born in such a condition that he can become one".(1)

(ii) Hegel's View of the Ethical

In what respect does Kierkegaard consider that modern thought, which for him is Hegelianism, is confused? What, according to Kierkegaard, is the modern (that is to say, 19th Century) view of the ethical? Such questions can be answered by taking a look at the Postscript. There he finds that the modern world considers the ethical under "world-historical contemplation". That is to say, it is something objective which is to be found outside the individual himself, in world-history. By the contemplation of humanity and the world the individual will discover the ethical.(2) The ethical is "becoming an observer".(3) In this way ethics, as Kierkegaard understands it, has been "crowded out of the System, and as a substitute for it there has been included a something which confuses the historical with the individual".(4) Everything, including the ethical, has been lumped together "indiscriminately in the aesthetic-metaphysical.".(5) But for Kierkegaard "There is only one kind of ethical contemplation, namely, self-contemplation."(6) Ethics is concerned, as

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.309
(2) Op. Cit. p.284
(3) Op. Cit. p.119
(4) Op. Cit. p.309
(5) Op. Cit. p.263 (Note)
(6) Op. Cit. p.284

Kierkegaard says, "with particular human beings, and with each and every one of them by himself...its enumeration is not in the interest of a total sum, but for the sake of the individual".(1) Even if individuals were numberless "as the sand of the sea" the ethical task is still the same, namely, to become subjective.(2) What happens when the ethical is confused with the world-historical is that it (the ethical) becomes essentially different when it has to do with millions from when it has to do with one" and out of this another confusion arises; "namely, that the ethical first finds its concrete embodiment in the world-historical, and becomes in this form a task for the living. The ethical is thus not the primitive, the most primitive of all that the individual has within him, but rather an abstraction from the world-historical experience."(3) Thomte well sums up Hegel's ethical position in a few sentences by writing: "To Hegel the history of civilisation is the unfolding and expression of immanent thought. The individual is immersed in this living process of the world and finds his freedom and worth through a participation in the universal process as it is expressed in society and its institutions. From this it follows that the highest ethical law is: Identify thyself with objective Reason as found in the institutions of mankind." (This last phrase is a quotation from Hocking's Types of Philosophy.)(4)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.284

(2) Op. Cit. p.142

(3) Op. Cit. p.129

(4) Reidar Thomte Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion p.210

I can find nothing in anything which the judge says to associate the ethical with any such concept.

(d) The Individual's Connection with History

But the foregoing does not imply that the individual has no connection whatsoever with history. Granted that "the first form which the choice takes is complete isolation" where the individual cuts himself off from the whole world; and granted that his choice is an active one only for the individual himself, the surrounding world having been reduced to nought;[1] but the self which he chooses is his self which is determined in his whole concretion. He is a definite individual who has "these talents, these passions...who is under these influences."[2] He is influenced by "these definite surroundings, as this definite product of a definite environment".[3] Accordingly, in choosing himself he chooses these things too; he assumes responsibility for them so that at the very moment of choice when he is in complete isolation, he is also in complete accord with his surroundings, because he chooses himself as product.[4] The self which the individual chooses is not an abstract self which vaguely fits in anywhere and thus is in no particular place (a Hegelian conception of the universal), but it is "a concrete self which stands in reciprocal relations with these surroundings, these conditions of life, this natural

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Either/or 2 p.201
(2) Op. Cit. p.219
(3) Op. Cit. p.210
(4) Op. Cit. p.210

order". It is not only an isolated self, but a concrete self; a self which is designed for taking an active part in the affairs of the world.(1) The ethical self is "a social, civil, self".(2) At the very moment the individual chooses himself out of the world, he chooses himself back into it.(3) The personal life in isolation is imperfection, but by the fact that he comes back into his personality through the civic life, the personal life manifests itself in a higher form.(4)

Again, the ethical individual connects himself with history and with other individuals through the act of repentance. Repentance is something which is essential to the ethical existence-sphere. The individual in choosing himself in his concretion, chooses himself with his past which includes the aesthetic existence-sphere from which he emerged when the leap was made and he chose the ethical. Moreover, the choice is one between evil and good. And when an individual chooses the ethical with the whole inwardness of his being this means that he equally passionately rejects the aesthetic which has become for him the evil. But in so far as it constitutes his past, there is a sense in which it remains with him and as such, in view of his rejection, it must cause him pain and sorrow. The self which is chosen in the ethical absolute choice has a history, and contained in that history is the pain of having been in the (now) distasteful

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.229f
(2) Op. Cit. p.219f
(3) Op. Cit. p.208f
(4) Op. Cit. p.220

category of the aesthetic. Yet history has made the individual what he is, therefore "at the very time it seems that he isolates himself most thoroughly he is most thoroughly absorbed in the root by which he is connected to the whole".(1) The expression of regret at having been in the aesthetic, and moreover through the process of striving, being aware that one is not what one ought to be, is repentance. The very idea of rejection of the aesthetic involves the concept of repentance which is therefore something more than just sorrow or regret, because if one repents, it is not only with regard to the past but with a view to the future, in order to bring about a change for the better. In the aesthetic sphere sorrow is connected with fortune and misfortune,(2) but not so with the ethical. Here repentance is synonymous with the ethical choice. "Choosing oneself is identical with repenting oneself."(3) The ethical individual does not try to obliterate or volatise what he is and was, on the contrary, he becomes repentantly absorbed in it. The manysidedness of his concrete self is himself, and it is only as he repents himself tightly into it that he can come to himself, since he does not assume that the world begins with him or that he creates himself.(4) Thus it

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.181
(2) Op. Cit. p.197
(3) Op. Cit. p.208
(4) Op. Cit. pp.208f;216

is by repentance, which is identical with choosing oneself, that the individual is brought into "the most intimate connection and the most exact cohesion with a surrounding world."(1)

(e) Kierkegaard is not using Universal-Human in a Hegelian Sense

For Hegel the task of realising the universal-human, to use Kierkegaard's words, would mean something as follows to the individual: "Look around you. Observe your neighbours, your friends, your countrymen, the whole human race as far as possible; through direct observation, through the study of history and in any other way. Think about your observations and then act upon what you see. Your task is to become like that." For Kierkegaard such advice would only lead to yet one more aesthetic, accidental, choice, because it is something which lies outside the individual himself. Kierkegaard would say with regard to the same expression (realising the universal-human): "Stop looking around you to your neighbour, history, the human race and so on. Look inside you so that you may be able to make the absolute choice, and when you do you will become more completely at one with them, by bringing to fruition what lies within every man." Although Kierkegaard may through the words of Judge William in Either/Or be using Hegelian terminology, as he does again and again in his writing as a whole, he is very far from using Hegelian ideas and concepts.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.202

Thomte says: "According to Hegel the norm of ethics was to be objectively and not subjectively determined. He rejected the autonomy of the individual in matters of ethics. Any deviation from the universal was viewed with suspicion. Though not a Hegelian Judge William accepts this Hegelian position, a position which is also expressed in Fear and Trembling."(1) He considers that the view of the ethical as described in Either/Or is rejected by Kierkegaard in The Postscript, where a more advanced ethical position is formulated: "With the category of 'the individual', the category of the universal-human as proclaimed by Judge William in Either/Or and Stages on Life's Way and by Johannes de Silentio in Fear and Trembling is completely discarded."(2) Again, when discussing Fear and Trembling he says in a footnote: "In Fear and Trembling the ethical is the ethical in a Hegelian sense."(3)

As I have stated(4) and have tried to show throughout this discussion on the ethical existence-sphere, I cannot see how Thomte's views in this respect with regard to Either/Or are correct. It seems inconceivable to me that Kierkegaard should be so inconsistent as to make the Judge define the ethical as something so unhegelian as absolute choice and so on; making it quite clear that such an

---

(1) Reidar Thomte Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion p.38f

(2) Op. Cit. p.118

(3) Op. Cit. p.59

(4) Compare p.176f

absolute is the only absolute alternative to aesthetic relativity, and then suddenly switch to accepting the Hegelian position, which is diametrically opposed to his own. Hegel's position had been decisively rejected when Kierkegaard formulated the ethical position as choosing one's self. Why would the Judge perform a volte face without any specific explanation that he was doing so? We have seen[1] that Kierkegaard is careful to question something which the Judge says about despair, in the later Concluding Unscientific Postscript; surely this position with regard to the Judge's views on the universal-human is something much more serious, particularly in view of all that Kierkegaard says about Hegel in The Concluding Unscientific Postscript. In other words, Kierkegaard is careful to question a comparatively small point in the Judge's diagnosis, but he never mentions the fact (according to Thomte) that he might be completely mistaken in accepting the Hegelian position with regard to ethics. If Kierkegaard had regarded the Judge's position as such he would certainly have mentioned it. But apart from this altogether, Kierkegaard can still speak with apparent approval of the universal-human in The Concluding Unscientific Postscript.[2] Diem speaks of "Kierkegaard's splendid consistency of thought, which means that not the

---

(1) Compare p.171f

(2) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.504

the smallest fancy of thought can remain outside the comprehensive conception of his dialectical method",[1] and again he takes it for granted that Kierkegaard carries out a certain experiment "with complete thoroughness and consistency".[2] Anyone who has read Diem's book: Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence, will know that he is extremely well qualified to pass an opinion on such matters. If what Thomte says is true then Kierkegaard not only is inconsistent with himself in two different books, a fact which could be explained as due to greater maturity and so forth, but he positively contradicts himself within the space of 145 pages of one book. As I have sought to establish, what Hegel means by the universal human, and what Kierkegaard, even in Either/Or, means by it are two entirely different things.

THE ETHICO-RELIGIOUS

(1) Connection between ethical and religious

Having made the ethical choice, he must continue in an absolute relationship to the self which is chosen, otherwise there is a step back into the sphere of the aesthetic. To make the ethical choice in some special instance and then choose something else at another time, is to have a relative relationship towards the absolute, it is to consider the absolute as something among other

---

(1) Hermann Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p.52

(2) Op. Cit. p.59

things and this leads to aesthetic determinations. If one wishes to maintain an absolute relationship then it must be maintained, that is to say the choice must be persevered in. And it is when carrying out this perseverance that the individual comes into the religious sphere and in so doing becomes "more and more absorbed in himself".(1) But the ethical choice is only the beginning of the process through which the individual comes to choose himself, or to be more accurate, the beginning of the process during which the individual discovers what having a self means.

Having chosen, the individual must keep on choosing, and in this process the religious is brought to light. But even at the very moment of choice, as we have seen,(2) the religious is posited by virtue of the leap. In fact the resolution (which is another word for choice) is already a religious life-view...a "religious starting point".(3) Although Kierkegaard takes pains to delineate a purely ethical existence-sphere in Either/Or we are made aware of religious presuppositions which underlie the Judge's point of view.(4) The ethical is no more than a transitional sphere(5) which leads on to the religious.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Stages on Life's Way p.386

(2) Compare p.172

(3) S. Kierkegaard Stages on Life's Way p.159

(4) S. Kierkegaard Either/Or 2 p.199

(5) S. Kierkegaard Stages on Life's Way p.430

While it "desires to be separated from the aesthetic and from the outwardness which is its imperfection, it desires to enter into a joyous alliance, and that is with the religious".(1) He who makes the ethical choice has the religious possibility constantly "as the deepest thing in his soul, as it already was in his life-view without his knowing it".(2) He has a "pristine possibility"(3) which breaks through to the religious. The individual cannot find himself in the religious existence-sphere without first having passed through the ethical; this is essential; he must have been submitted to the discipline of the ethical.(4) The religious sphere is "so close to the ethical that they are in constant communication with one another".(5) The two stages are to some extent dependent upon one another, and this explains why Kierkegaard so often refers to the "ethico-religious" sphere, and why it is so difficult to analyse the component parts. It also explains why there is only one either/or and not an either/or/or. Either the aesthetic or the ethical which leads to the religious...the ethico-religious. Although in the book Stages on Life's Way there is a triple division yet it is also an either/or, because "the ethical and the religious have in fact an

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Stages on Life's Way p.400

(2) Op. Cit. p.394

(3) Op. Cit. p.390

(4) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.347f

(5) Op. Cit. p.145

essential relationship to one another".[1] The ethical is included in the religious and to a certain extent, as we have just seen, the religious is included in the ethical. Whenever Kierkegaard uses the word "ethical" the reader must be on his guard in case he means by that the ethico-religious.[2] We must pay particular attention to the context in which it is written, and keep in mind the particular categories of the ethical or religious in so far as they can be given in their pure separate forms.

The religious existence-sphere really begins in the ethical. Starting from the absolute choice the individual who would maintain an absolute relationship must go on to uncover ever deepening levels of existence within himself until he reaches the limit. It follows therefore that all that has been said of the ethical applies equally to the religious, although in the latter category so much more is uncovered. The ethical with all its implications remains to the end. I shall from now on refer solely to the ethico-religious sphere.

Maintaining the Absolute Choice

The ethical choice is the absolute choice which as such brings the individual into relationship with the absolute telos which comes into being for the individual when he yields it an absolute devotion.[3] This

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.216

(2) Eduard Geismar Lectures on the Religious Thought of Søren Kierkegaard p.49f

(3) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.355

relationship to the absolute telos is "ipso facto also a relationship to God".(1) But it is impossible for him who would distinguish absolutely to make the absolute choice once and for all and then to be done with it, not only because such an act would throw everything back into the aesthetic, but also because the individual is living in time, with all that that means for the characterisation of existence in general. Time is a series of moments; as soon as the individual does anything or makes any decision, it is already in the past; he is always so much behind in thetime stream. The existing individual is always in process of becoming: "In existence the watchword is always forward."(2) "When the eternal strikes, he is already a little moment away."(3) When therefore the absolute choice is made, even at that precise moment the individual is behind time; it is already out of date. The relationship to the absolute can never in the nature of things be continuous. The nearest thing to a continuing absolute relationship which an existing individual can have is "the possibility of an approximation to the only true continuity he can have".(4) But nevertheless the individual sees it as his task to try to establish a lasting relationship to the Absolute. And this means that a fresh choice must be made at every instant.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.369
(2) Op. Cit. p.368
(3) Op. Cit. p.436
(4) Op. Cit. p.278

The difficulty is to maintain oneself in the absolute choice while still living in the finite, therefore the task is to "reinstate repeatedly the determination by which it was first accomplished".(1) "The Absolute telos...demands recognition as the absolute telos every moment. Hence it cannot be the intention to forget this the next moment."(2) That is to say, the individual must learn to exercise himself in the absolute choice.(3)

When the existing individual comes to this realisation the absolute telos appears not as something finite and temporal, but as infinite and eternal. It is an eternal happiness which cannot be possessed in time. "Since an eternal happiness is a telos for existing individuals, these two (the absolute and the existing individual) cannot be conceived as realising a union in existence, in rest." The whole of existence and of time must be a period of striving.(4) By reason of the temporal the individual can never be absolutely related; he may at a particular moment be able to be so related,(5) but at the next moment that relationship is gone. Unlike Hegel, who maintains that eternity is arrived at retrogressively through recollection, Kierkegaard considers that the existing individual can have a relationship to the

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.368
(2) Op. Cit. p.359
(3) Op. Cit. p.365; 366f
(4) Op. Cit. p.355f
(5) Op. Cit. p.367f

eternal "only as something prospective, as something in the future".[1] All that the existing individual can do is to maintain at one and the same time an absolute relationship to the absolute telos and a relative relationship to relative ends. This is for him "the maximum of attainment",[2] because as an existing individual he is bound up with the relative and temporal.

Infinite Resignation or Renunciation

How then does the existing individual set about establishing this absolute relationship? In the ethical choice all relativities were to be put aside in order to make room for the self. So the exercise of the relationship, that is to say the keeping up of the direction towards the absolute telos, lies in the continuous renunciation of relative ends. The individual must begin "by taking the power away from immediacy",[3] and "by exercising himself in the absolute renunciation... of relative ends". When he has the conception of an eternal happiness, the effect upon the individual is "to transform his whole existence in relation thereto, and this transformation is a process of dying away from the immediate".[4] The exercise of the relationship means that at every moment he must practise total renunciation. This is the "first genuine expression for a relationship

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.380
(2) Op. Cit. p.371
(3) Op. Cit. p.386f
(4) Op. Cit. p.432; cp.412; 414

to the absolute telos."[1] The act of renunciation Kierkegaard calls Resignation, but this is not to be confused with any interpretation involving a passive acceptance of one's fate as, for example, in the phrase "being resigned to one's fate". Resignation is used in the sense of resigning something, that is to say giving something up. Resignation is the "disciplinarian of life",[2] the inspector who continually keeps him on his toes.[3] It is something which constantly remains with him.[4] This means that absolutely everything relative has to be renounced, and it has to be renounced in favour of something which cannot be known or described. Because immediately you start to describe the absolute telos and look towards some definite result, everything returns to aesthetic categories.[5] To describe the absolute is to make it the highest in a series and so on, which is to make it relative.[6] Accordingly, the whole of the religious existence has the character of a venture or a dare. Everything must be risked, everything must be invested in the venture when the individual desires absolutely the highest telos.[7] In fact, it is so much

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.362
(2) Op. Cit. p.364; cp.354f
(3) Op. Cit. p.353
(4) Op. Cit. p.359
(5) Op. Cit. p.382
(6) Op. Cit. p.351; 358f
(7) Op. Cit. p.362

of a going out into the unknown, so much of a venture, that it may appear to others to be madness.(1)

The position so far is as follows. The individual has made the absolute choice. But he discovers that if it really is to be absolute and not relative then he must seek to have a continuous relationship towards the absolute. This brings him into an awareness of the absolute telos, God, the eternal happiness, thus bringing in the category of the religious. But here he comes up against a difficulty due to the fact that he exists in the temporal process and therefore can only think and act intermittently. It is impossible for him to have a continuous relationship unless he is prepared to make every instant a moment of choice, and even then it is only an approximation to a continuous relationship. This means that at every instant there must be a total renunciation of relative ends, of immediacy, which in turn takes on the nature of an absolute venture.

Suffering

The individual thus desires to be related absolutely but finds that he cannot by virtue of the fact that he lives in the finite and relative. His life is piecemeal, sprinkled with diversions and distractions in which "he is absent from his God-relationship, or present in it, yet not in the strong moment."(2) So that he is in an

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.381

(2) Op. Cit. p.439

"embarrassing situation"[1] where he can never be at ease. The ethico-religious man is always out of his element. The struggle with the finite, the continual encroachment of the relative upon the absolute causes him to be uncomfortable. He is under continuous tension and strain. The essential expression for the religious is therefore "suffering". The profound suffering of true religiosity arises from the fact that the individual stands related to the absolute in an absolutely decisive manner and yet he cannot find any decisive expression for this relationship.[2] Now this suffering is not to be confused with suffering in the ordinary sense of the word. It is not to be connected with fortune and misfortune, or physical or mental pain and absence of pain. These are contradictions which come from without.[3] Suffering for the immediate individual is something which he desires to be rid of, but this is not the case with the religious individual. Whereas suffering for the immediate individual alternates with non-suffering, for the religious individual it is something which is with him as long as he is in existence.[4] Therefore instead of trying to get rid of suffering the religious individual attempts to "share fully in the suffering...by realising that it is there".[5] He knows

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.404

(2) Op. Cit. p.440

(3) Op. Cit. p.388f

(4) Op. Cit. p.401

(5) Op. Cit. p.391

that to get rid of suffering in the religious sense is to get rid of the religious, and so he directs his reflection "upon the suffering and not away from it".(1) It is the persistence of the religious suffering which constitutes its reality, and this persistence is "essential for the pathetic relationship to an eternal happiness".(2)

Guilt

But there is still deeper to go into existence before the limit of the religious existence-sphere is reached. If suffering is the essential expression for the religious then the decisive expression for it is guilt or the consciousness of guilt.(3) The religious individual suffering through the tension between the relative and the absolute within him realises that he cannot have a continuous relationship to God, so the only thing which he can do is to put the two things together...eternal happiness and himself, and in so doing he becomes conscious of guilt. This putting together is of the utmost importance, because in doing that "consists all deeper apprehension of existence".(4) When he puts the two together the religious individual sees that there is an incompatibility, and moreover that it arises from his side. After all it is his finitude and the fact that he exists which prevents the absolute from receiving decisive expression. He is living in time and

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.397

(2) Op. Cit. p.400; cp.396; 398; 412; 496

(3) Op. Cit. p.468f

(4) Op. Cit. p.471f

subject to temporal limitations. Therefore, although he may not be able to see how he can help it, it is in a sense his fault. He is prevented from having the absolute relationship which he so much desires by the fact of his own existence, and so he experiences the consciousness of guilt. The consciousness of guilt is "the expression for the relationship by reason of the fact that it expresses the incompatibility or disrelationship".(1) When guilt is posited then "the exister is in thorough distress".(2) The existing individual in his concretion, living in time, is not a series of spurts but a "continuous meanwhile".(3) In the ethical choice the individual discovers that this choice must be continuously renewed, and just as he is about ready to start with this task he finds that he must begin upon "the immense detour of dying from immediacy, and just as the beginning is about to be made at this point it is discovered that there, since time has meanwhile been passing, an ill beginning is made, and that the beginning must be made by becoming guilty and from that moment increasing the total capital guilt by a new guilt at a usurous rate of interest".(4) No sooner does the individual uncover one layer of the task than a deeper one is revealed which must be tackled before he can begin.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.473

(2) Op. Cit. p.469

(3) Op. Cit. p.469

(4) Op. Cit. p.469

As with suffering in the religious sphere, so it is with guilt. We must be careful not to associate religious guilt with fortune and misfortune, crime and punishment, innocent or guilty in the legal sense. In the religious sphere guilt must be defined as a totality. If it is not, but on the contrary is aesthetically conceived, then the dialectic of guilt is as follows: "The individual is innocent, then we have innocence and guilt as alternating qualifications of life, at one moment the individual becomes guilty in this or that respect, at another moment he is innocent. If this or that had not been, the individual would not have become guilty; under other conditions the man who is now regarded as guilty would have been innocent."(1) As we have seen with regard to suffering in the religious sphere, existential pathos demands persistence.(2) The expression for the totality of guilt is the "eternal conservation of the recollection of guilt".(3) It is not an affair of the moment, and it is impossible in the dialectical process to find certainty...one must venture. In that case the individual knows that in relationship to an eternal happiness he "never would dare to say that he has done everything he could to hold fast the recollection of guilt". By this the totality of guilt is defined.(4)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.478

(2) Op. Cit. p.476

(3) Op. Cit. p.479

(4) Op. Cit. p.478

The Limit

The relationship to an eternal happiness "always sustains the disrelationship, only the exister cannot get a grip on the relationship because the disrelationship is constantly placing itself between as the expression for the relationship".(1) The total consciousness of guilt which arises as a result of putting together an exister and an eternal happiness is an essential expression for the disrelationship between the two. Whenever the relationship is posited, through the total renunciation of relative ends and so on, the disrelationship is also posited and this disrelationship finds its expression in the consciousness of guilt. That is to say it is something which belongs decisively; something which is inherent in the relationship itself: not anything accidental or relative. The totality of guilt is a continuing expression for the religious in the same way that suffering was seen to be, only it is a deeper expression. It must not be thought that because there is a disrelationship or incompatibility there is therefore a breach between the existing individual and the absolute. The disrelationship remains within the immanence of the individual. In any case, the "eternal embraces the exister on all sides".(2)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.473

(2) Op. Cit. p.474

With the eternal recollection of the consciousness of guilt, the limit is reached. The existing individual can go no further. "The religious man lies in the finite as a helpless child."(1) Although the religious has become clearer as he delves deeper into existence, yet the individual is no closer to the eternal happiness than he was at the beginning. "For now, on the contrary, he is as remote as possible, but nevertheless is related to it. The dialectical in this (though it is within immanence) sets itself in opposition so as to raise pathos to a higher power. In the relationship which underlies the disrelationship, in the immanence barely suspected which underlies the divisive dialectic, the man holds on to the happiness...by the aid of a possibility which is constantly being annulled."(2) The disrelationship keeps him from a relationship to an eternal happiness. The conception of God may be of absolute help to the individual, but "it is the only help which is absolutely capable of revealing to man his own helplessness".(3) As Geismar says: "The sense of guilt is the most concrete expression for the incommensurability of the individual with the end which is the object of his striving; it is the negative criterion of the presence of an ethico-religious life, of an absolute commitment to the highest end".(4)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.433

(2) Op. Cit. p.476f

(3) Op. Cit. p.433

(4) Eduard Geismar Lectures on the Religious Thought of Søren Kierkegaard p.52

Right at the limit of the whole process the category of "Anfechtung" comes into being. Anfechtung is the German word for a special kind of temptation. For Kierkegaard Anfechtung is a temptation which is constituted by the Absolute itself. In the ethical existence-sphere temptation came from the lower, but in the religious it comes from the higher in the form of Anfechtung. When the individual comes to the absolute limit with the consciousness of the totality of guilt there is a temptation from the absolute itself which would try to frighten the individual from going further.(1) But this is to leave behind the religion of immanence altogether.

When writing about the concept of "Anfechtung" in The Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Kierkegaard says that it belongs only to the essentially religious sphere: "and occurs there only in the final stage, increasing quite properly in proportion to the intensity of the religiosity".(2) That is to say, Anfechtung occurs only at the limit of the religious stage. This implies that an intensification of existential pathos occurs as the individual becomes more and more aware of what it means to exist, after he has made the absolute choice, until a limit is reached further than which he cannot go. At the beginning of the religious stage when the emphasis of the

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.410f

(2) Op. Cit. p.410

individual is more upon the ethical than upon the religious, or when he has not advanced very far from the ethical into the religious existence-sphere, this category of Anfechtung is not present. It only comes into being at the end of the process. As Kierkegaard says: "No-one who is not very religious will be exposed to Anfechtung".(1)

The religious existence-sphere, which I have just been discussing, Kierkegaard calls "religiousness A"(2) and it is "the dialectic of inward transformation; it is the relation to an eternal happiness which is not conditioned by anything but is the dialectic inward appropriation of the relationship and its dialectic."(3) In the religious in this context the specifically Christian is deliberately left out.(4) It is something which can exist in paganism and is at least a possibility for all men; always keeping in mind what Kierkegaard means by the universal and so on.(5) All that has been said with regard to the ethical equally well applies to the religious. It is concerned with the existing individual human being from start to finish, that is why it is called the religion of immanence.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.411

(2) Op. Cit. p.493

(3) Op. Cit. p.494

(4) Lilian Swenson Translator's Introduction to Kierkegaard's Edifying Discourses Volume 3 p.viif; ix

(5) Compare p. 185

So it is, that in his search for truth, which according to Kierkegaard is subjectivity and inwardness, the existing individual, looking ever more deeply within himself, arrives at the point where the only relationship to God which it is possible for him to have is in fact a disrelationship. What it means to exist becomes even clearer the more subjective the individual becomes, the deeper he delves within himself to find out the relationship which his self has to himself. If he desires to be rid of the merely aesthetic mode of existence, then he must make a deliberate and conscious choice of his self. The problem and the task for him now is: how is he to become related to this self which belongs to him, and it transpires that if he follows through this first ethical choice, then he comes to the point where the only relationship which he can have to himself turns out to be a disrelationship. In attempting to realise his subjectivity he discovers God and having come to the limit of the ethical process, or task, as far as it is immanently possible for him to do so, he finds that the disrelationship which he has towards himself applies equally to his relationship to God. That is to say it is a disrelationship. But we must be careful to observe that the God-relationship which is thus realised is nevertheless a true relationship, a valid relationship. As Geismar explains it with regard to the God-relationship: "The negative indices of its presence do but introduce a tension in the relationship, they do not break it. God is still immanent in the personality".(1)

---

(1) Eduard Geismar Lectures on the Religious Thought of Søren Kierkegaard p.52

Subjectivity is Untruth

Now it follows from all this that the thesis: Subjectivity is Truth must undergo some qualification. It still remains the case, if we are not to remain in aesthetic categories or be reduced to absurdity, that Subjectivity must be Truth. But insofar as the individual, by following the ethical choice, comes to a point where the disrelationship is posited, it now becomes apparent that this truth...the subjectivity which he seeks, is a twisted kind of truth. He is certainly brought to see the truth about himself; and that truth is that he is disrelated to himself and to God. This is not really very satisfactory, for it is not true subjectivity. He is not a true self, because he finds that within the bounds of his own personality or individuality, and concentrating entirely upon the inward while attempting to block out the outward, he cannot be grounded in God. This is the truth to which subjectivity or the task of becoming subjective has led him, but it is obviously lacking in something vital. The individual can only be related to himself and to God in a purely negative way. He has discovered God and he has discovered a self, and insofar as he has made these discoveries he has established some kind of relationship to them. But the self which he has discovered is unable to relate itself positively to itself or to God, because of the consciousness of guilt. This is the barrier which separates the individual from God and from self. This is the Truth to which becoming subjective has led him. It is a twisted kind of truth,

because if the individual is to become <u>really</u> subjective then he must be <u>positively</u> related to himself and to God. In other words this disrelationship cannot be removed. So at this point Kierkegaard qualifies his original thesis, insofar as it applies to the ethico-religious sphere by saying instead: <u>Subjectivity is Untruth</u>.(1) It is obvious from his analysis of the ethico-religious that he does <u>not</u> mean that Subjectivity has turned out to be falsehood, that his original thesis turned out to be wrong, but only that in some kind of way with regard to purely ethico-religious categories it has turned out to be sour. It <u>is</u> the truth in a twisted kind of way.

We have seen that if Subjectivity is Truth then the "Moment" must also have decisive significance. What happens to the concept of the Moment when we think of it in terms of the ethico-religious, where subjectivity is Untruth? It is a fundamental presupposition of existence that the fact that we are living in time is of decisive importance. And we have seen that if the existing individual is to come to himself, become aware of his existence as such an individual, then he must realise that all moments are transitory, and try to exist from one to the other. In this the concept of κινησις played an important part. All objective knowledge can only be

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Philosophical Fragments</u> p.185

an approximation, because as soon as we think, the moment, the instant, is already gone. The moment thus comes to have a certain significance since the individual comes to realise that his existence is only an approximation, and if he is to be aware of himself as existing, he must be aware of it from moment to moment. But the individual is always just that little bit behind.

Now once more in the ethico-religious sphere, which is as far as the individual is able to go within the realm of immanence, the concept of the moment comes again to the fore. According to the Socratic definition (and the ethico-religious is in fact the Socratic position), the eternal truth can only be realised as a vanishing instant of time. The Moment has not really any decisive significance after all. After having discovered one of the fundamental presuppositions of existence, namely, the all-important significance of the Moment, the existing individual, who: "is his own centre, and the entire world centres in him, because his self-knowledge is a knowledge of God",(1) finds that this Moment, where finite and infinite meet, is nothing more than an occasion to be forgotten.

But within Socratic terms of reference the Moment is also connected with the doctrine of Recollection. The individual must go back further and further in order to reach eternity. Eternal truth can only be found through

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.7

recollection. The Socratic position is that: "one cannot seek for what he knows, and it seems equally impossible for him to seek for what he does not know. For what a man knows he cannot seek, since he does not even know for what to seek". This is the "pugnacious proposition" which haunts the seeker after truth in the ethico-religious sphere.(1) If the individual cannot find the eternal within himself or within the sphere of immanence, then this means that he is ignorant, and this ignorance must be removed by the individual himself perhaps assisted by some other individual, who nevertheless can only serve as an occasion.

The temporal point of departure, the instant when one discovers the eternal, is nothing: "For as soon as I discover that I have known the Truth from eternity, without being aware of it, the same instant this moment, or occasion, is hidden in the eternal, and so incorporated with it that I cannot even find it so to speak, even if I sought it; because in my eternal consciousness there is neither here nor there, but only an ubique et nusquam."(2) Thus the Moment, this moment which was to have such decisive significance in the formulation of Subjectivity as the truth, is negated and we are back where we started.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.5

(2) Op. Cit. p.8

But for Kierkegaard, for whom Subjectivity is Truth, the Moment must have decisive significance; if it does not, then we land right back in the Hegelian System. It did have significance for the individual who became aware of his existence as a fundamental presupposition, but it now seems that having become more and more deeply involved in the search for subjectivity within the sphere of the ethico-religious, the original significance of the Moment has become less and less.

So we now find ourselves in the following position: The individual, having chosen himself with existential pathos, now finds himself at the extremity of the ethico-religious sphere, as far as human thought and will can go. He discovers that the only truth which is capable of being truth for him is "untruth"; that the only relationship which he can have towards himself or towards God, is a disrelationship; and that the only moment which has significance for him (and the Moment must have significance if he is to come to himself) is a vanishing moment which is forgotten and lost in eternity. It is something which can have no decisive significance since the eternal is conceived of as within the individual himself and is simply a matter of recollection. If the individual accepts the Socratic position, which in fact is the ethico-religious point of view, then he finds that he has completed a kind of circle, with the subtle difference that now an inward change has taken place in that the self is now more acutely posited than ever it was when he started.

From the point of view of Kierkegaard it is obvious that the matters cannot rest there. To leave the individual thus is to leave him in distress. There is still a long way to go before he can reach true subjectivity. The best that he can hope for at the present stage is a disrelationship within himself and with God. Yet as far as this goes it is valid.

The Ethico-Religious Sphere leads to Despair

How does the relationship within the self stand affected, when the individual has carried out the ethico-religious task to the utmost? We have seen that in the aesthetic sphere the self does not really wish to be related to itself. There is a failure in the relationship to relate to the relationship.(1) With regard to the ethico-religious task the individual has made the supreme attempt to discover his self and consciously to take note and account of it. The existing individual has really got to grips with himself, and he has discovered within himself God and the religious. It is possible, as we have seen, to come to some knowledge of God by simply taking account of the self. This is the religion of immanence. But this has proved to be unsatisfactory. Existence and time, two of Kierkegaard's basic presuppositions, ensure that there can never be any real relationship to God in the ethico-religious sphere. There is a relationship

---

(1) Compare pp.135ff

of a kind, it is true, which is certainly not to be found in the aesthetic sphere, but it is only a negative relationship. Suffering and guilt ensure that the individual is as far away from God as possible, but this is precisely the relationship which he comes to at the conclusion of the ethical task. It is a relationship but yet not a true relationship. The only name which can suitably describe such a relationship is a disrelationship. The idea of God and the eternal come into being for the ethico-religious individual, for they are to be found immanently within the self. They are discoverable there. And in so far as they have been discovered there, then there can be said to be a relationship established within the self. But along with this discovery goes the fact that the self is infinitely remote and that there can never at any time be a question of any true relationship. There is a relationship, but it is a negative relationship, but this is something quite different from having no relationship at all. It is by the aid of the eternal, as we have seen, that the individual is enabled to make the first ethical choice, so there must be some kind of relationship between the two, the eternal and the self, some kind of contact, but the only kind of contact possible is the knowledge that the individual is infinitely remote.

So the self in the sphere of the ethico-religious has once more come to an impasse, as it did at the limit of the aesthetic sphere. Here despair is manifested once more, but this time it is of a different nature. The despair associated with the aesthetic was called - <u>despair</u>

at not wishing to be oneself; here the despair takes the form of despair at wishing to be oneself: "The despair of willing despairingly to be oneself".(1) That is to say the individual in despair has turned away from the aesthetic existence-sphere in order to find primitiveness, his true self. But this has also led to despair. Moreover the despair is this time much deeper because there is the greatest possible consciousness of self. "With every increase in the degree of consciousness, and in proportion to that increase, the intensity of the despair increases: the more consciousness, the more intense the despair".(2) The man who has had the courage to go to the limit of self-knowledge, and has come to experience suffering and guilt and the impasse that the only true relationship to God he can have is a disrelationship, is in intense despair. And in addition the fact that he has to remain in this despair, for he is not yet aware of the Christian revelation, makes this despair even more intense.(3)

What is despair? Kierkegaard defines it: "Despair is precisely to have lost the eternal and oneself".(4) In the aesthetic existence-sphere the individual has lost the self, whether through "absent-mindedness" or

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.107
(2) Op. Cit. p.65
(3) Op. Cit. p.76
(4) Op. Cit. p.99

through having a wrong idea of the self. In the ethico-religious existence-sphere the individual has lost the eternal. There is a consciousness of God, but this is accompanied by the knowledge that we are infinitely separated from Him. The despair which is characteristic of the ethico-religious sphere is despair by the aid of the eternal. "But", says Kierkegaard, "just because it is despair by the aid of the eternal, it lies in a sense very close to the true, and just because it lies very close to the true, it is infinitely remote."(1)

We have now gone far enough to discover more about the true nature of the self. In the ethico-religious sphere it has not been truly defined, for the relationship has not been established, because there still exists despair. But from the facts of the ethico-religious as they are discovered by the individual in carrying out his task, we can infer what constitutes the true definition of the self. The ethico-religious sphere does not look beyond the individual. It tries to find a true relationship with the self within the individual, without going outside, so to speak. Indeed it is precluded from looking elsewhere by the very nature of the ethical choice itself. It has to assume that the self is constituted by itself. That is to say it needs no outside agency to give it reality; and by reality is meant a self without

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.108

despair in which the relationship is truly related to itself. But we have just seen that when the ethico-religious task is carried out to the limit, there is no freedom from despair, on the contrary it is intensified to an intolerable degree, for there now seems to be no way out of the impasse. If the individual takes his concept of selfhood from aesthetic categories which look beyond the individual then there is no relationship such as is needed to constitute the self: and if the individual takes his concept of selfhood from ethico-religious categories which concentrate specifically upon the self, then there is still no relationship. It might appear as if the individual were doomed, and this must heighten the despair. So the only alternative to supposing that the self constitutes itself, that is to say is self-sufficient, is to assume that it must be constituted by another. As Kierkegaard says: "...the self cannot by itself attain and remain in equalibrium and rest by itself..."(1) The very fact that there are two forms of despair; aesthetic, where the self does not wish to be its own self, or wishes to be rid of itself: and ethico-religious, where the self in despair wishes nothing more in the world than to be its own self; means that the self must have been constituted by another. If the self had only been self-constituted then there could only have been a question of aesthetic despair. The human self

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.18

is: "...a derived, constituted relation...which relates itself to its own self, and in relating itself to its own self relates itself to another".(1) For if the self had constituted itself then there would be no question of despair arising from wishing to be itself and from tackling the ethical task. On the contrary, all would be set right when the task had finally been accomplished. The self would have been reconstituted when the individual had finished the task. That is to say, when the self had turned from the aesthetic in which lies despair, to the task of ethically becoming itself. If it had constituted itself then there would have been no question of a disrelationship or of despair arising at the end of it all; on the contrary the relationship would have been restored and the despair annulled. As it is, the individual discovers nothing but the more intense despair and a feeling of being even more unrelated. Therefore it cannot be that the self is constituted by means of itself, and the only alternative is that it must have been constituted by another. "This then is the formula which describes the condition of the self when despair is completely eradicated: by relating itself to its own self and by willing to be itself the self is grounded transparantly in the Power which posited it."(2) And that power Kierkegaard has no hestitation in calling God. "The self is in sound health and free from despair only when, precisely by having been in despair, it is grounded transparantly in God."(3)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.18
(2) Op. Cit. p.19
(3) Op. Cit. p.45

It is a man's ethical task to choose himself. This is what primitiveness means. And the trouble with the present time is precisely lack of primitiveness. But even when there is an attempt to reach primitiveness, and that attempt has been successful there is a disrelationship which indicates despair and lack of primitiveness still. It is impossible for the self by itself, or within itself to find primitiveness. So the pilgrimage of the self towards integration, to use a modern word, is by no means over. For that to happen the self must be rooted and grounded transparantly in God, which it cannot be in the ethico-religious sphere. There is no mention of this impasse in The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication but yet it must be taken into account if we are to proceed any further. How the self can become rooted and grounded transparantly in God is shown by God in Christ.

How is he to get out of the impasse? How is he to go further? Kierkegaard shows the way by formulating an hypothesis which is an advance upon Socrates, an advance which is apparent at every point: "Whether it is therefore more true than the Socratic doctrine is an entirely different question, which cannot be decided in the same breath, since here we have assumed a new organ: Faith; a new presupposition: the consciousness of sin; a new decision: the Moment; and a new Teacher: God in time."(1) Here we are introduced to an entirely different set of categories: to the specifically Christian.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.93

CHAPTER 5

CHRISTIANITY

So it is that in the ethico-religious sphere the existing individual is brought to a complete and frustrating halt. On the one hand it is clear that because he exists, because he is an individual living in time, the truth is subjectivity, inwardness; but yet on the other hand, when he pursues this with existential zeal, he finds that it leads him to the impasse that the only truth which is possible for him as an existing individual, is untruth. This is as far as the religion of immanence, or religiousness A, can go.

And exactly here is where Christianity comes into being for the existing individual. As Kierkegaard says: "In proportion as the individual expresses the existential pathos...in that same degree does his pathetic relationship to an eternal happiness increase. So when the eternal happiness or the absolute telos has become for him absolutely the only comfort, and when accordingly his relationship to it is reduced to its minimum through the attainment of existential depth, by reason of the fact that guilt-consciousness is the repelling relationship, and would constantly take this telos away from him, and yet this minimum and this possibility are absolutely more than everything to him, then is the appropriate time to begin with the dialectical."(1) Now it cannot be emphasised too strongly that Christianity in no way arises as a matter of course out of what has gone before. It is true that

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.479

Kierkegaard considers that the existing individual must have been brought to the position of despair which is implicit in the thesis: Subjectivity is Untruth, but it does not follow on logically or automatically from there. There is no direct or immediate transition to Christianity.(1) On the contrary, there is a disjunction, a leap is required once more. When the existing individual made the ethical choice and persisted in it, then he was led to the dimension of the religious (the ethical presupposes the religious), the religion of immanence. That is why Kierkegaard can speak of the ethico-religious or interchange the terms when referring to or describing one or other position: that is why one is never quite sure whether the ethical and the religious are two separate spheres or really one evolving sphere. But Kierkegaard could never speak of an ethico-Christian sphere, or a sphere which consisted of immanence-transcendence. In the religion of immanence the religious arises out of the ethical as a matter of inevitability: Christianity does not in any way arise out of the ethico-religious. A leap is required: in fact the gulf between religiousness A and religiousness B (as Kierkegaard calls Christianity in The Concluding Unscientific Postscript) is so great that the condition for making the leap must have been given by God.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.47

In view of all that, I maintain that Christianity must be conceived of as an entirely separate sphere of existence. It is not even the deepest in the ever deepening awareness of the meaning of existence, that would be to revert to aesthetic categories, Christianity being the summa summarum, but an entirely different dimension altogether; so different in fact, that all that has gone before must be considered as "un-existence" (to coin a word to correspond to "disrelationship" and "untruth"), not, be it noted non-existence: that is to say, existence but yet not yet Existence when viewed in the light of Christianity. For this reason I consider that Christianity is another sphere of existence which is to be found in the thought of Kierkegaard. We have seen how Kierkegaard formulated a general characterisation of existence as it is posited by the fact of time...what it means simply to exist and nothing else, making clear certain fundamental presuppositions which underlie existence. Then more definitely he delineates the different modes of existence which are lived by the existing individual; first in aesthetic naivety, then in increasing inwardness in the ethical and religious spheres.

I emphasise the complete difference of Christianity from the other existence-spheres because Kierkegaard is surprisingly vague about it, although it is absolutely clear from his exposition of the individual's relationship to Christianity, that it could not be conceived otherwise. For example, he talks of religiousness A and religiousness B as if B was simply one manifestation of religiousness in

general. Nothing could be further from the truth, as we discover when we examine what he has to say about Christianity throughout his works as a whole. Sometimes he speaks of Christianity as "the religious in the stricter sense";(1) sometimes as the paradoxical religiousness";(2) and sometimes he only uses the word "religious" when it is obvious from the context that he is referring to Christianity.(3) This last use has, I think, sometimes led to confusion. I am thinking particularly of its use in Fear and Trembling, where the reader may be pardoned for thinking that he is referring to religiousness A when in fact religiousness B is meant; especially as he uses the ethical in the sense of ethico-religious. It is surprising to me that Kierkegaard has not deliberately separated Christianity, or, to be more accurate, has not said so, when otherwise he takes so much trouble to distinguish between the various spheres of existence. But when one finds out what he has to say about Christianity, then I think that this delineation of Christianity as a third dimension will be seen to be completely justified; as for example when he says: "The paradoxical religiousness breaks with immanence and makes the fact of existing the absolute contradiction, not within immanence, but against immanence."(4)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.240; 162

(2) Op. Cit. p.507

(3) Op. Cit. p.239

(4) Op. Cit. p.507

To the consideration of Kierkegaard's analysis of Christianity we now turn.

It would be well to get clear right at the very beginning what Kierkegaard considers his task to be. If anyone thinks that he sets out to define Christianity, to make clear what Christianity is, that is to say, to explain Christianity, then he would be very far wrong. His task is first and foremost - how am I to become a Christian. In other words it is the existing individual's relationship to Christianity which is his concern. As he himself says significantly, his interest is psychological rather than philosophical or theological: "calling attention to how much must have been lived before the problem can have any significance for the individual, and showing how difficult it is to become aware of the difficulty of the decision involved."(1) He is interested in the relationship of the existing individual to Christianity; first as a non-Christian, as someone outside Christianity; and then as a Christian. One discovers that Kierkegaard's conception of what it is that the individual is to be related to is quite different from the usual conception of Christianity, but this arises out of the psychological interest in the first place; it is not his primary interest. This must always be borne in mind. To look for an objective description of Christianity without taking into account

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.342

the seeking existing individual, is to do Kierkegaard a grievous harm; and of course the same can be said with regard to the ethico-religious as well.

As we have seen, the religion of immanence left the existing individual in a frustrating dilemma. The only relationship which it is possible for him to have with God is a disrelationship. As the self is not able to be any other than itself, it cannot transcend itself. It remains ever bound by its own limitations. The existing individual has gone asfar as he possibly can by the use of his own will. But contained in the religion of immanence, and indeed, an essential part of it, is the consciousness of guilt, which must always be distinguished from the consciousness of sin. And it is from the consciousness of guilt that we now take leave of the second dimension and leap to the third.

I used the word "leap" deliberately, because in no sense can there be said to be a logical transition or passing over from the one dimension to the other.(1) "By the qualitative leap sin came into the world and is continually coming into it."(2) "...there is no direct transition to this thing of becoming a Christian."(3) There is no point of contact between the one dimension and the other; between religiousness A, and religiousness B. In the former there is one serious defect which cannot be

---

(1)S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.47

(2)S. Kierkegaard Concept of Dread p.99

(3)S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.98

overcome, and that is when it comes to the question of sin. In paganism, for which the religion of immanence is the highest attainment, the concept of guilt and sin does not in the deepest sense emerge.(1) Sin lies in the intellect, whereas for Christianity it lies in the will.(2) For as long as the individual seeks within himself for the meaning of existence, and this he must do if subjectivity is truth,then he is in the Socratic position. The whole of the ethico-religious sphere of existence is in fact the Socratic position. This means that right and wrong, error and sin, can only be found within the existing individual himself, because the self cannot transcend itself. Sin therefore becomes a matter of ignorance. If a man knows the right he will not do the wrong: the only reason that he does wrong is because he does not know any better. The very fact that he is in error shows that he is in ignorance.(3) But if that is the case, and the existing individual has to look within himself for the meaning of existence, and cannot transcend himself, then he must have been originally endowed with the capacity for knowing...it is part of his being as an existing individual. Somewhere within him is the knowledge of the good, so that if he goes deep enough he ought to be able to recall it; and when he does so he

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concept of Dread p.87; cp. Sickness unto Death p.144

(2) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.145; 155

(3) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.149f

becomes all the more truly himself. The paradox in which he finds himself as being related through a disrelationship, is one which (according to Socratic presuppositions) can be resolved if only one has the requisite knowledge. Something has gone wrong somewhere, and one day a teacher will come along who will recall to him the latent solution, and then he will be able to see where he has gone wrong. But all that such a teacher can do is to act as a midwife, causing the existing individual to bring forth in himself that which is already there. The teacher must be kept in the background; must only serve as an occasion for bringing the truth to mind.(1)

Brief Outline of the Christian Position

Kierkegaard begins by assuming that the existing individual is rightly thought to have been created having the faculty to understand the Truth, but that he has lost it, not through being deprived by God, but due to himself;(2) he is destitute of it.(3) In coming into life the individual has become another than he was; he has become a sinner.(4) He assumes that originally every man is in possession of the truth in the Socratic manner, but that existence cuts off the way of Recollection. At the moment of coming into the world the individual is overwhelmed by existence to such an extent that he is made another than he was originally created.(5) Accordingly it is nowhere to be found within himself, so that right up to the moment

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.6
(2) Op. Cit. p.10
(3) Op. Cit. p.9
(4) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.517
(5) Op. Cit. p.517

when he learns it he is not in possession of it; he is "beyond the pale".[1] He cannot even be described as someone seeking the truth, for he does not know what the Truth is; in fact, in his position he is continually in Error, and the only thing that another individual can do for him is to help him Socratically to discover for himself that he is in Error; but more than that no man can do for another. Even although the whole world knew that he was in error, it is of no avail until he sees it for himself. "My own Error is something I can discover only by myself."[2] Thus, not being in possession of the Truth, the existing individual has no means of acquiring it. Therefore he has to be given the condition necessary for understanding the Truth, along with the Truth itself. This condition is given by God, and in order that it may have meaning for him, the existing individual must not only be transformed, but re-created. In the ethico-religious existence sphere a transformation of the individual takes place within the bounds of the self, but something more is needed. Consciousness of guilt is a transformation within the self, but in consciousness of sin there must be an alteration of the very subject himself.[3] The individual now sees by the help of God that he is in Error by reason of his own guilt, which of course constitutes sin.[4]

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.9
(2) Op. Cit. p.9
(3) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.517
(4) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.10

But if the individual is in sin by the consequences of his own fault, then one might think that he might be able to set himself free. In the ethico-religious sphere he was seen to be entirely bound by himself; he could not go beyond himself. Now that he has been given the condition for seeing that he was in Error, the condition for understanding the Truth, and therefore presumably the condition for seeking the Truth, could he not by his own will release himself from the bondage of sin? "For whatsoever binds me, the same should be able to set me free when it wills; and since this power is here his own self, he should be able to liberate himself."(1) If this were possible, then it would mean that by willing it, the individual could relegate his bondage to the past, as a "state tracelessly vanishing in the moment of liberation",(2) in which case again the Moment loses all decisive significance; we are back in Socratic categories. But if the Moment is to have decisive significance, then the individual cannot set himself free; and so it is. The individual exists in his bondage without compulsion, that is to say, in freedom, which means that: "all his powers unite to make him the slave of sin",(3) for, "he forges the chains of his bondage with the strength of his freedom." If he cannot release himself from this bondage

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.11

(2) Op. Cit. p.11

(3) Op. Cit. p.12

then in order to get release he must have a Redeemer or Saviour who takes away the wrath impending upon the individual's guilt in the Atonement. In the Socratic sphere it is necessary that the one who is the teacher recede more and more into the background so that the learner may have leave to appropriate the truth absolutely in his own inwardness. The teacher was only an occasion, the sooner forgotten the better. But with the new hypothesis the Teacher becomes the all-important, the supremely important, and at every instant the learner needs to be attached to him in order to receive the condition for understanding and to obtain release.(1) Once again the Moment is brought back to its first evaluation; it is of decisive importance for the existing individual; "filled with the eternal".(2) Kierkegaard now calls it: The Fulness of Time. The existing individual in the ethico-religious was seen to be moving away from the truth in as far as he could not even know or recognise it, now his direction is turned around towards the truth...Conversion. He becomes re-created, he undergoes a new birth. This means, as all birth means, passing from non-being to being, a decisive break. Just as the individual in the ethico-religious sphere forgets the world and owes nothing to any man in order to discover himself, so now the individual in the Christian sphere of existence forgets himself, owes everything to another who cannot be merely man, in order to discover the Teacher.(3)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.50

(2) Op. Cit. p.13

(3) Op. Cit. p.13f

Such then is a sketch of the Christian position. We turn to consider this thought project in more detail. Although Kierkegaard calls it an hypothesis in the Philosophical Fragments he subsumes it under specifically Christian categories elsewhere. For convenience we shall assume that he is talking about Christianity, although not about historical Christianity. Here again let us remind ourselves that he is not speaking of an objective something called Christianity, but about the existing individual's relationship to Christ, and what that makes Christianity out to be for him.(1) For example, Kierkegaard does not deal with sin as "a dogma or a doctrine for thinkers...it is an existence determinant."(2)

The Consciousness of Sin

From the Socratic point of view, the religion of immanence, which is as far as the existing individual can go within the bounds of the second dimension, there can be, as we have seen, no question of a proper conception of sin. It requires a revelation from God in order to have that.(3) God must have given him the condition for understanding the Truth...Christianity. Christianity, on the other hand, begins precisely with the consciousness of sin,(4) and that consciousness can come only through revelation. The decisive determinant for sin is that it is "before God":(5)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.331f

(2) Op. Cit. p.518

(3) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.144

(4) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.155; Sickness unto Death p.144; 194

(5) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.123; 128f

"...a self face to face with God, and this was taken as the basis of the definition of sin."(1) The individual has become aware, because God has given him the condition for understanding it, that he exists before God, that God is to be found outside the self as well as within it.

Incidentally this would appear to throw the whole thing back into aesthetic categories, for the individual is once more relating himself to something which is outside himself. But nevertheless this is the right relationship: it is one of the paradoxes connected with Christianity.(2) It is one of the things against which the understanding comes to a halt. A really aesthetic relationship would "consist in the fact that the individual always imagines that he is grasping after God and getting hold of Him, and in the conceit that the individual is pretty smart if only he can get hold of God as something external."(3) In other words he is related to God in the same way that he is related to acquiring something else, it is a relative, not an absolute relationship.

We have seen how the category of despair is posited as the terminus of the aesthetic, and again of the ethico-religious spheres. In either case the result is the same; the self is not truly the self; it does not become a self and therefore it is in despair whether it is aware of it

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.185

(2) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.498f

(3) Op. Cit. p.498 (Note)

or not. "Not to be one's own self is despair."(1) In the case of the aesthetic the despair arose from the fact that the existing individual did not will to be himself. Depending upon how much consciousness the individual possessed in the aesthetic sphere, the despair could be either active or passive. In the case of the ethico-religious sphere, the despair arose from the fact that the existing individual willed precisely to be himself, but found that it led him to an impasse. When, however, the individual is given the consciousness of sin, then all his despair is before God. And so the despair at not willing to be oneself and the despair at willing to be oneself ("willing" is used in the sense "to will" something) become sin.(2) Not only that, but if it is persisted in, it becomes defiance, which is a further potentiation of sin. Not to will to become what one already is; in other words, to refuse to recognise oneself as a sinner, which insight has been given by God, is to defy God. Similarly to will deliberately to be the self which is now known to be sinful is also defiance. When God offers the forgiveness of sins it is sin not to believe, and defiance not to accept.(3) "Despair of forgiveness of sins is a definite position directly in the face of the offer of God's compassion."(4) This is another form of despair before God: "It is almost

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.44

(2) Op. Cit. p.123; 130; 155f; 164

(3) Op. Cit. p.185f

(4) Op. Cit. p.205

like picking a quarrel with God".[1] Despair is concomitant with sin; it is "the potentiation of sin".[2] "Sin itself is the struggle of despair."[3]

The only way in which the individual can be rid of despair is when the self is grounded transparently in the Power which posited it or constituted it, that is to say, in God, and by relating itself to its own self, willing to be itself.[4] In the aesthetic existence-sphere it was seen that the existing individual is considered as a synthesis of finitude and infinitude, and if he is to be released from purely aesthetic categories then the task of the self is to become itself, a task which can only be performed by a relationship to God. But the self is in process of becoming, every instant it exists it is only a self , that is to say, it does not actually exist, it is only that which it is to become. If the self does not, or cannot become itself, then it is in despair.[5] And we see that this is precisely the case with the ethico-religious sphere. However, with the consciousness of sin the whole situation is deepened; it is the "expression for the paradoxical transformation of existence. Sin is the new existence medium. Apart

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.187
(2) Op. Cit. p.123
(3) Op. Cit. p.179
(4) Op. Cit. p.19
(5) Op. Cit. p.44

from this, to exist means merely that the individual having come into the world is present and is in the process of becoming; now it means that having come into the world he has become a sinner: apart from this, 'to exist' is not a more sharply defining predicate of existence, but is merely the form of all the more sharply defining predicates: one does not become anything in particular by coming into being, but now, to come into being is to become a sinner. In the totality of guilt-consciousness, existence asserts itself as strongly as it can within immanence; but sin-consciousness is the breach with immanence; by coming into being the individual becomes another, or the instant he must come into being he becomes another, for otherwise the determinant sin is placed within immanence".(1)

There is a lot of misunderstanding about the nature of sin, says Kierkegaard. People think of sin as being particular sins, or despair as being despair about something in particular; as if there was a time between the committing of the sins when the individual was free from sin, or that it was only at certain times in life when he despaired, at all other times being free from despair. Such is far from being the case. "Sin is a position which out of itself develops a more and more positive continuity";(2) "...every instant he is in despair he contracts despair".(3) It is just as ludricrous to

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.516f

(2) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.172

(3) Op. Cit. p.24

conceive of individual sins without regard to the intermediate state, as it is to conceive of a railway engine only moving every time it puffs.(1) "A debt does not grow because it is not paid, it grows every time it is added to. But sin grows every time one does not get out of it."(2) From the Christian point of view, the state of remaining in sin is really the greater sin. It is a worse sin than the particular sins, the continuation of sin is a new sin.(3) What has happened to the individual who can think of sin only in terms of separate sins, being unaware of the totalitarian nature of sin, is that sin has become so natural to him that: "he finds the daily continuance quite a matter of course... and it is only by a new sin...that for an instant he is made aware...his life, instead of possessing the essential continuity of the eternal by being before God in faith, has the continuity of sin."(4) Also, if a man thinks that by himself he can abolish despair from him, then all his labour to do so only puts him deeper and deeper into despair, because the pressure of despair is not something external but: "an inverse reflection from an inward experience."(5) The more consciousness of self, the more despair, and therefore, before God, the more sin. So that in the attainment of selfhood within

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.173
(2) Op. Cit. p.173
(3) Op. Cit. p.174
(4) Op. Cit. p.171f
(5) Op. Cit. p.19

the aesthetic and ethico-religious existence spheres, there is an increasing awareness of despair, and also, when the condition has been given by God, of sin.(1)

Faith

Now if the existing individual, having been given the condition from God, sees that he is in sin, and that the only way in which to be free from sin and despair is to be grounded transparently in God, what is necessary for him in order that this may be brought about? It is necessary for him to have faith. "Faith is: that the self in being itself and in willing to be itself is grounded transparently in God."(2) The opposite of sin is faith.(3) And here we come across one of the basic, if not the basic thing with regard to the individual's existential relationship to Christianity. Faith is by no manner of means an act of will because the reason is set aside.(4) It is something given by God(5) and it therefore must be closely connected with the consciousness of sin. Faith is the organ which makes manifest the underlying presupposition of Christianity, namely, the consciousness of sin.(6) In this capacity faith acts in the direction of revealing to the existing individual who is trying to

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.128f
(2) Op. Cit. p.132
(3) Op. Cit. p.132
(4) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.50
(5) Op. Cit. p.47; 52
(6) Op. Cit. p.93

find the truth by relating himself to himself and therefore (within immanence) to God, that every condition in which the self is not grounded in the Power which posited it is sin. But faith also acts prospectively and positively by giving an answer to the question: How am I to become a Christian, now that I know that I am a sinner? And the only answer is that I must believe.

Faith and knowledge are mutually exclusive,(1) according to Kierkegaard. If I know something then I do not believe it, but if I believe something then I cannot possibly know it. "To believe against the understanding is something different, and to believe with the understanding cannot be done at all."(2) Moreover, faith is a sphere entirely on its own with regard to Christianity.(3) It is not a question of believing, until by some method or another I can understand.(4) To understand Christianity is a contradiction in terms. "If anyone imagines that he understands Christianity he can be sure that he misunderstands it."(5) All knowledge, whether knowledge of the self or knowledge of that which is outside the self, is in the end bounded by the self and the capacity of the self to understand. It comes within the sphere of

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.50

(2) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.208

(3) Op. Cit. p.291

(4) Op. Cit. p.209

(5) Op. Cit. p.513f

immanence or the ethico-religious, which at its extremity leads to a disrelationship. If I am to be released from that, then the condition must be given by God, by the Power which posited my self, by my Creator. Faith therefore must be something different from the understanding, must be different from reason, otherwise I must return to the position of the ethico-religious. So its object must be something outside of, or beyond, or opposed to reason. It must be something which cannot be understood but nevertheless must be appropriated, there must be a relationship between myself and this thing, there must be faith, it must be believed.

If Christianity were a matter of knowing and understanding, then becoming a Christian would depend upon how much one understood, upon differential talent; there would be relative distinctions. Only the most brilliant of thinkers would ever have any hope of becoming Christian, while those of little or no intelligence would be barred. When faith requires that reason be left behind, and otherwise I end up in the disrelationship of a self bounded by its self as in the second dimension, then the task becomes equally difficult for the cleverest and the most stupid; probably a little more difficult for the clever since he has more to leave behind or give up.(1) Christianity requires: "that the individual sink his thought, venturing to

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.337; cp.194f; 261; 502

believe against the understanding."[1] We must recognise the distinction between what comes from man and what comes from God, otherwise we confound Christianity with human nature's own idea of what Christianity is: something which has come from the heart of man; and we "forget the qualitative distinction which accentuates the absolutely different point of departure."[2] Faith has in fact two tasks: "to take care in every moment to discover the improbable, the paradox; and then to hold it fast in the passion of inwardness."[3]

But the understanding has a part to play. The individual, whatever his ability must, "with all the strength of his mind, to the last thought"[4] attempt to understand, and then despair of the understanding. It requires "thought-passion to understand what it means to break thus with the understanding and with thinking and with immanence..."[5] That is to say, he must be brought to ~~be~~ the extremity of thought and understanding as far as his capabilities will carry him, before he can understand what it means to break with the understanding. Faith is not a refuge for the slothful who cannot be bothered to think about what it means to be a Christian.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.384
(2) Op. Cit. p.514
(3) Op. Cit. p.209
(4) Op. Cit. p.201
(5) Op. Cit. p.505

The believing Christian must not: "leap away from the toilsome task of developing and sharpening the understanding...the believing Christian, not only possesses but uses his understanding...but in relation to Christianity he believes against the understanding. Nonsense he cannot believe against the understanding, for precisely the understanding will discover that it is nonsense and will prevent him from believing it; but he makes so much use of the understanding that he becomes aware of the incomprehensible, and then he holds to this, believing against the understanding."(1)

The Absolute Paradox

From what has been said, it must be the case that whatever it is that the individual is confronted with, it cannot possibly be known or understood, in which case it must appear as a paradox or self-contradictory, or even just plainly absurd. In the Socratic view, the paradox is the source of the thinker's passion; thought must go on until it can go no further, but it still wants to know and understand what lies beyond, and so it seeks a collision. "The supreme paradox of all thought is the attempt to discover something which thought cannot think."(2) At the extremity of the ethico-religious this point has been reached. The reason has come to an impasse: undoubtedly subjectivity is truth, but when the extremity

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.504

(2) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.29

of religiousness A has been reached it is found to be untruth. The self in trying to relate itself to its self and to God, can only find a disrelationship. "But now the reason hesitates, just as Socrates did; for the paradoxical passion is aroused and seeks a collision; without rightly understanding that it is bent upon its own downfall...while as yet a mere presentiment, (it) retroactively affects man and his self-knowledge, so that he who thought to know himself is no longer certain whether he is a more strangely composite animal than Typhon, or if perchance his nature contains a gentler and diviner part."(1) Kierkegaard calls this unknown with which the reason collides:(2) God. But God still remains the unknown, the absolutely different, with which the reason collides repeatedly. The reason cannot conceive of the absolutely different or an absolute unlikeness: if it tries then it has to use itself to do so and therefore can only conceive an unlikeness within itself; it cannot absolutely transcend itself. When the reason tries to think of the single idea of difference within itself, then it is thrown into a state of confusion. "The Unknown is then in a condition of dispersion...and the Reason may choose at pleasure from what is at hand, and the imagination may suggest (the monstrous, the hideous etc.).(3) But the reason cannot hold fast to a difference of this nature. Every time it

---

(1)S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.30f

(2)Op. Cit. p.31

(3)Op. Cit. p.35

is done it is essentially an arbitrary act; there is no distinguishing mark, and because of this like and unlike finally become identified with one another. "The unlikeness clings to the Reason and confounds it, so that the Reason no longer knows itself and quite consistently confuses itself with the unlikeness." Anyhow, deep down "in the heart of piety lurks the mad caprice which knows that it has itself produced its own God."(1) If, therefore, a man is to receive any true knowledge about God...this Unknown, he must be made to know that he is unlike Him. But the Reason cannot obtain this knowledge of itself, therefore it will have to obtain it from God. In the nature of the case, however, even if the reason were to be given this knowledge, it cannot possibly understand it because it is absolutely unlike to itself. "Here we seem to be confronted with a paradox."(2)

So far so good. But Christianity asserts that God has appeared as a Man, that the eternal has come into the temporal; so when the existing individual who is seeking to become a Christian is faced with this, the paradox of which we have just been speaking takes on a more heightened form. With regard to reason the paradox as shown above repels in the innermost being of the individual: "through objective uncertainty and the corresponding Socratic

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.35f

(2) Op. Cit. p.36f

ignorance. But since the paradox is not in the first instance itself paradoxical (but only in its relationship to the existing individual), it does not repel with a sufficient intensive inwardness...but when the paradox is paradoxical in itself, it repels the individual by virtue of its absurdity, and the corresponding passion of inwardness is faith."(1) That is to say, the paradox came into being by virtue of the relationship subsisting between the eternal Truth and the existing individual; but when the eternal is in time in the Person of the God-Man, then the Christian has to base his eternal happiness upon something temporal, and hence only an approximation. With regard to the paradox in the first instance, the existing individual and God inhabit their respective domains, time and eternity, and the individual, in relating himself to God, knows that He is the absolutely Unlike. This is quite evidently a paradox, but what the individual is relating himself to, namely, God and eternity, are consistent in themselves. But when God becomes a Man and eternity enters time, then this is in itself a paradox. So that in Christianity the individual is faced with what might be called a double paradox or an Absolute Paradox. Not only is God a paradox for him but He is a Paradox in Himself. The Absolute Paradox is, as far as reason is concerned, the Absurd. And at this consciousness is offended. The

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.187f

capital 'P' of Paradox is to distinguish it from the paradox which we as existing individuals encounter in time, etc.

Now it might appear as if there was something of a contradiction in the fact that after all the Absolute Paradox has been discovered by the reason. The arguments in the preceding paragraphs lead up to the positing of the Absolute Paradox. Is this not due to sound reasoning? But we must always be careful to remember that before the individual could even be aware of any paradox, before he could be conscious of sin, which is the very first step in becoming a Christian, he had to be given the condition from God: that is to say, the Absolute Paradox Himself bestowed upon the individual the condition for coming into relationship with Him. "The offended consciousness holds aloof from the Paradox, and the reason is: quia absurdum. But it was not the Reason that made this discovery; on the contrary it was the Paradox that made the discovery, and now receives the testimony from the offended consciousness. The Reason says that the Paradox is absurd, but this is mere mimicry, since the Paradox is the Paradox, quia absurdum....and so always. All that the offended consciousness has to say about the Paradox it has learned from the Paradox, though it would like to pose as the discoverer, making use of an acoustic illusion."(1) "The more profound the passion with which the offended

---

(1)S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.41f

consciousness expresses itself, the more apparent it is how much it owes to the Paradox."(1)

Now it would appear as if Kierkegaard, having in the foregoing given expression to the nature of the Absolute Paradox, even being careful to point out that anything which he says about it must have come from the Paradox Himself, ~~now~~ places himself in a peculiar position. He has described the fact of the Paradox and the collision resulting therefrom and he takes care to emphasise that he has no wish to "explain". As Swenson says: "... Kierkegaard's energy of reflection is thrown into the task of coming to understand why he cannot understand; this is the source and nature of his category of the paradoxical."(2) And Kierkegaard himself says: "Let it constantly be remembered that I do not undertake to explain the problem but merely to state it."(3) Nevertheless has he not laid bare the secrets of becoming a Christian, so that the non-Christian can start off without further ado? No. In the first place such an assumption would mean that there could be a direct transition to Christianity. All the reader would need to do would be to understand what Kierkegaard says. But such an assumption is impossible as we have seen. Apart from that however, it is quite possible to think of Christ, of the God-Man, of the claims of Christianity without being in the least personally

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.40
(2) E. Geismar Lectures on the Religious Thought of Søren Kierkegaard. Swenson's Introduction p.xxv
(3) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.505

concerned. It would be a mistake to think that a man who was able to follow Kierkegaard at every step and agree with him, but who nevertheless was not a Christian, now, after reading and studying him, knew what Christianity was. To know Christianity, to understand Christianity, is a contradiction in terms: "...Christianity is not a matter of knowledge, so that the increased knowledge is of no avail except to make it easier to fall into the confusion of considering Christianity as a matter of knowledge."(1) What is important for Kierkegaard about the doctrine of the God-Man is as Giesmar says: "the existential meaning of the doctrinal content, the subjective significance which it has in the life of the believer."(2) The operative word in the last quotation is "believer". For in order to be that, the individual must believe against the understanding, must have been offended and passed through offence. He who has not felt the offence cannot become a believer.

The Possibility of Offence

As we have seen, when the individual encounters the Absolute Paradox then the reason is offended, and this introduces us to another of Kierkegaard's concepts: The Possibility of Offence. (Forargelsens Mulighed). This is something which is very closely connected with faith, and it refers to all the factors which have to be overcome before the individual, by faith, can win through to Christianity.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.192

(2) E. Geismar Lectures on the Religious Thought of Søren Kierkegaard. p.63

These are the things which offend, the things which prevent him from finding the Christian way completely attractive. They are the snags which the individual finds when he is confronted with the Christian Gospel. They are things which rub him the wrong way to such an extent that he finds them utterly offensive. In fact they are the things which could well put him off becoming a Christian. They are not just little technical or theoretical difficulties which can be overcome at some future date after the initial decision has been made. They are not details of disagreement with Christianity to which the individual can turn a blind eye and yet have the essential content of his Christianity remain the same. They are not things to which accommodation can be made in any way. They are real genuine stumbling blocks.

And Kierkegaard maintains that all who become Christian must go through the difficult process of overcoming these obstacles. It is something which, if the individual is to be a Christian, is: "not to be avoided, thou must pass through it, and canst be saved from it in one way only...by believing."(1) To do away with the possibility of offence is to make Christianity an easy matter of transition from one sphere of existence to another. It is to make it of little importance whether there be some shades of disagreement within the individual's so-called

---

(1)S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.100; cp.102; 103

Christianity, which he can ignore. The possibility of offence is a kind of guarantee that nothing like a transition to Christianity can take place; it keeps a man at a distance. To do away with offence means that it would be possible for men of all kinds to approach Christianity in an easy 'chummy' sort of way. It would make Christianity a kind of universal conforter, available to all who want it, just for the asking, and not requiring any change whatsoever on the part of the asker. This, says Kierkegaard, is to do away with Christianity altogether: "To do away with the possibility of offence is to do away with Christ, the God-Man."(1) And this is what has been happening in modern Christendom. To be considered a Christian it is no longer necessary to have passed through the possibility of offence. Kierkegaard says of the disciples that: "To become believers they must have passed through the possibility of offence, and that is what has been abolished in Christendom."(2) Christianity is: "a stride into the absurd."(3) There must of necessity be a gulf between God and man...even between God and His closest disciples.(4) It is something which is present all the time, even, it would appear, after the individual has become Christian: "The possibility of offence is...every

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.143
(2) Op. Cit. p.101
(3) Op. Cit. p.131
(4) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.210; cp.206

instant present, and constitutes at every instant the yawning gulf between the individual and the God-Man, across which only faith can reach. So it is not an accidental relation, as if some people noticed the possibility and others did not. No, the possibility of offence is the stumbling-block for all, whether they choose to believe or be offended."(1) Moreover, this possibility of offence, the possibility that the offence might prove too much for faith, is just as much present in one generation as another. It is something which all Christians must go through. Offence is: "the strict and narrow way...and the dreadful opposition to the beginning of faith...and when things proceed as they should in the matter of becoming a Christian the offence must in every generation take its percentage as it did in the first generation."(2) This offence is one of the characteristics of Christianity. It is only possible within Christianity. In the ethico-religious sphere everything is in immanence but in Christianity the offence comes from outside; it is an affront to the individual, it is something which is alien to ethico-religious categories. Any obstacle within the individual in the realm of immanence is something which belongs to the individual, something which, although in opposition to him, like the disrelationship which exists within him for

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.139

(2) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.518

example, yet nevertheless is part of him, and therefore can never arouse offence. In the religion of immanence: "even the most decisive definition is within immanence."(1)

The reason why the possibility of offence is something which is so decisive for faith is that if the individual allows himself to be overcome by the offence, that is to say, if he cannot stomach whatsoever it is that would cause him to hesitate and turn away almost in revulsion, then he is once more in sin, and so in despair. When the offending aspect of Christianity stands before the individual then he is faced with a choice: whether to believe, which is salvation through faith, or whether to be offended, refuse to believe, and so remain in sin.(2) If the offence has been overcome, it is a factor in faith, but if the offence has a direction away from faith, that is to say, has not been overcome, but remains, then it is a factor in sin.(3) The two factors with which the would-be Christian is involved are, on the one hand, sin, the consciousness of which has been revealed to him by God; and on the other hand he is faced with this offending factor which must be overcome before he can become Christian. These two, despair and faith, are: "the twin Cerebuses that guard the entrance to the Christian life."(4) The only

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.518

(2) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.83

(3) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.191 (Note)

(4) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.333

alternative to remaining in offence, to letting the offence get the victory, is to believe. And it is the task of faith: "to hold fast dialectically the definition of incomprehensibility."(1) All that the one who has overcome the offence knows is that Christianity cannot be understood. It is absurd; and as such presents itself as offending against reason. It is the task of faith to hold fast to this, both from the point of view of the inwardness of the individual, and from the point of view of expressing it in his outward existence. Faith is needed to overcome the offence. If the offence is not there then there is no need for faith, everything becomes a matter of knowledge. For, as Kierkegaard says: "this is the law; he who has done away with faith has done away with the possibility of offence...and he who has done away with the possibility of offence does away with faith."(2)

Now we must be careful not to confuse the issue by thinking that the possibility of offence concerns belief or otherwise in some doctrine of the Church or the Creed. It has nothing to do with intellectual assent. For example, the Atonement may, from the point of view of reason be impossible to understand, but yet it has to be believed. Christianity is something more than doctrine, it is a matter of personal commitment. To regard it as a doctrine is to reduce it to a matter of knowledge,

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.498

(2) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.143

something which belongs to the aesthetic sphere of existence. As Kierkegaard says: "All the talk about Christianity as a doctrine is a misunderstanding, it is a device to mitigate the shock of offence at the scandal...as, for example, when one speaks of the doctrine of the God-man, and the doctrine of the Atonement. No, the offence is related either to Christ or to the fact of being oneself a Christian."(1) Geismar puts it thus: "If the central feature of Christianity is a paradox, every effort to assimilate Christianity as a doctrine for the understanding, must be futile. The only entrance to Christianity is by way of a practical experience of profound pathos, in which the individual yields himself absolutely in a devotion analogous to a woman's love. To believe in Jesus Christ as God and man is to find in Him the centre of one's own life, to owe Him everything, to follow Him in everything."(2)

This section has been content to give a general picture of what Kierkegaard means by the possibility of offence. The more particular forms which this offence can take are dealt with in a subsequent section.

Existence and Christianity

At this point we can now assess the meaning of existence for the individual who is a Christian. Christianity asserts that Christ is the God-Man, that God has become man, that the eternal has entered time. How does this alter the existence of the believer as distinct

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.108

(2) E. Geismar Lectures on the Religious Thought of Søren Kierkegaard p.63

from that of the non-believer? In other words, how does existence in Christianity differ from that of the aesthetic and ethico-religious? In the first place it posits a decisive break. The exister must have broken continuity with himself. If there is any vestige of immanence left then the eternal determinant is still within the individual. This means that he must have become another through receiving the condition from God, he must have become a new creature. This in itself is a paradox; that this should happen to one who is already created. Incidentally it also means that when Christianity is preached to all men, it implies that they are non-existent. The individual has to base his eternal happiness upon an historical knowledge which at its maximum can only be an approximation. By this existence is paradoxically accentuated, because: "one constantly has one's eternal happiness based upon something historical."(1) In the break with immanence there is no longer in the individual any fundamental kinship between the temporal and the eternal, as there is in the other two existence-spheres; for the individual is a synthesis of the finite and the infinite. But in Christianity: "the eternal itself has entered time and would constitute there the kinship." The fact of existing becomes the absolute contradiction not within immanence, but against immanence.(2) There is now an absolute contradiction

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.510f

(2) Op. Cit. p.507f

between existence and the eternal: "for precisely the thought that the eternal is at a definite moment of time, is an expression for the fact that existence is abandoned by the concealed immanence of the eternal (which we find in the ethico-religious dimension)...the eternal is at a definite place and precisely this is the breach with immanence."(1) In addition existence is paradoxically accentuated and the "distinction of 'here' and 'hereafter' is absolutely defined by the fact that the eternal itself came into the world at a moment of time."(2) And now of course the Moment must have decisive significance, since the condition and the decision to believe and so on take place in time, and since the eternal itself is in time. The exister receives the condition in the Moment. It is in a moment of time that he turns to Christ, therefore that moment is for him of decisive importance.(3) Whether the individual is to advance beyond the ethico-religious dimension: "the Moment must decide....In the Moment the man becomes conscious that he is born; for his antecedent state, to which he may not cling, was one of non-being. In the Moment man becomes conscious of the new birth, for his antecedent state was one of non-being. Had his preceding state in either case been one of being, the moment would not have received decisive significance for him...while the pathos of Greek consciousness is concentrated upon

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.506

(2) Op. Cit. p.505

(3) Cp. S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.51

Recollection, the pathos of our project is concentrated upon the Moment."(1) "The concept around which everything turns in Christianity, the concept which makes all things new, is the fulness of time, is the instant in eternity, and yet this eternity is at once the future and the past."(2) Geismar says that: Kierkegaard "connects every particular Christian category with the assumption that the moment in time has crucial significance, being decisive for eternity. Decisiveness thus becomes the fundamental concept of the Christian religious life."(3) Just as the eternal came into the world at a moment of time, so the individual in time comes into relation with the eternal in time. The relation is within the temporal.(4) Existence within Christianity is, in contrast to that within either the aesthetic or the ethico-religious spheres, paradoxically accentuated.

The Historical Christ

We now turn to the important question of the relationship between Christ, the God-Man and the historical. What is the relationship between the historical and Christianity? It arises because the believer has to base his eternal happiness upon something involving time, the eternal in time, and therefore upon something historical. In addition we have the life of Christ before us in the

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.16
(2) S. Kierkegaard The Concept of Dread p.81
(3) E. Geismar Lectures on the Religious Thought of Søren Kierkegaard p.54
(4) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.506

Bible as something within history. As with everything else in Kierkegaard, this is no mere academic speculative discussion. It has to do with the individual's relationship to Christ, and what that makes Christianity out to be for him. There is always present a certain psychological interest.

The supreme contradiction is that a man, in order to become a Christian, must base his eternal happiness, with all the passion such an action requires, upon something historical, which therefore can only be an approximation even with respect to his own historical externality. "The reason for this is in part the impossibility of being able to identify oneself absolutely with the objective, and in part it is the consideration that everything historical, in the fact of being known, is eo ipso past and has the ideality of recollection."(1) With regard to the historical it is impossible to achieve certainty: "...nothing is more readily evident than that the greatest attainable certainty with respect to anything historical is merely an approximation."(2) And so it follows that: "every apprehension of the past which proposes to understand it by construing it, has only the more thoroughly misunderstood it."(3) It is a fundamental presupposition of existence arising from the fact of living in time.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.509

(2) Op. Cit. p.25

(3) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.65

Now to return to the God-Man. Not only is He an historical fact because He has entered history and thus from this point of view is subject to the dialectic of every historical fact, but He is also an historical fact of a peculiar character, uniquely different from every other historical fact. He is the Absolute Paradox, a fact which is based upon a self-contradiction.(1) In this case the historical fact for a contemporary is that God has come into being and no-one can become contemporary with this historical fact. It is the object of faith, both in the ordinary and in the eminent sense.(2) So like any historical fact it has no immediate contemporary (as we saw above) and this corresponds to faith in the ordinary sense, but neither does it have any immediate contemporary in its own peculiar position, which corresponds to faith in the eminent sense. "But this last resemblance subsisting between those who are most diversely situated temporally, cancels the difference which in respect of the first relation exists for those diverse temporal situations."(3) And this in fact means the cancelling out of all historical considerations except contemporaneousness, with regard to the God-Man. From the point of view of history pure and simple the immediate contemporary and the present-day reader are in the same position. And in

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.71

(2) Op. Cit. p.72

(3) Op. Cit. p.72

the case of the disciple at first hand and the present-day disciple there is no essential difference with regard to their respective relationships to the God-Man.

But as we have seen, the historical can only be an approximation. Now when it comes to the question of one's eternal happiness it will not suffice to have it based upon something so uncertain and nebulous as history. With regard to Christianity therefore, history and the historical are irrelevant: indeed they can lead one astray. The Bible is an historical document, the New Testament: "is a document out of the past, and is thus historical in the stricter sense. Just this is what serves to beguile the enquirer, tending to prevent him from making the problem subjective, and encouraging him to treat it objectively, in consequence of which it fails altogether to arise."(1) "Even with the most stupendous learning and persistence in research, and even if all the brains of all the critics were concentrated in one, it would still be impossible to obtain anything more than an approximation...essentially incommensurable with an infinite personal interest in an eternal happiness."(2) In Christianity the historical comes in the second place, when it is a question of the individual's eternal blessedness.(3) Kierkegaard asks the question: "Can one learn from history anything about Christ?"; and he answers: "No, Why not? Because one

---

(1) S.Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.38
(2) Op. Cit. p.26
(3) Op. Cit. p.509

can 'know' nothing at all about Christ. He is the Paradox, the object of faith, existing only for faith. But all historical communication is communication of 'knowledge', hence from history one can learn nothing about Christ. For if one learns little or much about Him, or nothing at all, He who thus is known is not He who in truth He is, i.e. one learns to know nothing about Him, or one learns to know something incorrect about Him, one is deceived. History makes out Christ to be another than He truly is, and so one learns to know a lot about...Christ? No, not about Christ, for about Him nothing can be known, he can only be believed."(1)

What happens when men try to prove from history or by means of history, that Christ was God? The first thing that they would wish to do would be to obtain the greatest degree of accuracy possible with regard to the facts of Christ's birth and life and so on, and they would have to be interested in the very least detail. But even if every historian in the world united in this investigation the nearest they could get would only be an approximation.(2) But surely it has been abundantly proved by history that Christ was God? Look at the way Christianity has prospered and flourished, going into every corner of the world. This can only prove, says Kierkegaard, that Christ was a man and nothing more. "At the most it might prove that Jesus Christ was a great man, perhaps the greatest of all; but that He

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p28; cp.26; 36

(2) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.511; cp.25

was...God - nay, stop there!"[1] Well then, let us begin with the assumption that He was a man, and then consider the historical consequences of His life. Perhaps the contemporary did not give Him much heed, but as time went on, people came more and more to see who He was, as the consequences of His life became more and more evident; till finally men were forced to deduce that He was God. In answer to this Kierkegaard says that simply by an ascending superlative scale starting from a man it is impossible to arrive suddenly by an inference at the new quality: God. "What consequences must there be, how great the effects produced, how many centuries must elapse, in order to establish a proof from the consequences of a man's life (this being the assumption) that he was God?"[2] It is possible that by contemplating the consequences of something as they unfold themselves more and more one might by a simple inference from them produce another quality different from that contained in the assumption?"[3] It often happens that a man is grossly misunderstood and maltreated by his own generation, but that history proves him to have been right. He is re-instated so to speak, by history. Could this not be the case with Christ? Persecuted, scourged and so on by His own generation, do we not now know how wrong they were? Has not history

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.29

(2) Op. Cit. p.29f

(3) Op. Cit. p.30

vindicated His life and teaching?[1] Kierkegaard points out that this is the same as saying that Christ's sufferings and humiliation at the hands of men were something accidental which happened to Him. If He had lived at another time more civilized for example, such humiliation would not have happened. He who says that forgets that Christ Himself willed to be the Humiliated One and that He came precisely in order to suffer. "With Him it is not as with a man who by the injustice of the age was not permitted to be himself or to be accounted for what he was, whereas history made this manifest; for Christ Himself willed to be the humble man, this is just what He would be accounted. Hence history must not incommode itself to do Him justice, nor must we with impious heedlessness fancy presumptuously that we know as a matter of course who He was. For no-one <u>knows</u> that, and he who <u>believes</u> it must be contemporary with Him in His humiliation."[2] Anyhow, whether Christ the God-Man was a humble servant or the "Emperor of all emperors" it is always a humiliation for God to become man.[3] Apart from all this however, to think that the consequences of Christ's life as revealed through history, are more important than the life itself, is blasphemy. In the case of a man it can conceivably be the case,[4] but with Christ, even if His life had absolutely

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Training in Christianity</u> p.35f

(2) Op. Cit. p.36

(3) Op. Cit. p.43; cp. <u>Concluding Unscientific Postscript</u> p.528

(4) Op. Cit. p.32

no consequences whatsoever: "the fact is the same, it remains just as noteworthy, the in-and-for-itself noteworthy. Assume that Christ's life had no consequences - to say then that His life was not noteworthy would be blasphemy."(1) To begin to deduce the fact that Christ was God from the consequences of His life is blasphemy, but to continue to deduce is: "a crescendo of blasphemy."(2) (That is to say from His life onwards into history up to the present day.) And it is the same when we come to the teaching of Jesus. Christ is infinitely more important than His teaching; if we assume otherwise it is blasphemy.(3) So much then if one attempts to prove from history that Christ was God by starting with the assumption that He was a man. It cannot be done.

If on the other hand one begins with the assumption that He was God, then the situation is entirely different. Because this is the assumption of faith. "One has thereby cancelled, annulled, the 1800 years as having nothing to do with the case, proving nothing pro or contra, inasmuch as the certitude of faith is something higher...if one begins (thus) everything is as it should be."(4)

Since New Testament times there have been determined efforts to discover every little detail of Christ's life. Till comparatively recently the Gospel accounts have been

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.34
(2) Op. Cit. p.33
(3) Op. Cit. p.123
(4) Op. Cit. p.29f

accepted as reliable and true. Now, however, much is seen as "myth", and in an effort to find out the true state of affairs there has been a process of demythologizing. For Kierkegaard the whole effort would constitute a myth in itself. The only myth that must be abolished is that Christ is discoverable through historical or linguistic or other scientific research. Supposing that every myth were expelled from the Gospel records and we for the first time got an accurate picture of Christ as He actually existed in Palestine, the most that could be proved, and that only approximately, would be that a man of that description lived almost 2000 years ago. But that He was the God-Man, that no-one can prove.

Supposing that all the opponents of Christianity were to combine in proving that the whole thing about a man Christ living on earth was a complete myth; that Christianity was built upon a complete mythological tale, in exactly the same wasy as the religions of Greece and Rome were based upon the myths of the gods; would they thereby have abolished Christianity? Not in the least, says Kierkegaard. "Has the opponent made good a right to be relieved of responsibility for not being a believer? By no means."(1) To be a believer one must have been given the condition from God, and all attempt to rationalise the Absolute Paradox can only be done within immanence, that is to say within a

---

(1)S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.31

sphere in which it does not apply.

In order to be released from the impasse of the ethico-religious sphere of existence, the individual requires to receive the condition from God in time. Time as posited in the Moment of decision must play a decisive part in the individual's relationship to God. If this is not so, then we are thrown back upon Socratic categories. And in order that the individual may come to himself, namely, be related to his eternal happiness in the way in which God originally intended, then it is that God must become the Christ for him.

But from what has been said, it would not seem to matter very much whether the God-Man's appearance has taken place or whether it is yet to come, because the historical is of little importance anyhow. It does not matter whether we know of the birth of the God-Man as an event in the past or as an expectation of the future. The fact that Kierkegaard can speak of Abraham in Fear and Trembling as having a relationship to the absurd, as having the experience of faith; as coming through the condition of Anfechtung to the extremity of the ethico-religious and by a leap of faith coming into relationship with the absurd, and so on, would seem to show that he could conceive of those living before Christ as having the same relationship to Him as those coming after Him in faith. He continually links Fear and Trembling with Christian categories.(1) The Christian experience is

---

(1)S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.96

thus as much a possibility for the believer B.C. as it is for him A.D. The condition is the same; given by God. What is of decisive importance is the Moment in time when the individual becomes related to the God-Man. As always it is the existing single individual (Enkelten) who is the important category. This Moment, the Fulness of Time, is the decisive one, not the moment when the Deity became or becomes human; and this moment is the same for every believer at whatever period of history they happen to live. It is the believer's life in time which is of paramount importance, not the life in time of the Deity. One of the characteristics of the God-Man is His in-cognito: that is to say, He can never be known, only believed. For Him to be recognised a divine revelation is necessary: "...it was not flesh and blood, but the exact opposite of flesh and blood, which prompted Peter to recognise Him."(1) Kierkegaard is a radical with respect to the Jesus of history, he would appear to do away with him altogether, but in his place we are faced with the God-Man and the decisive moment in time: the former is an objective and the latter is a subjective attitude.

But Kierkegaard does not say that the Gospel accounts are not true, nor does he say that the historical Jesus has never existed. In fact he does not question their authenticity; he is most orthodox with regard to the

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.128

historical accounts. But he assigns them a place which is very different from that of other people. He merely places the question of history in a secondary category. It is necessary to destroy the reliance upon the certainty of history, upon the historical, in order that we may be forced into subjective belief instead of objective knowledge. It is almost as if he wishes our so-called knowledge about the life of Christ to be converted into something less factual. It is almost as if he wished that all the historical accounts could be converted into a myth, so that instead of knowing we could believe such myths regardless of whether they are historical or not. He regards it as self-evident that Christianity has its basis in time and history, but these two things make it imperative that we do not rely on the Gospel accounts as knowledge, but believe them in faith. He has made them uncertain from the historical point of view, in order that they might be believed. There are contained in them certain characteristics which are of help in a negative way in the relationship to the God-Man. I say in a negative way because they provide occasion for offence through which the believer must pass in order to become a Christian. Kierkegaard distinguishes between sacred and secular history. Secular history is history as we understand it in the usual sense of the word, world-history, history of the race and so on. Sacred history applies only to Christ, and is qualitatively different from secular history. Sacred history: "recounts the story of His life under the

conditions of His humiliation, and reports moreover, that He Himself said He was God. He is the paradox, which history can never digest or convert into a common syllogism."[1] Sacred history is a kind of paradigm which shows how the the God-Man is received in every generation. It most certainly does not apply only to the generation in which He happened to be born, as we have seen, it applies equally to every generation. The sacred history of the Gospel is only the mirror by which we see ourselves. "His earthly life accompanies the race, and accompanies every generation in particular, as the eternal history; His earthly life possesses the eternal contemporaneousness."[2] By recounting the offence the first generation suffered at Christ we recount the offence all generations must suffer. The contemporary in the historical immediate sense had to have it revealed by God that Christ was God, just in the same way as the present day believer. And we must remember that the choice is whether to be offended or to pass through the offence and believe.

Contemporaneousness and Some Occasions for Offence

We have seen that belief in the God-Man cancels out the intervening time between the present day and the days of His life on earth. This brings us to another of Kierkegaard's characteristic ideas: Contemporaneousness with Christ (Samtidighed med Kristus). Enough has been

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.35; cp.216

(2) Op.Cit. p.68

said, I think, to show that this does not mean trying to get back in imagination to the Palestine of Our Lord's time on earth in order to capture the atmosphere and so on, with the fond imagination that if we had been there it would have been so much more easy. The very nature of the God-Man in history, the nature of the historical itself makes us contemporary. "Christ is...not at all a merely historical person, since as the Paradox He is an extremely unhistorical person. But this is the difference between poetry and reality: contemporaneousness."(1) There must be no talk of "getting back to Christ" and so on: "Every generation has to begin all over again with Christ and thus to present His life as the paradigm."(2) That to which the individual becomes related in becoming a Christian is the absolute. And in relation to the absolute there is only one tense: the present. And for him who is not contemporary with the absolute: "for him it has no existence. And as Christ is the absolute, it is easy to see that with respect to Him there is only one situation: that of contemporaneousness. The five, the seven, the fifteen, the eighteen hundred years are neither here nor there; they do not change Him, neither do they in any wise reveal who He was, for who He is is revealed only to faith."(3) For me, the existing

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.67

(2) Op. Cit. p.109

(3) Op. Cit. p.67

individual, only the present is reality. The past lacks the determinant: "which is the determinant of truth (as inwardness) and of all religiousness, the FOR THEE...What thou dost live contemporaneous with is reality - for thee. And thus every man can be contemporary only with the age in which he lives - and then with one thing more: with Christ's life on earth; for Christ's life on earth, sacred history, stands for itself alone outside history."(1) By looking at what contemporaneity meant to the first disciples and the people who lived along with Christ, we can get some idea of what it means for all who are contemporary with Him. All that happened to the believer, the disciple in the first generation was that Christ's life served as: "an occasion, by means of which the contemporary, as one who is in Error, receives the condition from God, and so beholds His glory with the eyes of faith...But such a contemporary is not in the immediate sense an eye-witness; he is contemporary as a believer, in the autopsy of faith. But in this autopsy every non-contemporary (in the immediate sense) becomes a contemporary."(2) Again: "What true Christians there are in each generation are contemporary with Christ, have nothing to do with Christians of former generations, but everything to do with the contemporary Christ."(3) For the immediate contemporary, the disciple's

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.67

(2) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.57

(3) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.68

life was: "construed in accordance with the paradigm";(1) and so it is for the believer in every generation in the autopsy of faith. For the believer: "the situation is inseparable from the God-Man, the situation that an individual man who stands beside you is God-Man...that an individual man is God is Christianity, and this individual is the God-Man. There is neither in heaven, nor on earth, nor in the depth, nor in the aberrations of the most fantastic thinking, the possibility of a...more insane combination. As such it reveals itself in the situation of contemporaneousness; and no relationship with the God-Man is possible except by beginning with the situation of contemporaneousness."(2) It is only possible for the believer, that is to say for one who has been given the condition from God, to be contemporary with the God-Man. And that applies to the non-contemporary and the contemporary (in the immediate sense). Neither the non-believer in the first or in any generation can have contemporaneity with Christ.(3)

Offence of Exaltation

So in the situation of contemporaneousness there is now more occasion for offence as we discover what this means. Remembering what has been said, the possibility of offence accompanies the God-Man at every instant, it is something which every believer must pass through. What does it mean to be a disciples in the situation of contemporaneousness?

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.110
(2) Op. Cit. p.84
(3) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.54f

The Gospel gives us an account of what Christ's life meant to all around Him. Look at the company He keeps: publicans and sinners and the like; the outcasts of society. It is all very well for a man to engage in good works among the poor and outcast, but to identify oneself with them in the complete abandon of divine compassion![1] The leaders of the nation who wish to protect the people in their religion, are very critical of such a man and they are against him. He is poor and persecuted and His followers likewise have to suffer, some are even excommunicated from the synagogue because of adherence to Him. And this man invites others to become His followers, His disciples. Is it any wonder that so few actually do, when to become a follower means to become identified with an outcast. It is madness to become attached to such a man. And he has the cheek to say: Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavily laden; when all he can offer is more suffering than they had before! Most people would rather endure their suffering than have it added to in this way.[2] Moreover He and His followers incense the authorities by the breaking of the Law at certain points in favour of a so-called "higher" law.

---

[1] S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.61; 62; 63; 64

[2] Op. Cit. p.41; 42; 57; 58

But to crown all, this man says that He is God, and by His attitude seems to arrogate to Himself a certain position above that of an ordinary man. This poor wretched creature says that He can forgive sins. What an insult to God that such a man should claim to be God, what an insult to the poor and suffering to invite them to come and then offer them...not help, but the forgiveness of their sins! No wonder Nicodemus comes to Him by night: that gives a measure of what it means to be His disciples.(1) No wonder people are offended at Him and turn away. There is nothing about Him to suggest that this man is God, nothing except the fact that He says that He is God. Certainly God is going about in disguise!

The believer believes that God came in the form of a servant, came incognito, but of course the disguise must not be so complete that He passes through the world unnoticed. People must take note of Him. And so it is with Christ. For a time the people look to Him; they take note of His miracles,(2) although they are no proof that He is God, but then they are offended. His noteworthiness provides the occasion whereby people might be brought to the point of receiving the condition from God in order that they might believe on Him.(3) Thus His divinity, His exaltation provides an occasion for offence.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.55f
(2) Op. Cit. p.98f
(3) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.44ff

The Offence of Lowliness

But there is another form of offence which has to do with the lowliness of Christ: "In this instance one is not offended by the claim that He is God, but by the observation that God is this man..."[1] This is the offence at His lowliness: that this high and mighty God, the Creator of the Universe should at the same time be this lowly man. The offence: "consists in the fact that such a one as He should be God, this lowly helpless man who when it comes to a test has no power to do anything."[2] The disciples who believed on Him would be more likely to find offence in this than in the previous form. "That a man falls into the power of His enemies is human. But that He whose almighty hand had wrought signs and wonders now stands impotent and paralysed...precisely this it is that brings Peter to the point of denying Him."[3] But all must pass through offence, whether to be offended or to believe. The disciples may easily pass through the offence pertaining to His exaltation as described above, but in such a passage as Matthew 26:31,32 they are now brought to a halt when they see God suffer exactly as a man. If they are to believe then they must pass through offence once more.[4]

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.105
(2) Op. Cit. p.84
(3) Op. Cit. p.106
(4) Op. Cit. p.153

Nor are succeeding generations exempt from this form of offence. It is all very well for them to look back and think with imagination that of course they would not have been offended; but it is different in the situation of contemporaneousness when all the claims and all the happenings and so on are taking place with regard to a man whom we know quite well and see in the street every day. It is easy to be wise after the event, but in the situation of contemporaneousness, we are there.(1)

In the present day we are just as likely to be presented with offence at this aspect. For Christ is risen and exalted. But this is the humiliated one, the lowly man who ascended into heaven and it is He who draws all men unto Himself. When Jesus of Nazareth said the words: "Behold I will draw all men unto myself", He said them in the days of His humiliation when He was a lowly man on earth. "It was not from His glory that He uttered them."(2) These words apply today and it is still Christ who has uttered them. It is easy to be drawn to someone who is high and exalted, and easy to forget His lowliness. In fact it is easy to be blinded by His glory and so miss His lowliness.(3) But this lowliness is just as much a part of the nature of God as His exaltation, and cannot be ignored. He is still the lowly humble one who uttered these words. So for the present day the offence is still

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.102

(2) Op. Cit. p.40

(3) Op. Cit. p.184

there. We have to accept Him as He is; exalted, divine, and at the same time lowly and abased. We are not asked to choose between exaltation and lowliness, we are asked to choose Christ. As Kierkegaard puts it: "Therefore will He who humbled Himself, He the humiliated one, from on high draw man to Himself. Yet whether in lowliness or in exaltation, He is one and the same...The choice is not between lowliness and exaltation; no, the choice is Christ; but Christ is composite, though one and the same, He is the humbled one and the exalted, so that by means of the two He prevents the choosing of the one or the other, or the fact that the two sides are there makes it impossible to be drawn to Him except through choice."(1) In the present time it is the lowly aspect of the exalted one which is the more likely to give offence, than the divine aspect. Contemporaneousness ensures that we are aware of the possibility of the offence in both its forms.

His ascension and triumph were not factors in the offence of the original disciples...it was His life here on earth with which they had to do. And it is still this which constitutes the paradigm for us even although we now have to do with Him in His triumphant state. Kierkegaard says: "In Christendom they preach perpetually about what happened then after Christ's death, how He triumphed, and how His disciples made a triumphal conquest of the whole

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.160

world...in short one hears only sermons which might properly end with Hurrah! rather than with Amen. No, Christ's life here on earth is the paradigm in the situation of contemporaneousness; in that situation there was no stuff and nonsense about what happened afterwards ...every generation has to begin all over again with Christ and thus to present His life as the paradigm..."[1] Although a human being who started off in poverty and eventually became very rich might conceivably forget his humble origins, this cannot apply to the God-Man. Because for Christ: "the exalted One, everything is eternally present...the 1800 years are as one day. His exaltation cannot alter Him; He is Himself so vividly present that even today He is the same in the words which He uttered, so lively a memory He has that He was the humbled One. He is the humbled One who says to men now living, 'From on high I will draw all unto myself.'"[2]

The Offence of Suffering

And in the situation of contemporaneousness the believer is bound to discover yet another form of offence; one which pertains to his own life. This is the suffering involved in being a Christian.[3] The trouble with established Christendom is that there is no endless contest between the Christian and the world. The possibility of offence is done away with. People think

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.109
(2) Op. Cit. p.165
(3) Op. Cit. p.112

that one can become a Christian: "in the merriest possible way, without in the least becoming aware of the possibility of offence. In established Christendom the natural man has managed to have his own way."(1) Offence is a necessary correlative of becoming a Christian. It consists in the fact that eternal blessedness is valued at so high a price. But: "the possibility of offence is removed when a person has nothing more to do about the matter than be born in Christendom."(2) In the situation of contemporaneousness it appears that to be a follower of Christ means that in truth, in the eyes of the world, in the eyes of men, the individual should be abased: "it should mean all possible hardships, every possible sort of derision and insult, and mean at last to be punished as a criminal!...Thou must pass through the possibility of offence; for to be a Christian is certainly not to be Christ....but it is to be His follower - yet not the sort of fashionably rouged follower who profits by the firm's name and is content to regard Christ's sufferings as an affair of many, many centuries ago. No, to be a follower means that thy life has as great a likeness to His as it is possible for a man's life to have."(3) In the situation of contemporaneousness to become a Christian proves to be: "an even greater torment and misery and pain than the greatest human torment, and hence also a crime in

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.113
(2) Op. Cit. p.114
(3) Op. Cit. p.108

the eyes of one's neighbours. And so it will always prove when becoming a Christian in truth comes to mean to become a contemporary with Christ. And if becoming a Christian does not come to mean this, then all the talk about becoming a Christian is nonsense and self-deception and conceit, in fact even blasphemy and sin against the Second Commandment of the Law and sin against the Holy Ghost."(1) "If thou wilt believe, then thou must pass through the possibility of offence, accept Christianity on any terms. Then 'it is a go'. So, a fig for the understanding! So you say, 'Whether it is now a help or a torment, I will one thing only, I will belong to Christ, I will be a Christian...' But if this relationship is the right one, if the man so ill-treated is in truth a Christian, he thus resembles the pattern as nearly as it is possible to resemble it. But the contradiction is that in which the possibility of offence consists: that one should be punished for doing well."(2) Geismar says that in the suffering of the individual in following Christ we touch upon the fixed centre of Kierkegaard's many thoughts, and that: "some experience of this suffering is inevitable for all who earnestly attempt to follow Christ, since it is the expression for the heterogeneity of the environment."(3)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.67

(2) Op. Cit. p.117

(3) E. Geismar Lectures on the Religious Thought of Søren Kierkegaard p.72f

Søren Holm asks if Kierkegaard: "does not by his strong accentuation of contemporaneousness, namely, that every Christian should be contemporary with Christ without reference to the intervening historical development, in reality deny the importance of development for the nature of Christianity. Has he not thus torn Christianity out of its historical context and cultural connection in a way which is both unhistorical and hinders a right understanding of the nature of Christianity, which scarcely can be determined without reference to the subsequent historical development? Here most religious philosophers will surely answer with a Yes..."(1) There is no denying that Kierkegaard has done just that, and from the historian's point of view some such criticism may be justified. Holm is right to say that Kierkegaard's method is unhistorical; but from the point of view of Christianity he is wrong to say that it hinders a right understanding of Christianity. Kierkegaard's point is precisely that Christianity cannot be understood but only believed. In fact from one point of view it is the greatest compliment to Kierkegaard that he has succeeded in his task of hindering people from "understanding" Christianity. Kierkegaard is not interested in the historical as such, which is obviously Holm's primary interest in this study, but only in the question of becoming a Christian. But there can be no question that,

---

(1) S. Holm Søren Kierkegaard's Historiefilosofi p.119

far from hindering, Kierkegaard has provided a positive insight into the nature of Christianity, not by explaining it, or understanding it, but by understanding that it cannot be understood. For him Christianity is "the miraculous, the absurd, a challenge to the individual to exist in it, and not to waste his time by trying to understand it speculatively."(1)

In Christianity Subjectivity is Truth

We are now in a position to see how Kierkegaard considers that the thesis: Subjectivity is Truth, finds its fulfilment in Christianity. We have seen in what way he regarded this proposition as being the expression of something which is of primary importance for the individual. It arose out of the fundamental presupposition of existence which every individual possesses as a human being. And in the ethico-religious sphere of existence it became clear that in trying to achieve subjectivity within the bounds of his own personality, within immanence, which would seem to be the logical course to take in order to become completely subjective, the individual could only end up in a disrelationship. This meant that within the terms of reference of the ethico-religious, the original thesis had to be modified to: Subjectivity is Untruth. But in Christianity the original thesis can be seen to be completely justified, for now we come to see that true

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.338

subjectivity is only possible within Christianity. So that if the terms of existence are to be fulfilled then the individual must become a Christian. As Kierkegaard says: "That subjectivity, inwardness, is the truth, was my thesis....which in its maximum is Christianity."(1) Again: "Christianity proposes to intensify inwardness to its utmost."(2) In what way is this so?

In the first place the individual discovers that he exists, not as an individual with only immanence as term of reference, but before God.(3) "A man seated in a glass case is not put to such embarrassment as a man in his transparency before God."(4) Subjectivity is of supreme importance in Christianity, for the individual is of supreme importance. "The Christian combat is always waged by the individual before God; for this precisely is spirit, that everyone is an individual before God, that 'followship' is a lower category than 'the single individual', which everyone can and should be. And even although the individuals were numbered by thousands and thus were fighting in union, yet, Christianly understood, it is each individual that fights. And in addition to fighting in union, he fights at the same time within himself, and shall as an individual give an account on the day of Judgement, when his life as an individual shalt be on trial."(5) When he knows that every secret thought,

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.284; cp.206
(2) Op. Cit. p.55
(3) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.137
(4) Op. Cit. p.203
(5) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.218

every dark movement of the spirit is not just a matter for himself alone within the bounds of his own personality, but takes place before the blazing light of God's presence, then this is enough to make the individual conscious of his subjectivity in a way in which he never was before. He must look to himself. He is forced to look inward in an absolute and exclusive sense. As Kierkegaard says: "Being thus infinitely introverted, the individual has nothing whatsoever to do with anybody else."(1)

But the fulfilment of subjectivity is brought about also in Christianity by the fact that the individual discovers that he is a sinner before God. When he stands revealed to himself in the presence of God Who has given him the condition for being able to have such insight, the individual recognises that he is a sinner. He discovers that within him there is this fundamental defect of sin, and in order that he himself should be put right he must relate himself to God through Christ. It is sin which makes sure that the emphasis is upon the individual and not upon the crowd. The fact that he is before God emphasises the gulf between him and God. "The doctrine of sin, the doctrine that we are sinners, thou and I, which absolutely dispenses with the crowd', fixes then the qualitative distinction between God and man more deeply than ever it was fixed anywhere...sin is in fact before God etc. In no respect is a man so different from God as in the fact

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.219f

that he is a sinner, as every man is, and a sinner 'before God'".(1) One cannot recognise sin in oneself or feel guilt without the most intense subjective passion. It is possible to have knowledge that one is a sinner through the teaching of the Church and so on, but unless one really appropriates to oneself then it is only a matter of objective knowledge and nothing more. "The concept of guilt and sin posits precisely the single individual as the single individual. There is no question of any relation to the whole world or to anything that is past. It is a question only of a man being guilty..."(2) To be really aware of sin is to be aware of it in oneself. One does not stand convinced of sin by a theory of original sin, or by any objective examination of sin, but by the fact of one's own guilt and sin. "How sin came into the world every man understands by himself alone."(3) Again Kierkegaard says: "The category of sin is the category of the individual...the individual man is subsumed under the concept...the emphasis of seriousness falls upon the sinner who is an individual."(4)

But further: subjectivity is fulfilled in the individual by the positing of the Absolute Paradox and the possibility of offence. In Christianity subjectivity is the truth because of the absurdity and the offence to the

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.199
(2) S. Kierkegaard The Concept of Dread p.88
(3) Op. Cit. p.46
(4) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.194; cp.196f

understanding which this absurdity brings about. Having discovered that he exists before God and that he is a sinner, the individual now realises that in order that he should be put right he must relate himself to God through Christ. But in order to do this, his reason and almost his whole personality has to suffer a shock. It is not ~~all that~~ easy to become a Christian. There are several objectionable factors in Christianity which have to be overcome, and there is no means of overcoming them by means of the reason, therefore they have to be overcome by faith. This is a matter of intense reorganisation within the individual. His whole inwardness has to be changed; he has to be re-created in order to meet the new situation which arises as a result of the consciousness of sin.(1) Within the terms of immanence there is no allowance made for such a thing as believing against the understanding and so on. The ethico-religious can only go so far, and then it is brought to a disconcerting and frustrating halt. In order to go further, in order that the process of subjectivization may proceed further, the condition must be given by God. This is subjectivity in its true element. "Christianity has proclaimed itself as the Paradox, and it has required of the individual the inwardness of faith in relation to that which stamps itself as an offence to the Jews and a stumblingblock to the Greeks

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.51

...and an absurdity to the understanding. It is impossible more strongly to express the fact that subjectivity is truth, than when subjectivity is in the first instance untruth, and yet subjectivity is the truth."(1) Such a belief against the understanding, such a transformation requires: "a passionate interest in one's eternal happiness."(2) and this is nothing if not subjectivity. It is precisely the breach with immanence required for becoming a Christian which: "makes the inwardness the greatest possible".(3)

Thus Christianity and Subjectivity become synonymous for the individual, for only in Christianity can the terms of subjectivity be fulfilled. "The development or transformation of the individual's subjectivity, its infinite concentration in itself over against the conception of an eternal happiness, the highest good of the infinite... this constitutes the developed potentiality of the primary potentiality which subjectivity as such presents...It is subjectivity that Christianity is concerned with, and it is only in subjectivity that its truth exists, if it exists at all...If its truth happens to be in only a single subject, it exists in him alone."(4) Again Kierkegaard says that: "Christianity desires to deal with the individual, and with the individual alone and so with every other individual."(5)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.191
(2) Op. Cit. p.33
(3) Op. Cit. p.507
(4) Op. Cit. p.116
(5) Op. Cit. p.47

Now on a superficial reading it would seem as if this retreat by the individual within himself which is implied by subjectivity could in a certain sense be the very antithesis of all that Christianity stands for in the popular mind. It is more like an advocacy of Cistercian Monasticism than the kind of Christianity which is the usual conception of the man in the street. But it will be seen that this impression must be dispelled when we come to deal with the communication of subjectivity as fulfilled by Christianity. In communication a further qualification of subjectivity is brought about.

PART II

THE DIALECTIC OF COMMUNICATION

CHAPTER 6

THE COMMUNICATION OF SUBJECTIVITY IN THE ETHICO-RELIGIOUS SPHERE

If Subjectivity is truth and the ethico-religious is such as has been described, then there is an apparently insurmountable problem posited when there is an attempt to communicate. The problem is raised when the individual, in carrying out the ethical or ethico-religious task, seeks to become present to himself, seeks to become subjective. He discovers that the only relationship which he can have to God is a disrelationship. This is the religion of immanence. In the nature of the case there must be a difficulty involved when the individual attempts to establish a relationship to others. For it is impossible to communicate the ethico-religious truth in a direct manner.

Communication and Subjectivity

The very idea of communication, when it comes to the ethico-religious is the antithesis of all that the ethico-religious stands for. The ethico-religious is inwardness, subjectivity in its very essence. In it the individual has plumbed the very depths of his being; here he is truly alone. To try to communicate this fact, the fact that Subjectivity is truth in a direct manner immediately brings about a contradiction. For in direct communication, this subjectivity, inwardness, receives direct expression, external expression, and in so doing it must therefore cease to be inward. In other words it must give up its essential character as inwardness. To give direct external expression to something which concerns inwardness alone is a contradiction. It becomes subject to the limitations of all direct communication, and we revert to aesthetic

categories. As Kierkegaard says: "...there are certain things, among them in particular the secrets of inwardness, which lose something by being made public and which are completely lost when one makes publication the most important thing."(1)

Let us take a closer look at what happens when the individual attempts to communicate the ethico-religious in a direct manner. What happens if he tries to give direct utterance to that which concerns the individual alone - to express the proposition: Subjectivity is Truth? The answer is that it becomes precisely a proposition and nothing more, a matter of knowledge, something for learning, a statement of fact, a result. It is put on a level with other propositions and doctrines. To be apprised of this proposition through having it set down before one, whether in writing, or in speech, or in a lecture on the subject, or indeed in any other direct manner, is to be made aware of it in exactly the same way in which any other piece of knowledge is made available - in an objective fashion. It is considered as something among others, and this factor alone makes it relative, deprives it of its absoluteness, its uniqueness. The result is that once the proposition has been communicated in such a direct manner, the individual thereafter knows it, understands it, and thinks that this is all that there is to it. The recipient of such a direct communication

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.137

feels that once he has got the hang of it then he knows it, he can subscribe to it. But like every other piece of knowledge so communicated, it need have no relationship to his existence. Says Kierkegaard: "people lyingly credit themselves with everything...and finally they wind up...with having done the impossible. Inwardness has become a matter of knowledge, existing a waste of time".(1) Again: "the recipient is led to adopt the misunderstanding that it is knowledge he is to receive, and then we are once again in the sphere of knowledge."(2)

It is therefore ridiculous for anyone to try to communicate inwardness in a direct manner, for it is a contradiction. It is possible to imagine great enthusiasm being aroused by such a direct communication. For example, someone reading Kierkegaard for the first time and coming across the thesis: Subjectivity is truth, may find himself moved in a marked way by the new concept to which he has been introduced, but without inward appropriation and self-activitiy, the direct utterance can never be more than a possibility. A direct communication of the ethico-religious shows precisely that the individual has not understood what he says.(3) One who really understands the true nature of inwardness would never be so naive or confused as to think that it was capable of being communicated directly. Such direct

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.228

(2) Op. Cit. p.223

(3) Op. Cit. p.79

communication is only a misunderstanding.(1) Therefore if subjectivity is truth, the individual who attempts to give direct expression to this in his ethico-religious communication is consequently saying something untrue.(2)

But not only is a direct external expression of what is essentially inward out of the question, but also there can be no question of a direct relationship between the communication and the recipient. Here is involved yet another contradiction. The whole tendancy of the ethical or the ethico-religious is in the attainment of primitiveness, subjectivity, inwardness, where the individual seeks to be present to himself. Therefore in relation to other individuals there can never by any question of a direct relationship. Apart from anything else the other person can only be related to me as a conceived reality; that is to say in the same way that any other conceived reality is related, in the form of a possibility. Another person can only appear as an aspect of the individual's own inwardness; the direction is inward all the time, away from everything objective and external, including the other person. It is: "away from one another in inwardness."(3) The individual who has reached the limit of the ethical task cannot have a direct relationship with the other. "There can be no immediate relationship, ethically between subject and subject."(4)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.223
(2) Op. Cit. p.76
(3) Op. Cit. p.236
(4) Op. Cit. p.285

The mistake is often made by the teacher who wishes to communicate essential truth, ethico-religious truth, of assuming such a direct relationship between teacher and pupil. Such a teacher may go to great lengths to explain what the ethico-religious is, may give a brilliant lecture, in the manner of any classroom lecture. He assumes that, given the average intelligence of his pupils, some rapport will be established between them in which through the direct relationship they will immediately understand what he is talking about. The speaker may even attempt to describe his own inwardness, perhaps recognising that this is all that it is legitimate for him to do, perhaps realising the contradiction involved in talking about inwardness objectively, generally, disinterestedly, but says Kierkegaard: "This inwardness is not inwardness but a direct outpouring of feeling..."(1) Similarly it is not inwardness for the pupil to publish abroad his teacher's praises: all that this can be called is: "an immediate devotedness."(2) The direction of subjectivity is precisely inward and when a direct outpouring of feeling on the part of a teacher, or an immediate devotedness on the part of the pupil, is involved, then this is in the opposite direction.

The ethico-religious is precisely inwardness in which both teacher and pupil must, through their own self-activity, appropriation, double reflection, become

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.217

(2) Op. Cit. p.217

subjective. The teacher ought to have: "the respect for the learner which recognises that he is in himself the inwardness of truth". This would be an expression for the teacher's inwardness also.(1) The expression for the learner's inwardness would be: "the devout and silent accord in which the learner himself assimilates what he has learned, keeping the teacher at a distance because he turns his attention within himself..."(2) Both teacher and pupil are engaged on the same task. There is therefore no question of the teacher having authority. He who would communicate the ethico-religious is: "never a teacher, but a learner."(3) for he is in process of becoming, he is striving, just like the recipient.

So we find that the ethico-religious can never be communicated directly because direct communication applies to results, objects, knowledge, all of which are the opposite of inwardness. Also direct communication assumes a direct relationship between communication and recipient, which again is in contrast to the ethico-religious where the direction is inward away from the other. The life of inwardness in other words is essentially secret; it can never be communicated directly. Here we must distinguish between an essential and an accidental secret. Inwardness is an essential, as opposed to an accidental secret. Some things are secret

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.217

(2) Op. Cit. p.217

(3) Op. Cit. p.78

but when they are revealed directly then the person to whom they are so revealed has no difficulty in understanding them right away. If we are keeping something from someone in order to surprise them later on, then when this person receives the surprise he is capable of understanding it right away. It is no longer a secret. Or as Kierkegaard puts it: "...what was said at a secret meeting of the ministry is an accidental secret as long as it is not made public; for it is in itself such as to be directly understandable as soon as it is revealed." The secret of inwardness, on the other hand is an essential secret something which even when it is revealed cannot be directly understood. The secret of inwardness constitutes an essential secret: "because it cannot be communicated directly...Everything subjective, which through its dialectical inwardness eludes a direct form of expression is an essential secret."(1) In other words, even although such an essential secret is revealed it is impossible: "for everyone who is not in the same way doubly reflected within himself" to understand it.(2) The fact therefore that inwardness is such an essential secret means that it cannot be revealed or communicated directly. "Hence when anyone proposes to communicate such truth directly, he proves his stupidity; and if anyone else demands this of him, he too shows that he is stupid."(3) The reflection

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.74

(2) Op. Cit. p.73

(3) Op. Cit. p.73

of the ethico-religious sphere is that: "of inwardness, of possession, by virtue of which it belongs to the thinking subject and no-one else."(1) "Objective thought, on the other hand, which uses direct communication as its medium is indifferent to the thinking subject and his existence."(2) There can be no question of results or of knowledge or of external direct communication in the case of the ethico-religious for both communication and recipient are: "constantly in process of coming to be" and therefore certitude is an impossibility.(3)

The problem is then; how is the ethico-religious to be communicated if it is of such an inward nature that it cannot be communicated directly? Kierkegaard says that the individual who seeks to have his existence in ethico-religious categories desires to: "express the life of eternity, where sociality and fellowship is unthinkable."(4) The ethico-religious is subjectivity, and any concept of communication naturally involves some sort of fellowship, a bridge-head between communicator and recipient. The problem for the ethico-religious individual is that he: "desires at one and the same time to have his thinking in the inwardness of his subjective existence, and yet also to put himself into communication with others."(5) How can such a problem be overcome

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.68
(2) Op. Cit. p.67
(3) Op. Cit. p.68
(4) Op. Cit. p.68(Note)
(5) Op. Cit. p.68(Note)

without negating the essential inwardness which must apply both to communicator and recipient? Not only must the communicator retain his inwardness in the solitude of his subjectivity, while at the same time giving expression to it in some form of communication, but the recipient must through appropriation and self-activity come by himself to see that subjectivity is truth; his own inwardness must not be violated. All communication seeks to establish some sort of relationship between communicator and recipient, whereas the inwardness of the ethico-religious seeks to make the individual more and more isolated; that is to say seeks to break off any contact in the relationship between the self and the other. And yet there must be some means whereby others can be educated in the ethico-religious, if only from the point of view of bringing up children. How is the ethico-religious individual to get out of the impasse?

Reduplication

Fortunately the very nature of the ethico-religious itself provides a clue. The whole point of inwardness is that the individual must have become present to himself, that he has done this through the process of double-reflection, having made the leap which is necessary for the transformation of possibility into reality in his own particular existence. His existence must express this fact. Existence cannot be left out of account otherwise he ends up in the contradiction involved in objectivity.(1)

---

(1) Compare pp.78ff

It follows therefore that if any communication regarding the ethico-religious is to be made, the particular existence of the individual must never be forgotten; to do so would be a negation of subjectivity. And when we think of the particular existence of the individual, we must remember that in communication there are two particular existences to be taken account of; that of the communicator and that of the recipient. The communication of subjectivity should therefore embody this fact. As Kierkegaard says, it should embody: "artistically as much of reflection as he himself has when existing in his thought".(1) That is to say, not merely a theoretical philosophical reflection, but also the working out of that first reflection in the existence of the individual; in other words, the realm of reality. When the individual has given reality to the thought in his own existence, when possibility has been translated into actuality (remember that the only choice which is open to the individual who takes account of his existence is himself, which means subjectivity) then this is reduplication. To quote Kierkegaard: "The existential thinker must be pictured as essentially thinking, but so that in presenting his thought he sketches himself."(2) Any communication of the ethico-religious must embody this fact. Geismar puts it thus: "All thinking that does not reflect an understanding by the individual of

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.68

(2) Op. Cit. p.319

his own manner of life in its essential aspects is non-essential thinking, and ultimately irrelevant and insignificant. The existential thinker will understand that communication is an art, the most difficult of all, and that this art involves reduplication in manifold ways."(1)

This taking into account of existence involves reduplication, and this must also be involved in the communication of subjectivity. "All communication with regard to 'existence' requires a communicator" says Kierkegaard, "in other words the communication is the reduplication of that which is communicated; to reduplicate is to 'exist' in what one understands."(2) Reduplication does not only apply to the thinker, to his own existence, but also to the communication of his own existence, which in subjectivity is precisely the ethico-religious. Says Geismar: "The existential thinker will not only reduplicate his thinking in his life, but insofar as he tries to communicate his thought, he will necessarily reduplicate his thinking in his style and mode of communication. His thought will reflect his own situation in existence, with its contrary poles: subjective conviction and objective uncertainty, the positive and the negative, the temporal and the eternal".(3)

---

(1) E. Geismar Lectures on the Religious Thought of Søren Kierkegaard p.48

(2) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.13

(3) E. Geismar Lectures on the Religious Thought of Søren Kierkegaard p.48

Existence, the particular existence of the individual, must be taken into account in the communication of the ethico-religious and this applies equally to both recipient and communicator. This is of primary importance in ethico-religious communication. Says Kierkegaard: "In relation to an existential communication, existing in it is the maximum of attainment, and understanding it is merely an evasion of the task."(1) In the communication of the ethico-religious the only thing that matters is that both communicator and recipient exist in it. When this happens there is already communication taking place indirectly. Existential reality, ethico-religious truth is really incommunicable and he who wishes to make any communication in this direction must recognise this and give his communication an indirect form. Says Kierkegaard: "...the subjective thinker finds his reality in his own ethical existence. When reality is apprehended by an outsider it can be understood as a possibility. Everyone who makes a communication, insofar as he becomes conscious of this fact, will therefore be careful to give his existential communication the form of a possibility, precisely in order that it may have a relationship to existence. A communication in the form of a possibility compels the recipient to face the problem of existing in it, so far as this is possible between man and man."(2)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.332(Note

(2) Op. Cit. p.320

In other words recognition must be made of the fact that the recipient can only apprehend any reality as conceived as a possibility, and when the communication deliberately sets out to be given in the form of a possibility, then this compels the recipient to face up to the problem of existence in his own life.

Therefore the first essential in the communication of the ethico-religious is that it should be an expression of what is communicated, that is to say an expression of existence. And this can only be so when it applies to the concrete existence of the individual, whether that individual be communicator or recipient. If subjectivity is truth, then all that is required of either individual is that he exist in it. So any communication of this truth must also be an expression of existence, not existence in general, in abstracto, but the particular existence of the individual concerned. From the point of view of the communicator it will be an expression of his existence; from the point of view of the recipient the communication will be reflected in his existence.

Now we must remember that Kierkegaard considers that existence is the negative factor in the synthesis of possibility and reality, eternal and temporal, which constitutes a human being - the positive factor is the eternal, the possibility.(1) So in ethico-religious communication which must of necessity be an expression of

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript pp.75; 78

existence the form must always be negative. "The subjective existing thinker who has the infinite in his soul has it always, and for this reason his form is always negative. When it is the case that it reflects existentially the structure of existence in his own existence, he will always be precisely as negative as he is positive; for his positiveness consists in the continuous realisation of the inwardness through which he becomes conscious of the negative."(1) It is for this reason that the communication of existence or the ethico-religious must be indirect or negative. The negative element is existence, the particular existence of the individual which because of the temporal process is always vanishing. Existence is always a striving. In comparison with the communication which is indirect, direct communication appears to be certain and positive. But the aesthetic individual does not reflect upon the negative, his own existence, which makes any supposed positivity of his so-called direct communication into an illusion. The direct form of communication is impossible for one who is "dialectically qualified".(2) In fact, communication in the direct manner is really no communication at all. "In the elusiveness of a double reflection, the negative element in the process of communication is reflected upon; hence this type of communication, which seems in comparison with the other

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.78

(2) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.134

to be no communication, is precisely communication."(1) In other words, indirect or negative communication is precisely communication because it takes account of the fact that both communicator and recipient are existing human beings who are held apart by this fact and require to practise self-activity if the double reflection necessary for becoming subjective is to be accomplished.

We have seen that ethico-religious communication must be an expression of the existence of the individuals concerned. Reduplication is involved in the communication itself. The communication must take account of this fact. What further characteristics can we expect to arise in the communication resulting from the nature of the ethico-religious itself? Direct communication is out of the question, so the only alternative is indirect communication, in other words a communication which does not violate the essential characteristic of the ethico-religious. The ethico-religious as we have seen isolates people in their inwardness, so it would seem natural that any communication which involves inwardness should take account of this fact as well as of existence. It should be one of the fundamental rules in ethico-religious communication that this isolation and this tendency away from one another in inwardness should be fully taken into account. As it is the subjectivity of the particular existing individual

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.70 (Note)

which is involved in ethico-religious communication, and all subjectivity consists precisely in inwardness, away from others, then in communicating this fact, the less in contact, the further apart, the individuals are, the better. "Wherever the subjective is of importance in knowledge, and where appropriation constitutes the crux of the matter, the process of communication is a work of art, and doubly reflected. Its very first form is precisely the subtle principle that the personalities must be held devoutly apart from one another, and not be permitted to fuse or coagulate into objectivity".(1) In other words there must be a deliberate attempt on the part of the communicator to keep his distance, to hold off the recipient at arm's length and further if possible. In fact this might even mean having to repel him. Speaking about Repetition Kierkegaard says: "By taking place in the form of an experiment the communicator creates opposition for itself, and the experiment establishes a yawning chasm between reader and author, posits the separation of inwardness between them, so that an immediate understanding is impossible. The experiment constitutes the conscious challenging recall of the communication, which is always of importance for an existing individual who writes for existing individuals, to prevent the situation being altered so as to become that of a prater for praters."(2) This yawning chasm must be established but yet the communicator must be there indirectly. How can this be done?

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.73

(2) Op. Cit. p.235

It can only be done by giving the communication a "contrary form". Kierkegaard means by this that the communication must appear to say something different from what it is actually saying. The form of the communication would appear to reflect a content which is other than that which is actually being conveyed. And the greater the discrepancy between the form and the content the better does it succeed in holding the communicator and the recipient apart. "...Pathos in a contrary form is something which remains with the maker of the communication in spite of being expressed, and cannot be directly appropriated by another except through that other's self-activity: the contrast of the form is the measure of the inwardness, and the less contrast, up to the point of direct communication, the less inwardness."(1)

One way of bringing into play this contrasting form in ethico-religious communication is by means of Irony and Humour, both of which belong to the ethico-religious sphere. Irony is ideal for meeting the conditions which must be met in ethico-religious communication. Says Kierkegaard: "Through the repellent effect exerted by the contrast, which on a higher plane was also the role played by his irony, the learner would be compelled to understand that he had essentially to do with himself, and that the inwardness of the truth is not the comradely inwardness with which two bosom friends walk arm in arm, but the separation with which each for himself exists in the truth."(2)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.234
(2) Op. Cit. p.222

Irony and Humour

What does Kierkegaard mean by irony, and just how does it fit into indirect communication? For his Master's Thesis Kierkegaard wrote on the Concept of Irony and this account is usually taken as a rather undeveloped view of irony, in contrast to that which occurred in his later writings. Many scholars believe that he wrote this work while he was still very much under the influence of Hegel and certainly the terminology is very Hegelian in form and might give the impression that at this time Kierkegaard was a disciple of Hegel. It is true that there are certain things which he repudiates in later works, but these are I think comparatively unimportant compared to his concept of irony as a whole; that is to say combining what he has to say about the subject in this early work and what he has to say in his work as a whole. Certainly Kierkegaard was very tied up with Hegelian terminology when he wrote this work; indeed it could hardly be otherwise. In fact he never really emancipated himself from that. All his writing suffers from a somewhat Hegelian mode of expression.

Another view of The Concept of Irony which is held is that Kierkegaard was speaking with his tongue in his cheek. It was in itself an example of Irony. He was deliberately using Hegelian terminology in order to conceal his real meaning. I do not think that either of these views is the correct one, rather a combination of the two would seem to be nearer the truth. Kierkegaard for want of anything better had to express himself in

Hegelian language simply because that had been the sole philosophical expression of his university training. Certainly the terminology is Hegelian, much more so than in his later works, but this does not mean to say that the content of this terminology, the matter of which it is the expression, is Hegelian. He uses Hegelian terminology in his later works but the matter is very far from being Hegelian. As for Kierkegaard using Hegel as a cloak to hide his real meaning, playing a kind of trick upon the examiners and upon the readers in order to illustrate what he means by irony, this, though nearer the truth, is too clever. All his works are expressions of this kind. One has to look behind the form, the words and so on, the "how" of the communication, to the content, the "what" of the communication. Sometimes the one may not appear to have much relation to the other. Indeed the pseudonymns are an expression of this ironical tendency.

It is not part of the function of the present study to evaluate The Concept of Irony in relation to the rest of Kierkegaard's writings, but I include this early work along with the others because even at such an early stage in his authorship Kierkegaard already shows that he is entirely consistent. For example he says: "In the oratorical lecture there frequently occurs such a figure which bears the name of Irony, the characteristic of which is that it says the opposite of what is meant. In this there is already a conception which applies to all irony: The phenomenon is not the being, but the opposite of the being".(1)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Samlede Vaerker Volume 1 p.236f (My translation)

This could well be put: the form is not the content, but the opposite of the content. This agrees well with what has been said above about the contrasting form and so on. Or take this extract: "When I next observe the speaking subject then I perceive once more a definition which applies to irony, namely: the subject is negatively free. When I am myself conscious as I speak, that what I say is what I mean, and that the assertion is an adequate expression for my meaning, and I suppose that he to whom I speak in that expression grasps my meaning entirely, then I am rooted in the expression, that is I am positively free in it. The old verse, semel emissum volat irrevocabile verbum; applies here. Also with reference to myself, I am bound and cannot make myself free from it whenever I wish to. If, on the contrary the expression is not my meaning then I am free in relation to myself and to another."(1) Is there not here a foretaste of the ethico-religious where the individual in his communication has to maintain his inwardness both in relation to himself and to others? Is there not here a germinal idea of the difference between direct and indirect communication? It is interesting to read what Diem has to say about irony and communication which would seem to substantiate what I have been saying.(2) Although Kierkegaard had not yet formulated the concept of the Stages, nor did he yet have any precise notion of subjectivity, yet I believe that here in The Concept of Irony his analysis of irony was such that there was not much need to alter anything later on.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Samlede Vaerker. Volume 1 p.264 (My translation)

(2) H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p.42ff

The characteristic of irony is that it says the opposite of, or something different from, what is meant; or the expression is the opposite of the content. It expresses the contradiction that things are not what they appear to be. In this respect irony has a certain affinity with hypocrisy. "Irony and hypocrisy are opposite forms, but both expressing the contradiction that the internal is not the external, irony by seeming to be bad, hypocrisy by seeming to be good, emphasize the principle anent the contemplative enquiry concerning ethical inwardness, that reality and deceit are equally possible, and that deceit can clothe itself in the same appearance as Reality."(1) That is to say, just as the hypocrite conceals his true wicked self behind the appearance of goodness so does the ethical individual conceal his inwardness behind the appearance of irony which is something that might well given the impression of badness, or at least something quite different from the ethical.

From the point of view of the ethico-religious individual, he sees the contradiction involved in trying to put together finitude - the objective world in which he lives, with the requirement of the isolation of subjectivity. Says Kierkegaard: "Irony arises from the constant placing of the particularities of the finite together with the infinite ethical requirement, thus permitting the contradiction to come into being."(2)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.278
(2) Op. Cit. p.448

In other words Irony arises as the result of the double reflection which the individual has to undergo in order to achieve subjectivity. It arises out of the process of translating possibility into reality; and reality for the individual is his own existence, subjectivity, the ethical or ethico-religious in the life of the individual. Irony is thus something which belongs to the ethical as an integral part of it and not something which happens occasionally whenever the individual thinks fit to give it expression. It is: "an existential determination and nothing is more ridiculous than to suppose that it consists in the use of certain phraseology, or when an author succeeds in expressing himself ironically. Whoever has essential irony has it all the day long, not bound to any specific form, because it is the infinite within him."(1) It belongs to the ethical, and by that is meant the ethico-religious. It is an attitude of the ethico-religious individual because he knows that his inwardness can never be given direct outward expression and that there is a contradiction involved. He is in possession of the inwardness which cannot be directly expressed; therefore, he knows that any indirect expression which he makes must take care to hide the essential secret of his inwardness. Irony is therefore used as an "incognito" of the ethicist. It is: "a synthesis of ethical passion which infinitely accentuates inwardly the person of the individual in

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.450

relation to the ethical requirement - and of culture, which infinitely abstracts externally from the personal ego, as one finitude among all the other finitudes and particularities. This abstraction causes the emphasis in the first to pass unnoticed, and herein lies the art of the ironist, which also ensures that the first movement shall be truly infinite."(1) The world in general lives in aesthetic categories which, as we have seen, abstract from the self; the direction is outward, away from the self. The self is considered as just one relativity among a great number of other relativities. This is all that the world or the observer sees. He also sees only such outward expression which for him is another particularity, but in the ethico-religious individual the emphasis is upon inwardness, subjectivity. The aesthetic emphasis of the observer causes the ethical emphasis of the individual to pass unnoticed. Outwardly to the observer there is no difference between the aesthetic individual and the ethical individual. The difference between the two lies in the fact that what makes the ethicist what he is: "is the movement of the spirit by which he sets his outward life inwardly in juxtaposition with the infinite requirement of the ethical, and this is something which is not directly apparent."(2)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.449f

(2) Op. Cit. p.450

Irony is thus seen as ideal for keeping apart the communicator and the recipient in ethico-religious communication; it is indeed a necessary factor of all such communication.

But Kierkegaard also speaks of humour as the incognito of the religious sphere.(1) And here we are faced with apparent difficulties. We have seen how the ethical is considered as a transitional sphere,(2) how it merges into the religious (the religion of immanence), how it is included in the religious. This is the reason why Kierkegaard speaks of the ethico-religious as being one, and why sometimes he uses the word "ethical", and sometimes the word "religious" to describe it. Again in passing I remind the reader that he sometimes uses "religious" to describe the specifically Christian stage; that is to say religion B. If irony is the incognito of the ethical, just where does humour take over from irony as the incognito of the religious? The ethico-religious sphere being what it is, it would seem sensible to suppose that humour and irony work together, or are together, in the same way as the ethical and the religious; humour being present in proportion as to how far advanced towards the limit of the religious he has reached. The more religious the less irony: the more ethical the less humour. Even in The Concept of Irony Kierkegaard links Irony and Humour. "As far as

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.451

(2) Compare pp.188ff

there can be any question of the eternal validity of irony, the question can first find its answer when one enters into the field of humour. Humour contains a much deeper scepticism than irony; for it is not the finite, but sinfulness upon which everything depends in this instance. Its scepticism relates itself as ignorance to the old proposition: credo quia absurdum; but it also contains a far deeper positiveness, for it moved not only in human but also in divine-human categories."(1) This is the last paragraph of the work and would seem to indicate that Kierkegaard considered, even as early as this that he had come to the point where upon entering religious categories, it passed over into the realm of humour. The reference to sinfulness would further seem to indicate that he was thinking of specifically Christian categories.

This raises the further difficulty as to whether Kierkegaard regards humour as the boundary zone between the ethical and religion A, or between religion A and religion B. Many Kierkegaard scholars see a difficulty with regard to this.(2) It does not seem to be certain at all times when Kierkegaard talks of humour being the incognito of the religious and so on, whether he means the religion of immanence or the religion of Christianity. Now Kierkegaard speaks quite definitely in one place of humour being: "the last terminus a quo in relation to the Christian type of the religious."(3) I think that this

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Samlede Vaerker. Volume 1 p.331 (my translation

(2) Eg. R. Thomte Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion p.101f

(3) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.258, cp.259

is how he wishes it to be regarded. He is quite definite about it. There is no doubt at all, no ambiguity, and I think that from the account which follows it will become plain that this is how humour is to be interpreted. The reader is asked to notice the oblique references to specifically Christian categories in the quotations regarding humour.

It is impossible for an observer to tell the difference between the humorist pure and simple and one who is using humour as the incognito of the religious. But there is an essential difference. As with the purely ethical so with the religious, there can be no question of direct expression. The religious is an even deeper manifestation of inwardness than the ethical pure and simple. The humorist in the ordinary sense: "constantly...sets the God-idea into conjunction with other things and evokes the contradiction, but he does not maintain a relationship to God in terms of religious passion stricte sic dictus, he transforms himself instead into a jesting and yet profound exchange centre for all these transactions, but he does not himself stand related to God. The religious man does the same, he sets the God-idea into juxtaposition with everything and sees the contradiction, but in his inmost consciousness he is related to God."(1) Here humour is thought of as the "confinium" between the ethico-religious and religiousness B, Christianity. How else could it be understood? In the first part of the quotation where

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.451

Kierkegaard speaks of the humorist pure and simple setting the God-idea into relationship with other things, he certainly cannot be referring to the individual who is expressing humour in aesthetic categories, although he definitely considers that humour can be such an expression.(1) Mention of "the God-idea" definitely precludes any such consideration. Nor yet can it be considered at this stage as an expression for the ethical pure and simple, for there is no awareness of God until it passes over into the religious.(2) But when Kierkegaard speaks of the individual setting the God-idea into juxtaposition with other things, but yet not himself being related to God, this is an accurate description of the ethico-religious where the only possible relationship to God is a disrelationship. The second part of the quotation about the religious man setting out everything in relation to the God-idea, but nevertheless being related to God in his inner-consciousness, can only refer to the Christian, where everything is before God. "Before God" is one of the fundamental qualifications of Christianity, but in contrast to the ethico-religious individual the Christian has the most intense relationship to God in his inmost being. This is subjectivity par excellence. Again the religious individual who uses humour as his incognito has to: "set up a screen between himself and men, in order to safeguard

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.459

(2) Compare p. 198f

and insure the inwardness of his suffering and his God-relationship."[1] This screen is humour. But Kierkegaard goes on to say that far from being inactive, the religious individual who is using humour in his communication to preserve both his and the recipient's inwardness, to prevent his communication from becoming direct: "transforms his outward activity into an inward matter, inwardly before God, by admitting that he can do nothing of himself, by reversing every teleological relation to his activity in the outward direction and cutting off every resultant in the finite world, although he labours to the limit of his powers; and this precisely is enthusiasm."[2] Here again the qualification "before God" comes in, and we must note that it is only the individual in religiousness B, Christianity, who admits that he "can do nothing of himself". The whole point of religiousness A, the religion of immanence, is that the individual is entirely self-sufficient; everything including God, is to be found within the self. I believe that Kierkegaard is here thinking of humour as being the "confinium" between Religiousness A and Religiousness B, and not between the ethical and religiousness A. Incidentally, the reference to: "reversing every teleological relation" and so on, is of interest in interpreting "the teleological suspension of the ethical" in Fear and Trembling.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.452

(2) Op. Cit. p.452

So I take it that Kierkegaard means us to regard humour as the expression of the Christian religiousness, which, because it is subjectivity in truth, cannot be expressed outwardly. But it also finds expression in religiousness A, because it is here that the individual discovers the contradiction between inwardness and giving outward expression to that inwardness. (We remember that religion A includes the ethical and can be referred to as the "ethico-religious"). The individual in religiousness A can never wholly succeed in retiring into his inwardness as we have seen, the nearest he can come to realising that Subjectivity is Truth is only that it is Untruth. It is in this disparity and in the attempt to conceal his inwardness that he discovers humour. Humour and the comical arise out of his desire to maintain his inwardness. It is not the opposite, namely that he protects his inwardness in order to be able to observe others humorously. It is: "precisely because he has not yet wholly succeeded in retiring into his inwardness, humour becomes his incognito, and an indication of his inner life. He does not conceal his inwardness in order to be able to apprehend others comically, but conversely: in order that the inwardness that is within him may be inwardness in truth, he conceals it, and in consequence of this concealment he discovers the comical..."[1] The religious individual in the ethico-religious sphere discovers humour precisely because he has discovered that subjectivity is untruth, in the religion of immanence he can never

---

[1] S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.454

succeed in retiring wholly in inwardness. The religious individual in Christianity on the other hand is anything but a humorist, although humour is also there as an expression of inwardness, for he: "is absolutely engrossed in the God-relationship."(1)

To the popular mind humour and the comical, and for that matter irony, are the last things one would use to describe the specifically religious and ethical outlook. These things are usually associated with joking, laughter, entertainment, having a sense of humour, seeing the funny side of things, and so on. But all these things are indicative of a certain way of looking at things, and are indeed only one aspect of it. If we were to analyse a sense of humour, or why certain things seem to be funny to individuals we would find that this is so because the individual concerned sees a certain disparity between what he observes and how he interprets that observation. There is in a sense a secret within the individual; he sees something in the event or whatever it is, which is not apparent to anyone else, and in fact what he sees may be quite different from superficial appearances. In fact the more different, the funnier it appears to be. Now this is exactly the kind of thing about which Kierkegaard is talking, only it may not be particularly funny or laughable. But in the religious or the ethico-religious and in the Christian, the same movement of the spirit is there. To

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.454

look upon irony and humour in the popular entertainment sense is to look on them from a purely aesthetic point of view. However when the same process of observing disparities and so on is brought out in the ethico-religious and Christian spheres, then the whole thing takes a different turn. Kierkegaard observes that the ethico-religious and the Christian individuals have to practise the same movement of spirit as the humorist or ironist in the popular sense, and he uses these words to describe that movement in the ethico-religious and Christian spheres, even although there may not be any question of laughter or fun involved, although of course sometimes there will be such expression. Says Kierkegaard: "wherever there is life there is contradiction, and wherever there is contradiction the comical is present."(1) The comical exists in every existence-sphere, indeed this is what irony and humour have in common, and what holds them so close together. With regard to the religious, whether it be the ethico-religious or the Christian: "The comical is brought out when the hidden inwardness comes into relationship with an environment, in that the religious individual comes to hear and see that which is brought into conjunction with his inward passion produces a comic effect."(2) An effect, that is, of disparity.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.459

(2) Op. Cit. p.457

As so often with Kierkegaard, he uses the words in a much broader sense than usual, making the popular definition fit into a much broader concept which he calls by the same name. That is to say what the man in the street considers as humour is only a part of what is included under humour in the Kierkegaardian sense. In fact he would almost seem to imply that tragedy is simply a negative aspect of the comical, or that to which they both belong. "The tragic and the comic are the same, insofar as both are based on a contradiction; but the tragic is the suffering contradiction, the comical the painless contradiction."(1) The relationship between the two is further brought out in relationship to the controlling idea. "The comic apprehension evokes the contradiction or makes it manifest by having in mind the way out, which is why the contradiction is painless. The tragic apprehension sees the contradiction and despairs of a way out."(2) Again: "Whenever there exists a contradiction and the way out is not known, where the contradiction is not painless, and where the correction is based on something higher....it is in itself the more comical, because the contradiction is greater."(3) When humour is faced with a contradiction it can see a way out through recognising the contradiction and not receiving any pain thereby, the tragic attitude on the other hand recognises the contradiction but cannot accept it and can only despair.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.459
(2) Op. Cit. p.462f
(3) Op. Cit. p.464

Irony and humour are closely connected, for the comical is present in both. Irony has the comical within it, but the ethical individual can only see it as vanishing, for he himself, because of existence and time has: "constantly to hold himself to the ethical."(1) The question of renewing the relationship crops up continually, therefore the ironical putting together of the contradiction is something which is also requiring renewal. Similarly humour has also the comical within itself, and just because he also has to keep himself; "in religious passion with regard to the God-relationship", so also is it only seen as vanishing.(2) It would seem therefore that irony and humour are very closely connected; indeed it might be said that irony is a mild form of humour, which becomes true humour in proportion as the ethical becomes the religion of inwardness and Christianity.

Much of the difficulty experienced by scholars with regard to the position of irony and humour in relation to the spheres of existence arises from the fact that they have been considered as intermediate existence-spheres in their own right. Thus Thomte regards irony and humour as intermediate stages.(3) Lowrie seems to do the same when he describes them as: "just a little touch to perfect the scheme."(4) He is referring to the scheme of the stages.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.464f

(2) Op. Cit. p.465

(3) R. Thomte Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion p.98ff

(4) W. Lowrie Life of Kierkegaard p.325

Frithiof Brandt says: "Thus the following sequence is obtained: the aesthetic stage, the ironical stage, the ethical stage, the humorous stage, the religious stage."(1) Even Geismar would seem to regard them in the same light. Thus he says: "In-between stages (Mellemstadierne), irony and humour, are also delineated, and they are characterised as sliding (glidende) stages."(2)

I cannot see how this interpretation is consistent with Kierkegaard's thought as a whole. As we have seen irony and humour are both categories which arise out of the ethical and the religious, whether this word is used in the ethico-religious or the Christian sense, and they can also be present in the aesthetic sphere. When the individual is in the ethico-religious sphere, or when he has finally achieved subjectivity in Christianity, then these two things belong as a result. They are what arises as a result of the individual seeing the contradiction which happens when such a thing as essential inwardness has to be given outward expression in communication, and they are also an attitude which the individual has towards the world outside him even when no communication is required. They are of the very essence of indirect communication. It must always be remembered that Kierkegaard is giving them a much broader significance than is usually understood by the words irony and humour. I would almost go so far as to say that they

---

(1) F. Brandt Søren Kierkegaard Natur och Kultur p.29 (My translation)

(2) E. Geismar Søren Kierkegaard Hans Livsudvikling og Forfattervirksomhed. Volume 2 p.103 (My translation)

are the words which he uses to describe what indirect communication is. If they were "in-between stages", then when the individual was in the ironical he would be between the aesthetic and the ethical, and in the humorous he would be between the ethical and the religious, or religion A and religion B. They are not bridges: to think of them in that way is to do away with the category of the leap which must be put into operation when the individual wishes by choice to pass from the aesthetic to the ethical, or from the ethico-religious to the Christian existence-sphere. Irony and humour are existential determinations which are expressive of the inwardness which is to be found in subjectivity. They are the form which ethico-religious communication must take in order to avoid direct expression. Thomte says: "Irony is a form of speech in which the real meaning is concealed by the words used."(1) Only in Kierkegaard it is much more than just that. It is not only the words used but the whole communication as expressed in the existence of the individual.

The quotation where mention is made of the boundary-zones is as follows: "There are thus three spheres of existence: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. Two boundary zones correspond to these three: irony constituting the boundary zone between the aesthetic and the ethical; humour as the boundary that separates the ethical from the religious."(2) There is nothing to

---

(1) R. Thomte Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion p.99

(2) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.448

contradict anything which I have said about irony and humour in this; indeed it only confirms it. Notice that Kierkegaard says that the boundary zones correspond to the spheres. (Svare) They do not add to them, or go between them; they go along with, correspond to, them. I give the Danish so that the reader may judge for himself. "Der er tre Existents-Sphaerer: den aesthetiske, den ethiske, den religieuse. Til disse svare to Confinier: Ironie er Confiniet imellem det Aesthetiske og det Ethiske; Humor Confiniet mellem det Ethiske og det Religieuse."(1) In a note on the word "Confinium" which occurs in the same context on the previous page the Danish editor translates the Latin as "graenseomraade", which means "border-country", "periphery", "boundary-zone", and so on.

Communication of the Ethico-Religious Leads to Paradox

What are the implications of this view of indirect communication in relation to the ethico-religious? We have seen that the further apart the Communicator and the Recipient are, the better, and the less direct the communication the better. The point is that the Communicator and the Recipient should maintain their own inwardness while at the same time being indirectly related through some form of communication. Irony and humour, which arise as a result of the ethico-religious, serve as the expression for the ethico-religious in communication. But even to desire to communicate, to give any expression to that which is the opposite of

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Samlede Vaerker. Volume 10 p.179

expression, would seem to be involving the Communicator in a dilemma, even when the communication is as indirect and as maieutic as it is possible to be. And if the Recipient in looking towards a teacher or a Communicator is aware that from him he has received a communication of the ethico-religious, then here again there is a dilemma. For it is supposed to be by his self-activity that he becomes subjective.

It would seem that the nearest to any communication which can be got in the ethico-religious is simply a stimulus which is created merely by the existence of the Communicator in his ethico-religious categories. And it does not really matter whether this is effective as a means of communication or not. If we are going to have regard to the existence of the Recipient and have it preserved in all its inwardness, then again it cannot concern the Communicator whether he receives the indirect communication or not. In fact the less the one is in touch with the other, the better. So we are brought to the point where in communicating the ethico-religious the only kind of communication which is valid is indirect communication, as we have seen, and the less of that the better; or perhaps it would be better to say: the less the form of the communication expresses the content, the better. As the direction of the ethico-religious is always inward, away from one another, eventually it must work out that the ideal situation would be that in which there was no expression of the ethico-religious contained in the communication. In such an event surely the

Communicator and the Recipient would be as far apart as it is possible to be, and this would be the ideal. In such an event any stimulus which the Recipient would receive from whoever happened to be the communicator would be purely fortuitous. The Communicator of this ethico-religious truth would be, for the Recipient, just a matter of whoever happened to stimulate him to becoming subjective...It would be dependent upon the self-activity generated by the double reflection which he has undergone when faced with the possibility which was placed before him by whoever it was who happened to place it before him. It would by no means be certain that any communication was intended on the part of the Communicator, although presumably he would hope that just from the very fact of his existence in ethico-religious categories some communication would be taking place, although he could not know with whom. The whole question of communication is thus taken out of the realm of consciousness on the part of both Communicator and Recipient.

Kierkegaard seems to recognise something of this position when he says that even if someone wished to communicate the ethico-religious, and, true to himself, never did so directly and therefore never was able to bring to birth the slow understanding of the ethical task within another individual: "it seems more consistent not to have made the slightest accommodation in order to get anyone to understand him, first and last so tending to his own self as not to make himself important in relation to others... If he acts in this manner he will have the solace in the

day of judgment, when God is the Judge, that he has indulged himself in nothing for the sake of winning someone, but with the utmost exertion has laboured in vain, leaving it to God to determine whether it was to have any significance or not."(1)

Therefore it seems to me that in the ethico-religious sphere, the only form of communication which is valid ultimately, which will fit the requirements which the ethico-religious itself imposes, must be so indirect as really to be no communication at all in the accepted sense. Yet it must be a communication that is to say, the stimulus whereby the ethico-religious is brought to birth in the existence of the Recipient. For this reason I call it a discommunication. (The word is mine, not Kierkegaard's). The only communication in the ethico-religious which it is possible to have is precisely no communication at the conscious level, but nevertheless remains the only communication which it is possible to have.

This corresponds to the disrelationship which the individual in the ethico-religious finds is the only possible relationship which he can have to himself and to God. He has to come to the limit of the ethico-religious in order to discover this. The only kind of relationship to God which he can have is precisely no relationship, but nevertheless this constitutes the only relationship which it is possible for him to have.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.247

It is at this point that most scholars and commentators consider that Kierkegaard has left his analysis of indirect communication. If there is anything further to be found on the subject then they would assert that it is of only a very rudimentary nature. According to them, Kierkegaard did not fully work out any theory of communication beyond this point. And so they feel justified in saying that he had brought himself to an impasse where he discovered that the theory of indirect communication just did not work.(i)

Now if it is true that Kierkegaard did not have any more to say than this, then it would seem as if their criticisms were fully justified. It would seem as if from the very nature of his own presuppositions, Kierkegaard has landed himself in a dilemma. On this evidence alone it is only possible to see a somewhat vague doctrine of communication, which, after starting off with a great flourish of trumpets with regard to indirect communication, ends up rather lamely with the conclusion that indirect communication does not work. And many of these commentators(2) conclude that Kierkegaard, after working out the thesis: Subjectivity is Truth, in which the concept of indirect communication must play a decisive part, was forced to abandon the whole thing more or less because he saw that it did not work. And moreover this abandonment is often linked with Kierkegaard's increasing recognition of his own melancholia and the fact that possibly this had predisposed him to work out this particular theory of communication. Also connected with the so-called abandonment of indirect

(i) Eg. W. Lowrie *Life of Kierkegaard* pp. 379f; 406
R. Thomte *Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion* p 202

(2) Ibid.

communication is the fact of his Easter Experience of 1848 in which he says: "I must speak", and so on. Thereafter (so the contention runs), Kierkegaard became aware that Christianity required direct communication, and that any attempt to employ indirect communication arose out of something inherent in the weakness of his own sinful nature.

But even in spite of this they have to admit that even after this Easter experience Kierkegaard could still speak of indirect communication, subjectivity and so on. In fact he speaks about them right to the end. This is seen, however, as confirmation of the fact that Kierkegaard could never really rid himself of his melancholia, and occasionally relapsed into his old ways once more.

Now of course any such view of Kierkegaard calls into question not only his theory of indirect communication but also his whole concept of subjectivity. If this really were the case then the whole subject and tenor of his thought must have appeared to Kierkegaard to have been completely mistaken. In fact he might well have been tempted to ask whether Hegel had not been right after all, considering that the thesis: Subjectivity is Truth, arose out of reaction to Hegelian objectivity in the first place. Nevertheless it would appear that there is some justification for the views expressed above, from the evidence of Kierkegaard himself. He does appear on the surface to be rather muddled about communication in general, seeming to reject it on the one hand, but yet clinging to it in spite of everything.

Here is what Lowrie says: "The sequal instructs us what he meant by 'I must speak'. He was recurring to the generic idea of confession expressed in the dictum of the Judge, that 'it is the duty of every man to be manifest'. He had ignored this maxim for a long time, having succeeded in suppressing it below the threshold of consciousness because it was an ideal which he was not able to realise. He had set up a defence mechanism against its recurrence by stressing the importance of 'double reflection', 'indirect communication', 'hidden inwardness', 'religion A with humour as incognito', etc. Whatever may be said in favour of these notions, it is evident that they are the polar opposite of the judge's maxim. And when S.K. reverted to this earlier ideal he implicitly repudiated the concepts he had been dealing with for so long a time. For though the pseudonym Anti-Climacus was the new invention of this period, it did not make it doubtful that S.K. was speaking in his own person. Though he did not expressly repudiate the method of indirect communication, which he still held to be appropriate at certain times, yet he began to suspect in it a certain daimonia."(1) Again, Lowrie, while wishing to go all the way with Kierkegaard, tries to justify the apparent discrepancies of Kierkegaard's own thoughts on the subject: "Both his arguments and his example suffice to persuade me that there is a place for

---

(1)W. Lowrie Life of Kierkegaard p.406

indirect communication and that we should do well to learn from S.K. Yet it is plain to us now that his theory was an attempt to rationalise a practice to which he was compelled by a morbid reserve which was a specific product of his own melancholy."(1) What Lowrie is saying in fact is that Kierkegaard, while recognising the inadequacy of his whole thought, nevertheless could not escape from it entirely because of the inadequacy of his own nature. Hence he explains the continued presence of the concept of indirect communication even in spite of Kierkegaard's apparent rejection of it. Lowrie sees in Kierkegaard a certain dilemma.

The extreme error of this point of view lies in the fact that it posits too close an identification between Kierkegaard's writing and thought, and his own historical position as an individual existing in time. Lowrie is at one moment talking of the peculiar character of the historical individual Kierkegaard, a character of morbid reserve, which caused him to use indirect methods for communicating what he had to say, and at another moment he is referring to his dialectics of the communication of Subjectivity which is to be found in his writings, and which is valid apart from Kierkegaard's own personal existence. When Kierkegaard says: "I must speak", he is referring to the decision to publish under his own name instead of a pseudonym. It is as if he said: "I must

---

(1) W. Lowrie Life of Kierkegaard p.379f

let it be known that I, Kierkegaard, am the author. I, Kierkegaard, must take full responsibility for my writings." He certainly recognised that perhaps his diffidence arose from morbid reserve, but this diffidence in no way refers to his views on indirect communication which are contained in his writings. Such a view as Lowrie's gives excessive prominence to the historical element in existence. It is an historical judgment and therefore precisely subject to all the limitations of the historical which Kierkegaard himself sets out so admirably in The Philosophical Fragments and The Concluding Unscientific Postscript. This is what comes of ignoring Kierkegaard's own fundamental presuppositions when attempting to evaluate and analyse his thought. To speak like this betrays the fact that the author is applying to Kierkegaard canons which he himself rejected.(1)

In addition, to say that Kierkegaard, in saying: 'I must speak', was going back to the Judge in Stages on Life's Way, who said that it was the duty of every man to be manifest, shows that Lowrie considers Kierkegaard to be expressing a Hegelian point of view. This has already been refuted at the appropriate place in this study.(2) Suffice it to say here that what the Judge means is that it is the duty of every individual to become manifest or revealed to himself. If Lowrie really thinks that the Judge is expressing a Hegelian viewpoint in this matter, then he is

---

(1) Note. The American writer Paul Holmer admirably develops this in an article in the Book: Kierkegaard Critique entitled "On Understanding Kierkegaard". Kierkegaard Critique pp.40-53

(2) Compare pp.185ff

saying in fact that, after the Easter experience, Kierkegaard became reconciled with Hegel, at least in this point; in fact really admitted that Hegel was right after all. Here again, in an even more fundamental sense Kierkegaard would seem to have repudiated all that had gone before.

Thomte seems to follow Lowrie in most of what he has to say regarding Kierkegaard and communication, although he does seem to recognise that such a view is not really very adequate as an explanation of what Kierkegaard's position really is. Like Lowrie, he refers to the Easter experience of 1848 as being a turning point, which it undoubtedly was, but the reader is not very sure whether Thomte thinks of it merely as a personal turning point in the problem of his morbid reserve, his personality, or in his whole concept of the communication of Subjectivity. Thus he says: "While Kierkegaard discontinued the use of the indirect method of communication after the Easter experience of 1848, he did not discard the concept of indirect communication as an integral part of the Christian faith, for indirect communication is inherent in the Christian of incarnation."(1) But yet at the beginning of his chapter which deals specifically with the communication of the truth, Thomte proposes to deal with the subject <u>from a chronological point of view</u>, thus falling into the same error as Lowrie. And he proceeds

---

(1)R. Thomte <u>Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion</u> p.202

to treat communication as he finds it dealt with in The Concluding Unscientific Postscript, side by side with the personal account of his own position with regard to his reservedness and so on which is found in The Point of View for my Authorship. And his chronological treatment deals with both the theory of communication and its relevant principles, and the personal aspects of Kierkegaard's own communication through his writings.(1) It would appear as if Thomte also thought that there was something of a dilemma in Kierkegaard's treatment of communication.

The French writer, Jolivet, finds the same kind of dilemma in Kierkegaard. Thus he writes: "The whole problem for Kierkegaard was to find a way out of subjectivity, which seemed to lead to the immanence of the self within itself, and to a reason set afire with impossible demands. What is certain is that Kierkegaard's example admirably illustrates the dramatic conflict engendered by the abstract creation of a radical opposition between the spheres of reason (immanence) and that of faith (transcendence). Far from leading us to erect this conflict into the law of the Christian life, it should rather induce us to avoid the paths which involve one in such contradiction. Thus Kierkegaard made his...truly tragic...speculative embarrassments a condition of belief and of the religious, and he transformed the failure of his efforts into an apologia of despair, of subjectivity and of being 'unto oneself'."(2)

---

(1) R. Thomte Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion p.191ff

(2) Jolivet Introduction to Kierkegaard p.226f

Now there may appear to be some truth in all these points of view. For Kierkegaard does appear to stop at the ethico-religious in his development of the concept of communication. This might seem to be borne out by the contents of the fragment The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication which we have dealt with in an earlier chapter[1] and from the fact that in talking about communication in The Concluding Unscientific Postscript and elsewhere he does seem to leave the matter there. But even so there are still some hints of further development in Christianity when he can speak of communications being direct-indirect and so on. From a superficial reading of the writings this would appear to be no more than just a hint which is not really developed any further, and it would appear as if the matter were left pretty much as Lowrie, Thomte and the others have suggested.

Going by the hints which Kierkegaard himself gives in his writings, we go on from here to try to find out whether Kierkegaard does not in fact develop the concept of communication further in a Christian direction, and if there is not something which the commentators have ignored when attempting to interpret Kierkegaard. I believe that we can find such a further development in Kierkegaard's treatment of the essential form of Christianity as love. Not only is there this further development but it is the culmination of the whole dialectic. It is the perfect

---

(1) Compare pp.10-72

"rounding off" of the whole process. In the following chapter I will show that the extension, culmination and conclusion of the dialectic of communication is to be found in Kierkegaard's demonstration of the meaning of Christian love.

To an exploration of this we now turn.

CHAPTER 7

THE COMMUNICATION OF SUBJECTIVITY IN CHRISTIANITY

The purpose of this chapter is to show how Christianity resolves the problem of communication which is to be found in the ethico-religious sphere. It demonstrates how, through the operation of Christian love, the whole dialectic of Communication and Subjectivity is finally fulfilled. This means that we must explore what Kierkegaard has to say about Christian love, firstly as we find it in God's love as manifested in Christ; secondly as this love of God in Christ is communicated in the usual and obvious sense, that is to say, through Christian preaching and the authority of the preacher; and thirdly through the operation of Christian love in ordinary individuals. The bulk of the chapter will concentrate on this last aspect, because it is here that Kierkegaard makes a contribution to the dialectic of Communication and Subjectivity which has been largely passed over by scholars, and which in a brilliant way brings to a close the whole analysis. The recipient of God's love, the receiver of His communication, which brings about Subjectivity within the individual, is not only a recipient, but also in a secondary sense a communicator. Therefore we have to discover not only how God's communication works within the individual, but also how the individual's communication, of which Christian love is the expression works within the person to whom he communicates.

In dealing with direct and indirect communication we have seen that both are inadequate to meet the needs of Subjectivity. In the first case there is no attempt to preserve the inwardness of the individual; all is objective,

and in such a circumstance there can be no real communication at all. In the second instance the attempt to preserve the inwardness of the individual only leads at best to what I have called a discommunication. When however, we come into the sphere of Christianity, we find that the requirements of Subjectivity are met while at the same time the communication is accomplished in the fullest possible sense.

Christianity is, as we have seen in a previous Chapter, completely paradoxical. For while the thesis: Subjectivity is Truth, can only really be said to find its complete fulfilment in Christianity, yet the condition for receiving Christianity comes from outside the individual, thus apparently reducing it to aesthetic categories. As opposed to the ethico-religious sphere there must first of all be a communication from God who is outside. He has to implant the condition necessary for the appropriation of the inwardness, which is Christ Himself. Accordingly there would seem to be an element of outward communication, direct communication; and also a communication which is concerned to preserve the inwardness of the individual and which therefore must also be indirect. The self-activity of the individual must be brought into play in order that true inwardness should be preserved, and this can only be done through indirect communication. So in this sense there is an element of direct and an element of indirect communication in Christianity. We have already seen from the first Chapter of the present study that Kierkegaard speaks of Christian Communication as being <u>direct-indirect</u>. After all that has been said regarding direct and indirect

communication it might well seem as if a combination of the two were an impossibility.

On the purely human level it would be an impossibility, but in Christianity we are dealing with the divine-human and therefore we are introduced to an entirely new realm of expression for the communication which cannot be accounted for through the practice of irony and humour. Christian communication is not merely human, it involves the divine as well. Christian communication is not just a question of inter-human relationships, it is first and foremost a communication of God to man and only in a secondary sense a communication between man and man. In the communication of Christianity, which, we must remember, is true Subjectivity, there is not only a direct-indirect dialectic but also a divine-human one.

Now we shall find that the form of Christian communication, corresponding to irony and humour in the ethico-religious sphere, is always the same whether we are thinking of the communication of God to man, or communication between man and man. In fact in Christianity form and content become one. In the Christian sphere the individual is entirely and utterly dependent upon God, who creates in him the condition for appropriation, so it will follow that when a human being attempts to communicate to others that which has been communicated first and foremost by God to him, then this communication ought to reflect most accurately the same characteristics as the divine communication. The divine communication was given once and for all in Christ, and thereafter the Christian

communication is given through His disciples, always remembering, of course, that it is God who gives the condition for understanding the communication in the first place. Firstly, therefore, we shall examine what Kierkegaard has to say regarding this primary divine communication.

Christian Communication as revealed in Christ

(a) Love is the expression of this communication

With regard to the divine communication which is primary in the communication of Christianity, Kierkegaard is quite clear and specific. What he has to say is contained mostly in The Philosophical Fragments.(1)

We have seen that the highest relationship in communication between man and man, that which comes nearest to preserving inwardness; which indeed is absolutely necessary if inwardness is to be preserved, is indirect communication. The whole point of indirect communication is to keep intact the subjectivity of both communicator and recipient. The recipient is goaded into self-activity, and it must appear as far as possible as if what had been communicated rose up unaided from the depths of his own being. Similarly the communicator had as far as possible to preserve his own inwardness and so be as remote from the recipient as he could be. It was a fundamental fact of indirect communication that the communicator and the recipient should be kept as far apart as possible. In the process of indirect communication the ideal is that not only should the recipient be made to understand himself more fully, but the communicator seeks also, through the

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.17ff

recipient, to understand himself more fully, always bearing in mind what Kierkegaard means by understanding the self. "The disciple gives occasion for the teacher to understand himself, and the teacher gives occasion for the disciple to understand himself."(1) This, as Kierkegaard points out, is the Socratic position. The pupil is just as necessary to the teacher as the teacher is to the pupil, in order that the subjectivity of each may be preserved according to the requirements of the ethico-religious sphere.(2) All this has been made plain in the previous chapter.

But when it comes to the question of Christian communication, or, to be more precise, the divine communication which God gives to man, then we are brought into an entirely different situation. In indirect communication in the ethico-religious sphere the teacher and the pupil, or the communicator and the recipient, needed one another in order to understand themselves, but in the divine communication God does not need the recipient or the disciple to help Him understand Himself.(3) So from this point of view God does not need to make any communication at all. But on the other hand the disciple does need God to help him to a self-understanding. We have seen that when he seeks to do so only within the limits of ethico-religious categories, within the limits of immanence, this only leads to an impasse. He needs the

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.17
(2) Op. Cit. p.18
(3) Op. Cit. p.18

outside assistance of God before he can receive the condition for such a self-understanding, and in this respect at least he is absolutely dependent upon God the Communicator.

So if God has no need to communicate in order to preserve His inwardness or bring about a deeper Self-understanding, what is it, therefore, which moves Him to communicate with man? Kierkegaard answers that it is a deep concern for the disciple. And this concern is called love. This is what motivates the divine communication.

Now with this concept we are at the very heart of Christian communication. For it is only through love which is not only the motive but also the expression of the divine communication, that the problems connected with communication and subjectivity can be resolved. What irony and humour are to the ethico-religious sphere, love is to the Christian sphere.

(b) The Nature of God's Love.

Let us see what Kierkegaard means by love in this sense, and, more important, the effect which this love has upon the inwardness of the disciple and those to whom the disciple, as a Christian, communicates; in other words, precisely how love fits into the communication of subjectivity. We remember here that Subjectivity in its perfect sense is only to be found in Christianity.(1) Irony and humour are inadequate as vehicles in the ethico-religious sphere. How does love fit into the sphere of Christianity?

---

(1) Compare Chapter 5 pp.280ff

Before we go any further we must dissociate ourselves from any comparison with purely human love. In Kierkegaard's analysis of Christian love he is at pains, in almost every aspect of love with which he is dealing, to distinguish the characteristics of divine love from those of purely human love. Whereas purely human love is transitory, subject to the dialectic of time, divine love is eternal and unchanging.(1) This must always be kept in mind, for it has a direct bearing on Christian love as Kierkegaard sees it.

We may begin by asking what is the purpose of God's love? What is it setting out to achieve? Kierkegaard says that, as we are dealing with the divine and the eternal, we have to realise that what God is setting out to achieve in love is the same as the motive. When we are dealing with the eternal then the motive and the end must of necessity be the same. In this case the motive of God's communication is a deep concern for the disciple which is given the name of love. Therefore the end, the purpose, of this love is to bring about a deep concern for God; in other words, a love for God. As Kierkegaard says: "it would be a contradiction for God to have a motive and an end which did not correspond."(2) This is a difficult statement. When we are dealing with the finite and temporal, then the end, the object in view, cannot correspond with the motive which brings about that

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.18

(2) Op. Cit. p.19

end. It is something which belongs to time; the future perhaps. With God there is no past or future; everything is eternally present. Therefore for Him, the motive and the end in view must be synonymous. Even when a purpose has been achieved in the temporal sphere and the motive has reached its apparent conclusion, it cannot be final or definite because of the time stream. The motive and the end are separated by the time stream and insofar as this happens they are not the same. Indeed "motive", "end", "purpose" are words which belong essentially to the finite and temporal. In the eternal there cannot be any distinction between the motive and the end. Motive and end in time are separate; in the eternal they are the same, or together at one and the same point.

If the motive and the end are the same in divine communication then this means that the end of divine love is love in return; in other words, to get the disciple to love God. If we look at it from the purely human point of view as opposed to the divine, then, as we have seen, if Subjectivity is Truth, the individual must have a true relationship to himself, and this can only be achieved when: "the self is grounded transparently in the power which constituted it."(1) That is to say, in God. To be rooted and grounded in God surely means to be absorbed in Him in other words to love Him fully.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Sickness unto Death p.19

So God wishes the disciple to love Him in return. At the same time this is why He loves him. In this reciprocal relationship God is making man equal with Himself. If the disciple, through the love of God, loves God in return, this is in fact to make him equal with God. God resolves that man shall be to Him what He is to man in this particular respect.(1) But the disciple is far from equal to God in any respect, and we have seen that before he can ever begin to appropriate Christianity, God must bestow upon him the condition for understanding it. Kierkegaard asserts that it is only in love that the unequal can be made equal, and the only thing which can prevent this understanding, this relationship between God and man, is some obstacle on the side of man: "in his refusing to realise that which has been made possible for him."(2)

Let us grant that it is the desire of God through His love to make the individual love Him in return; to make the unequal equal. How is this to be accomplished? It is not a question of the simple straightforward carrying out of God's purpose. It has been pointed out above that God's purpose may be frustrated by some obstacle residing in the soul of the disciple or individual. There are in fact inherent obstacles arising out of the very fact of man's inequality with God. The problem arises through attempting to make equal what is essentially unequal.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.19

(2) Op. Cit. p.19

Kierkegaard uses the illustration of a high and mighty king who falls in love with a humble maiden.(1) In his desire to make her equal to himself he could simply make a command and the girl could become his wife. She would be queen and equal in status to himself. But what if she did not desire this situation? What if she could never forget the basic difference between them?(2) The king was only using his power and his influence to gain his own ends; in other words, he was only thinking of himself and had no true concern for the girl. The fact that there was a certain outward appearance of equality which was brought about by her elevation to be queen does not necessarily mean that the basic inequality between them has been resolved. They could never really be equal in spirit. Kierkegaard concludes that the girl, in such a case, would be far better off in obscurity, confident in the love of one who really was her equal. Although all might be well from the external point of view, from the point of view of the spirit, their love would be a deception. Of course the girl might really love the king but be quite content to accept the fact that she was nothing compared to him and to remain his slave in adoration. But the king does not desire this. He wishes them to be equal in their love because he loves her. In her humility the girl cannot understand this; she is content to remain in her inferior status and be his faithful slave even although she

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.19ff

(2) Op. Cit. p.20

loves him. This, says Kierkegaard, must be infinitely grievous for the king, for he must realise that he is prevented by his position from making her equal in love. He is prevented from making the relationship a true one. Here again the appearance of love is only a deception.(1)

Now, says Kierkegaard, this last dilemma is something of the position with regard to God. God loves all men, but is met with the inability to understand. The individual is incapable of understanding that God loves him. But in spite of this God still persists in loving him: "...and God desires to teach him and is concerned to bring him to equality with himself. If this equality cannot be established, God's love becomes unhappy and His teaching meaningless since they cannot understand one another."(2) In fact love on the part of God is always unhappy.(3) He may, out of love and concern, even have to repel the learner whose prerogative it is to choose between the appropriation of God's love, or going on his own way to destruction. In merely human love we consider that human love is the greatest possible happiness, but with the divine love it can be the greatest possible unhappiness.

We have seen that God desires that man should be made equal to Himself. How is this understanding between them, this union, to be accomplished? How is the communication to be made? It cannot be brought about by raising the

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.21
(2) Op. Cit. p.21
(3) Op. Cit. p.19

individual to the level of God, for in such a case the disciple would forget that the misunderstanding ever existed, and in any case, such a condition, though happy for the learner, nevertheless means that he is deceived.(1) Neither will it do for God to display Himself in all His power, simply in order to receive the learner's adoration. This would not satisfy the love of God which does not want homage and adoration and self-glorification, but simply the glorification of the beloved. Again this might appear to be all right for the beloved but it is deception in the sight of God for this is not His true purpose.(2) At the same time we know that the individual cannot become truly related to God when he seeks Him within the limits of the self.

The only alternative to elevating man to the position of God, or of being content to let him adore from afar, is for God to make Himself equal to man; to come down to man's level. To bring about a point of contact on equal terms, God became man, and more than that, a humble servant-man. Instead of elevating man to His position, God humbles Himself to become the equal of the humblest and it is in this way that the union is brought about.(3) And the only alternative to finding God within the self is to find Him outside the self; to be related to God outside the limit of the self. As we have seen, God must give or

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.22
(2) Op. Cit. p.22f
(3) Op. Cit. p.24f

bestow upon man the condition for recognising Him. There are many things which cause offence in this recognition, and it is man's choice either to be offended, that is to say, let the offence deter him from accepting God's communication of Himself, or to overcome the offence through faith. All this we have seen in our examination of Kierkegaard's analysis of Christianity. If the possibility of offence is overcome then the individual becomes a new creature or a new creation. In other words, God's love is creative.(1)

Here is contained another reason why the love of God is unhappy. It is the unhappiness of knowing that many may be repelled by one or another form of offence. There is still the possibility of misunderstanding even although God does implant the condition within the individual. In fact, He who is love itself, and who desires that all men should love Him, may only be able to save a few at most. Kierkegaard's words are: "How wonderful is life, all sorrow and all love: to yearn to express the equality of love and yet to be misunderstood; to apprehend the danger that all men may be destroyed, and yet only so to be able to save a single soul. His own life filled with sorrow, while each hour of the day is taken up with the troubles of the learner who confides in Him! This is God as He stands upon the earth, like unto the humblest by the power of His omnipotent love."(2) This is the only way in which the revelation can take place.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.24

(2) Op. Cit. p.25

For, as we have seen above: "Every other form of revelation would be a deception in the eyes of love; for either the learner would first have to be changed, and the fact concealed from him that this was necessary...or there would be permitted to prevail a frivolous ignorance of the fact that the entire relationship was a delusion."(1)

Now of course if the love is unhappy, this means that there is always an element of suffering involved in the servant-form; a suffering which may end in death. This is easy to see, but what is not so obvious is that there must also be an element of suffering on the part of the learner. New wine must be put into new bottles; the love of God has to be instilled into a new creation; and in this process of becoming a new creature, the learner must undergo suffering. For one thing the guilt that is within him always seeks to bring about a misunderstanding, as we have seen above when dealing with guilt in the ethico-religious sphere, and there is always suffering connected with this. Again there is always the suffering involved in the fear of the responsibility of being made equal with God.(2) In God's communication to man there is always an element of suffering and unhappiness involved.

We have now seen, that in becoming man, in bringing Himself down to the level of man, God places Himself in the position of having to make His communication just as another human being would make it. It is true that by becoming man, God has already to some extent made the communication;

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Philosophical Fragments p.26

(2) Op. Cit. p.27

He has already given expression to His love by becoming man, but although He has already given man the condition for understanding Him, yet He still has to be recognised. The communication still has to be received. By the very fact of His becoming the equal of man, God has to place Himself to some extent under the limits of human communication.

(c) The Nature of God's Communication as seen through the God-Man

On the surface it would seem as if God's communication to man through Christ was a comparatively simple matter. All that people have to do is to recognise Christ; take Him at His face value, so to speak; accept His assertions about Himself and His teaching; and all will be well. After all, according to the Gospels, Jesus did not hesitate to proclaim who He was. His communication was absolutely direct and immediate. But this is just where the problem arises. It was direct and immediate and so, inasfar as it is just that, subject to the limitations of all direct communication which does not take into account the self-activity of the individual which is required for appropriation. From this point of view it would simply be a communication of knowledge which required no self-activity on the part of the recipient. It would have no respect for the inwardness of the individual and therefore would be open to all the weakness involved in such a communication. It would really be a direct communication from the purely human point of view.

It might be argued that God has already given the condition for understanding and so in a sense this objection is taken care of. But the understanding which God gives is the understanding of the divine significance of His communication, not the ability to understand another human being. It is quite possible to understand the simple direct statement of the Gospel; to know it all from beginning to end so to speak, but yet completely to miss the point inasfar as it is of significance for the existence of the individual. It is quite possible to regard Christ from the purely human point of view; even to agree with what He says; see it as logical, and so on; but yet from an existential point of view completely to misunderstand. Another example of this would be if we could see the complete reasonableness of Kierkegaard's analysis of God's communication to man, but still regard it as a direct communication of Kierkegaard to ourselves regarding God, and having understood what he has to say, we could let it remain no more than just another communication of knowledge. What Kierkegaard says is perfectly understandable but not unto salvation: for that to happen we have to be in possession of the divine condition which God gives for the understanding which leads to appropriation; self-understanding. It is the same with the direct utterance of Christ, when it is regarded from the purely human point of view. So we must do more than just accept these utterances at their face value, if the communication which God makes to us through Him is to bring about the desired result, which is to reciprocate in love towards God.

We have to take into consideration the fact that Christ, the God-Man, is not what He appears to be at first sight. Here we are introduced to a new factor which does not apply to any other human being, at least in this fundamental sense. True enough, a man may pose as something he is not: for example, a confidence-trickster may appear to be the most respectable and honest of men until he has gained his end. But the confidence-trickster remains a man no matter what other facade he may adopt; he remains a human being. But Christ is more than a man, He is the God-man. He is God who has taken on humanity so that humanity may come to Him. A human being can never go as far as to say that he is God or something else, for we know that no matter what he says, he still remains what he is, a man. Mental institutions are full of people who think that they are something other than what they appear to be, but we know that they remain essentially human beings, albeit deranged, and nothing else. With the God-man, however, it is different. From the point of view of the world He seems to be a humble man and nothing else; but He is more than that in fact; He is God. We have to take note of this particular human being, that he is not what He appears to be, that is to say, just a human being; but is also God.

Now this human being says that He is God. From the purely human point of view this is blasphemy. Any human being could say this and it would not be true. But with <u>this</u> human being it <u>is</u> true. However, it is not directly apparent. All that is <u>directly</u> apparent is that it is a

human being who is speaking. But there is something which lies behind this direct assertion, namely, that the person who says it is not what He appears to be, which in His case makes the assertion true. The situation arises therefore where what appears to be a direct communication becomes something which is indirect by virtue of the fact that it is Christ who says it. From the purely human and direct point of view the statement: "I am God" is not true though it is able to be understood. But <u>indirectly</u> the statement is true even although it is a human being who says it, because He is more than a human being: He is the God-man. So we see that the simple direct communication which God makes as a human being becomes indirect by virtue of the fact that it is God who makes it.

Kierkegaard therefore calls Christ: <u>The Sign of Contradiction</u>. This is a Biblical designation for Jesus[1] and Kierkegaard makes much use of what this may mean. He defines it thus: "A 'sign of contradiction' is a sign which contains within itself a contradiction."[2] Something may be immediately apparent in a direct sense but at the same time be something other than it appears to be. From this point of view it can rightly be considered to be simply a sign and nothing more, and as such it is simply there to draw attention to the reality which lies behind it. All language could be considered as such a sign or symbol. But

---

(1) Bible Reference. Kierkegaard's version of Lk 2:34 "A sign which shall be spoken against"

(2) S. Kierkegaard <u>Training in Christianity</u> p.124

there is no contradiction involved here. It is a sign and nothing more. A sign of contradiction is something different. It arises when that to which attention is drawn by means of the sign or symbol is in itself a contradiction; that is to say, when the sign contains a contradiction within its very constitution. Then it is rightly called a sign of contradiction. However we must be careful to see that the contradiction contained within the sign is not so violent that it renders the sign of no point at all. In other words it must have some recognizable relationship to the sign. The contradiction must also not be of such a nature that the sign ceases to be recognizable as such and becomes an absolute secret.(1)

A Communication which is a combination of jest and earnestness would be such a sign of contradiction. Kierkegaard explains what he means by this: "It is not by any means a direct communication, it is impossible for him who receives it to tell directly which is which, because the communication does not directly communicate either jest or earnestness. The earnestness of such a communication lies in another place, or in a second instance, in the intent of making the receiver independently active - which, dialectically understood is the highest earnestness in the case of communication. Such a communication must make use of something whereby it draws attention to itself, whereby it prompts and invites one to take heed of the communication. And, on the other hand,

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.124f

the unity of jest and earnest must not by any means be madness, for then there would be no communication."(1) In other words there must be something specific, something definite (the sign) to conceal the true nature of the communication. There must be a sign, otherwise there is nothing to draw attention to the communication. The contradiction consists in the fact that even when the sign has been penetrated, the nature of the communication, whether it is jest or earnest, cannot be said to be at all certain. "A sign of contradiction is one which draws attention to itself, and then, when attention is fixed upon it, shows that it contains a contradiction."(2)

Such a sign of contradiction is the God-man. He is a sign or a symbol. That is to say, as well as being what He appears to be on the surface, He is also something else. But He is also a contradiction. In other words, what it is that He is, in addition to what is apparent, stands in opposition to that which is apparent. As Kierkegaard says: "Immediately He is an individual man, just like other men, a lowly insignificant man; but the contradiction is <u>that He is God</u>."(3)

We now have to ask the question: in what specific way is Christ the Sign of Contradiction? What is it about Him which draws attention to the fact that He is not only a man but also very God Himself? It could quite easily be the case that such a contradiction could never become

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Training in Christianity</u> p.125
(2) Op. Cit. p.125
(3) Op. Cit. p.125

apparent. It could simply appear as if this man said that he was God; something which any man could say. In the case of any man such a statement would be blatantly untrue. Therefore in order to distinguish Christ's words from those of any other man saying the same thing; or in order to point to the fact that here really is a sign of contradiction, there must be something to distinguish Him. People have to be made aware of the contradiction. If they are not made aware of it then the contradiction does not exist for anyone: "as when a mystification succeeds so well that its effect is nill". There must be present some factor which draws attention to it. Such a factor is, says Kierkegaard, or such factors are, the miracles of Christ and the fact that He was God.(1) These two factors, the miracles and the assertion, cannot be regarded as direct even although they are immediately discernable. Insofar as they are factors they do have a certain element of direct communication about them, but to regard them as direct would mean that: "in this wise the contradiction would <u>eo-ipso</u> be removed."(2) Without anything to distinguish Him from other men, the fact that Christ was God would never become apparent.

Now this fact that Christ is the sign of contradiction has some unexpected results from the point of view of the observer, because when the observer of the communication takes note of it then it has the effect of revealing what is in the heart of the observer. According to Scripture

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Training in Christianity</u> p.125

(2) Op. Cit. p.125

the sign of contradiction: "shall reveal the thoughts of the hearts."(1) That is to say, the thoughts of the hearts of those who listen or transcribe.(2) How does this come about? When we look upon the contradiction, which we are forced to do by the miracles and the assertion of divinity, then we are forced to pass an opinion, to make a choice. And according to how we judge so is the state of our heart revealed. The sign of contradiction: "draws attention to itself, and then it presents a contradiction. There is something which makes it impossible for one to desist from looking...and lo! while one looks, one sees as in a mirror, one gets to see oneself, or He, the sign of contradiction sees into the depths of one's heart while one is gazing into the contradiction. A contradiction placed directly in front of a man...if only one can get him to look upon it...is a mirror; while he is judging, what dwells within him must be revealed. It is a riddle, but while he is guessing, what dwells within him is revealed by how he guesses. The contradiction puts before him a choice, and while he is choosing, he himself is revealed."(3) We stand revealed by our attitude to Christ.

From what has been said we can now see that Christian communication as it is to be found in the God-man who is the Sign of Contradiction cannot be communicated directly. For even when there is a direct communication it must be

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.126
(2) Op. Cit. p.126
(3) Op. Cit. p.126

understood that the communicator is encased in his incognito and is therefore not what He appears to be. As Kierkegaard says: "...unrecognizableness means not being in the role which essentially belongs to one; so that here we have a contradiction which transforms direct communication into non-direct communication. If there is to be a direct communication one must step out of one's incognito, for otherwise that which in the first instance is direct communication (the direct assertion) becomes in the second instance (in view of the communicator's incognito) non-direct communication."(1) For Christ direct communication is impossible because He is a sign. If a communication from a communicator is to be direct it is not enough that the communication itself appears to be direct; "but the communicator himself be directly qualified."(2) In other words, the communicator must be what he appears to be and not anything else. When we behold him we are faced with a human being who is what we take him to be. But when the communicator is not what we take him to be, then even the most direct communication becomes, by reason of this fact, non-direct communication.(3) So it is that when Christ says directly: "I am God: the Father and I are One", then, to use Kierkegaard's own words: "we have to take into account that it is the sign of contradiction who says it, and because of this the direct assertion becomes indirect and also it puts a choice before him who receives it; it reveals the thoughts of his heart:

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.132

(2) Op. Cit. p.134

(3) Op. Cit. p.134

whether to believe Him or not."[1] How we regard the communication of the God-man reveals what we ourselves are.

Now all this means that from the point of view of Christian communication, direct recognizableness is not one of the attributes of Christ. To be able to recognize Him requires faith and recognition that the condition for being able to recognize has been given to us. It is a pagan idea of God to think that He can be directly recognizable.[2] A direct utterance in the mouth of Christ only serves to draw attention to Himself in the same way that the miracles do.[3] When Christ says directly that He is the Only Begotten of the Father, then in His mouth this becomes an indirect utterance which can serve only to make people believe or be offended; to make plain how they stand and therefore what they are. Faith is not a matter of direct recognizableness, but arises out of having overcome the contradiction and the offence of what is directly discernible.

The fact that God must spurn all human recognizableness although He is love and wishes nothing else but that all men should love Him, shows us once more the element of suffering in the divine love. "He is love: and yet every

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.134

(2) Op. Cit. p.135

(3) Op. Cit. p.135

instant He exists He must crucify as it were all human compassion and solicitude...for He can only be the object of Faith."[1] In this way He holds men at a distance. Men must be saved through faith; as soon as direct recognizableness enters in then faith goes out and something which is essential to salvation is lost. Faith is an essential element in the reception of Christian communication. It is faith which enables us to understand or to accept even if we do not understand.

Here again we come to the definition of Christian Communication as it is found in The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication. It is direct-indirect. It presents itself directly to the eye and ear and thus far can be said to be direct; but also it merely serves to draw attention to what lies behind the communication: the Absolute Paradox, which is a contradiction in itself. Therefore this most direct utterance becomes indirect. And the only way of receiving this direct-indirect communication is through faith, which, however, does not make the communication any clearer but reveals the true nature of the recipient. Kierkegaard says: "There is no direct communication, and no direct reception...there is a choice. It does not, like direct communication, employ enticement and warning and threatening...and then gradually and quite unobserved the transition is brought about little by little, to the point of accepting it, of regarding oneself as convinced by it, of being of the opinion etc. No, an altogether distinct sort of reception

---

[1] S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.137

is required...that of faith. And faith itself has a dialectical quality...and the receiver is the one who is revealed, whether he will believe or be offended.(1)

An important point to note therefore with regard to the communication of God to man as manifested in Christ is that eventually there is no direct communication. In the beginning there is an element of the direct about it, but this, like the Sign of Contradiction Himself, only serves to draw attention to the communication. What appears to be direct is in fact indirect. This is quite easy to grasp. But what is not so easy is the fact that not only is the communication from the Communicator indirect, but there is no direct reception of that communication on the part of the recipient. The recipient receives a mixture of direct and indirect. There is nothing definite or clear-cut in the communication with regard to the understanding. The appropriation of the communication is not a question of getting at the root of what lies behind the direct part and then discovering the pure clear unequivocal kernal which has been hidden in this shell of indirectness. That would be to make Christianity in the end a matter of knowledge. It would be a matter simply of explanation and understanding; of probing behind the direct utterance with the aid of the reason. As Kierkegaard tells us(2), the kind of reception which is required on the part of the recipient is not a matter of

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.140

(2) Op. Cit. p.140

knowledge but a matter offaith, and faith does not make the communication any clearer, but it does make the recipient clearer to himself. In other words, the communication which takes place through Christ or in Christ requires the exercise of faith. The very ambivalence of the communication constitutes an offence which has to be overcome through the exercise of faith, before the communication can be appropriated. If this offence is not overcome then we are reduced to ethico-religious categories once more: and if the recipient has tried to receive the communication directly, as a matter for the understanding, then he ends up by becoming involved in merely aesthetic categories once more.

The whole trouble with ethico-religious communication is that the recipient regards the communication in the end as something which, when stripped of all the trappings of secrecy which surround it through its indirect presentation, is able to be directly discernible. And this in itself is a contradiction of the principle of subjectivity. The whole point of subjectivity is, as we have seen in a previous chapter, to make the existing individual stand revealed to himself and to be in a right relationship to himself. This cannot happen in the ethico-religious sphere where we would most expect it to happen; nor can communication which fully respects the requirements of the ethico-religious ever be able to escape from the fact that what is essentially inwardness has through the very fact of communication become its opposite. We have seen that only through the indirect reception, through faith, is the

requirement of subjectivity fully met - that the individual stands revealed to himself and, through overcoming the offence, stands related to himself. For Christ reveals the thoughts of the heart.

Christian Communication in the present day

So far we have been looking at Christian communication or Christian love as shown in the purpose of God as revealed in Christ. But what about the communication of Christianity thereafter? For all succeeding generations there has to be some intermediary source of communication before God's primary communication of love in Christ can be appropriated. Nevertheless the same essential qualities of Christianity and its communication apply today as they applied to the God-man of Nazareth. These intermediary sources must only serve as mere occasions which lead us to the primary source, and we must be careful not to place our reliance on these direct communications, otherwise we shall end up in aesthetic categories. Indeed this is one of the main criticisms of preaching which Kierkegaard found in his day.(1)

According to Kierkegaard there are two main means of communication of Christianity in the present day: the direct proclamation of the Word in preaching, and the indirect communication between individuals occasioned by Christian love. This last aspect has been largely passed over in expositions of Kierkegaard up till now. But the two are complimentary; they need each other for the full and final

---

(1) Compare Kierkegaard Authority and Revelation p.166

communication of Christianity. It is perfectly true that Kierkegaard does not put it so clearly and unequivocably as this, but nevertheless this is what we find when we study his writings as a whole. And indeed it is necessary to find some such train of development if consistency is to be maintained and Kierkegaard's fundamental presuppositions are to be respected. Certainly the two means of communication are to be found in Kierkegaard's writings, and the failure to relate the second indirect aspect to the dialectic of Christian communication has resulted in a certain amount of misunderstanding on the part of Kierkegaard scholars. So now we turn to an exploration of what Kierkegaard has to say concerning these two aspects of present day communication of Christianity.

(a) The Direct Aspect

It would appear from a superficial reading of Kierkegaard that with regard to the communication of Christianity in the present day, the only aspect upon which he touches in any specific sense is the direct aspect. Indeed it might almost seem that this is the only aspect of the present day situation with which he deals. Accordingly we now turn to examine what he says with regard to preaching and so on.

One of the marks of the God-man, one of the signs of His authenticity, was the fact that He spoke with authority. It was this authority which authenticated his message. Similarly when the message is proclaimed in the present day, the preacher himself must have authority; the authority of his office. This is the authority which comes

through ordination and is something which is conferred upon the individual.(1) It is also something which is paradoxical. For to all intents and purposes, to all outward appearances, a man is making a direct communication which apparently is subject to all the limitations of the aesthetic with regard to communication, but yet this preaching contains something more by virtue of the fact that the man speaks with authority. Authority does not mean that the preacher is cleverer than anyone else, but simply that he is invested with a certain power from God. And although he remains himself, he becomes absolutely different from other people. "A man has long before perhaps reached mental maturity and the age of discretion --- then he is called to be an apostle. By reason of his call he does not become a better head, aquire more imagination, greater acumen, etc. By no means. He remains himself, but with the paradoxical fact of being sent by God upon a definite mission. By this paradoxical fact the apostle is from all eternity made paradoxically different from all other men."(2) He does not have any special vision on insight, but he becomes a completely different individual with regard to the preaching of the Gospel, because the Gospel itself is paradoxical in that it is itself completely new for every generation and every individual. "However long it may be preached in the world, essentially it remains equally new, equally paradoxical, no immanence can assimilate it. The

---

(1) Compare Diem. Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence, p.141;139

(2) S. Kierkegaard Authority and Revelation p.107

apostle did not behave like a man distinguished for natural gifts, who was born before his time, he was perhaps what we call a simple man, but by a paradoxical fact he was called to proclaim this new thing."(1) With regard to preaching two men can say exactly the same thing, yet if one has authority and the other not, then there is a difference between them. "If such an elect man has a doctrine to communicate according to a Divine order, and another man has found out for himself the same doctrine, nevertheless these two are not equal; for the first is by reason of this paradoxical specific quality (the Divine Authority) different from every other man and from the qualification of essential likeness and equality which immanently lies at the basis of all human differences."(2) Kierkegaard defines authority thus: "Authority is a specific quality which comes from another place and makes itself felt precisely when the content of the saying or of the action is assumed to be indifferent."(3)

There is a kind of authority which exists between human beings, but it is only something which belongs to the temporal sphere. As Kierkegaard says: "In so far as there may be a question of authority in political, social, civic, household, or disciplinary relationships, authority is only a transient, vanishing factor, which either vanishes later in temporal existence, or vanishes for the fact that earthly

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Authority and Revelation p.107
(2) Op. Cit. p.112
(3) Op. Cit. p.110

life itself is a transitory factor which vanishes with all the differences. At the bottom of all relationships between man and man qua man it is only possible to think that the differences lie within the identity of immanence, i.e., within the essential equality.... In the moment I must be so good as to respect and take pleasure in the differences, but I am permitted to edify myself religiously with the certitude that the differences vanish in all eternity, both those which distinguish me and those which depress me. As a subject I must honour and obey the king with undivided soul, but I am permitted to edify myself with the thought that essentially I am a citizen of heaven, and that, if once I should encounter there his deceased majesty, I shall not be bound to him by the obedience required of a subject."(1) But it is impossible for the preacher to prove his own authority. "He has no other proof of his own authority but his own assention.... and at the most by his willingness to suffer everything for the sake of the doctrine."(2)

It will be noticed that there is something analogous to "The Sign of Contradiction" in the authority of the preacher. To all intents and purposes he is just an ordinary man, yet he is also invested with this authority from God. He is something more than he appears to be. Unlike the God-man whom he proclaims, he is not in himself that which he preaches, but his message nevertheless is self contradictory from the point of view of the understanding, for it is also the Absolute Paradox.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Authority and Revelation p.111f

(2) Op. Cit. p.117f

With regard to the communication of Christianity in the present day in its direct aspect Kierkegaard does not have very much more to say. On the surface it does not seem to be very much, and he is dealing with an aspect which is self-evident to all. This is what people usually think of when they refer to Christian communication, and this is the point at which most commentators[1] on Kierkegaard seem to think that he leaves the matter, as if he left it to the individual to work out for himself just how this Christian communication which is given in preaching applies to the dialectic of subjectivity as it has been demonstrated up to this point. It means that with regard to the subjectivity of the individual we are left pretty much in the ethico-religious sphere with regard to communication, although we have clearly seen that it is only in Christianity that the thesis: Subjectivity is Truth can really find its justification. It might seem that Kierkegaard meant us to think of Christian communication as a combination of the direct preaching aspect and the indirect ethico-religious aspect, and somehow work his theory of indirect communication which applies to the ethico-religious sphere, into the direct proclamation of the Gospel as it is found in Christianity. If this is all that Kierkegaard does then some of the criticisms of him which are levelled by scholars may seem to be justified. They would find Kierkegaard inconsistent and in a bit of a dilemma.

Accordingly we shall take a look at what the distinguished theologian Hermann Diem has to say because in many ways he is considered to be one of the most penetrating

---

(1) Eg. H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p 193f

of all Kierkegaardian scholars of the present day, whose method of studying Kierkegaard can earn him nothing but praise. We shall look mainly at what he has to say regarding authority in Kierkegaard in connection with the communication of Christianity. It is obvious that he fails to see that there is also another fundamentally important aspect of the communication of Christianity which is to be found in Kierkegaard, and which, if he had taken note of it, would have prevented him from criticizing Kierkegaard in the way in which he does. Diem is not alone in this. We have seen in the previous chapter what Lowrie, Thomte, and Jolivet have to say about the indirect communication associated with the ethico-religious. Now with regard to the communication of Christianity in the present day, Diem finds a dilemma of a different and more fundamental kind.

We note first of all that Diem's criticism refers to Kierkegaard's thoughts on Luther, which occur in the Diaries as distinct from the Works. But it is evident that Kierkegaard's opinions of Luther and Lutheranism as they occur in the Diaries are to be found just as strongly in the Works, even although there is comparatively little reference to Luther in the latter, and where it does occur, it is comparatively mild and inoffensive. Indeed it would seem that, in the Works, Kierkegaard shows a dutiful respect for the reformer. It is perfectly true that in the Papirer the criticisms are more severe and are of the kind which Diem mentions. But the point of view which Kierkegaard expresses with reference to Luther and Lutheranism in the Papirer, is also abundantly clear throughout

the whole of the Works, as must be apparent from the present study: but not, of course, in specific reference to Luther. In passing may I say that because of this the question of the "real Kierkegaard"(1) does not arise. The views expressed in the Papirer with regard to Luther, and those expressed throughout the Works as a whole, are in substance the same. Although Diem's remarks are directed specifically at the Kierkegaard of the Luther criticism, they apply equally well to Kierkegaard's thought as a whole.

And it is just in this question of preaching and the authority of the preacher, that Diem finds Kierkegaard in difficulty. According to Diem, Kierkegaard's difficulties begin with his insistence upon the sweeping away of history and on contemporaneousness; and of course in the last resort this has to do with time and the historical, both of which are fundamental presuppositions which underlie all Kierkegaard's thought. According to Diem, Kierkegaard cannot insist on the authority of the preacher or apostle and at the same time do away with all other authority such as the Church, the Bible, and so on. To do away with these means that you have also to do away with the first. If we think that Kierkegaard's insistence on the authority of the preacher is all that there is to be said about Christian communication, then it would seem that Kierkegaard, by virtue of his own attack on established Christendom, has also destroyed the very means by which Christianity can be communicated.

---

(1) H. Diem, Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p.185f

In the first place, Diem finds that Kierkegaard appears to contradict himself when, on the one hand: "The conveyance of truth can be effected only from existing individual to existing individual, hence by immediate communication from communicator as a believer who has actualized his faith both through an existential form of communication and through the power of his own existence, to the recipient who appropriates that truth by a faith which overcomes the moment of offence. Apart from this specific type of communication there is no other real communication of Christian truth, or what there is is not only irrelevant but positively harmful and misleading."(1) That is to say, looking at it from the ethico-religious point of view. On the other hand the authority conferred upon the preacher would seem to suggest that only they, or someone conferred with such authority was eligible to communicate Christianity. So it would appear that in order that the communication should be effective, the man having the authority must also possess the personal attestation of a Christian life. But, says Diem, when Kierkegaard would seek to destroy every historical intermediary between the God-man and the present day believer, this must also include the apostle or the communicator, who besides having authority, has had his existence moulded and penetrated by the power of his communication. "The insistence on the contemporaneity of the believer with Christ must now mean that all historical intermediaries, such as the Church,

---

(1) H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p.170

doctrine, the preaching office, and even the Apostolate, lose their significance...true Christianity can only exist where the recipient, with the help of a communicator... enters into direct contemporaneous relation with Christ."(1)

Hence it is that the only kind of authority which is valid would seem to lie in the subjective bearing of the communicator. Diem asks; "Does the believer attain faith through the acceptance of some doctrine which he considers to be true, and by which his personal existence does not need to be changed, or not rather by his submission to the authority of a person who by his personal authority guarantees the truth of what he declares and thus challenges the bearer to express that truth similarly in his own existence?"(2) As doctrine has been done away with so there can be no question of a relationship between teacher and doctrine. There can no longer be any question of a teacher in any real sense, for doctrine has been destroyed in existential communication; and so doctrine: "loses whatever validity it supposed itself to possess apart from and prior to the event of existential communication. The same applies to the teacher. The discipline of thinking about doctrine, quite apart from its existential communication...is now given up. The teacher can now play only the same miserable part within Christendom as is played by the philosophical thinker who in his search for objective truth leaves his personal existence out of the reckoning

---

(1) H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p.170f

(2) Op. Cit. p.172

and does not even notice that he is doing so. But in the case of the Christian thinker matters are even worse, because the object of his teaching is the fact of revelation, which of all that exists in the world is the least indifferent to the existence of the thinker."(1) Thus we have to take into account that the communication of Christianity lies ultimately in the existential relationship which lies in all communication of the ethico-religious. The question of authority lies in the ability and effectiveness of the teacher or preacher to have his message appropriated by the recipient. And this ability must rest within the existential appropriation of the teacher himself. "The question of authority...can now only be how that personal enforcement of truth comes about in which alone can now lie the authority of the communication."(2) This has nothing whatsoever to do with the kind of authority which is conferred by ordination: "for there it is the fact of commission which lends authority. The fact of commission cannot really play a part any longer."(3) But Kierkegaard has said that it is precisely the commission which gives authority. Yet on the other hand he would appear to give equal place to the personal attestation of the teacher. Here Diem sees a dilemma for Kierkegaard. Even if it were the case: "that both the commission and the personal factor together conferred authority, then we would have to ask

---

(1) H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p.172f

(2) Op. Cit. p.173

(3) Op. Cit. p.173

whether the personal factor alone can legitimate the commission or whether, on the contrary, the commission remains valid independent of its personal enforcement and the latter's weakness."[1] But, says Diem, this is really excluded by Kierkegaard's argument.

The student of Kierkegaard who does not think that Kierkegaard has any more to say with regard to communication in the Christian sphere other than that it is to be given through preaching by a man in whom is vested the divine authority, is bound to find the difficulties in Kierkegaard which Diem mentions. For on the one hand Kierkegaard makes it clear that the indirect communication which is necessary for the communication of subjectivity must be between individual and individual, and on the other hand he appears to say that Christianity can only be communicated by one in whom is vested this divine authority. If we do not think that Kierkegaard has any more to say than this then we cannot help but find in him a dilemma such as Diem mentions. However Kierkegaard has a great deal more to say, as we shall see in due course.

Apart from the fact that Diem should find it natural to discover such inconsistency in Kierkegaard, I would question his motive in putting forward his criticism. He is worried, I think, that Kierkegaard has done away with doctrine and the relationship of the teacher to doctrine. It would appear that he considers that there must be an objective body of belief to which the teacher must be

---

(1) H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p.174

related. There is a suspicion behind it all that Diem wishes to justify the position of the dogmatician, of whom he himself is a distinguished example. For Diem as a theologian it is offensive that there should be no body of doctrine to correspond to the subjective yearnings of the Christian. Now this is precisely the kind of position which Kierkegaard would expect an orthodox theologian of his own day to adopt, and it was deliberately against such a view that he insisted upon the abolition of doctrine and the Church. Above all, Kierkegaard wishes to do away with the danger of the individual becoming objectively related to a set of propositions or anything similar. I cannot see how Diem can infer that the teacher is reduced to no more than the absent-minded philosopher, which Kierkegaard talks about in criticism of Hegel, because doctrine has been dissolved in existential communication, and therefore the relationship between teacher and doctrine has been destroyed.(1) The whole point of Kierkegaard's criticism of the said philosopher is that he is seeking truth objectively instead of subjectively. It is out of this very criticism that the thesis: Subjectivity is Truth arises. Surely the comparison of the Christian teacher in relation to doctrine ought to be that by seeking to relate himself even in a meaningful way to a body of doctrine, the individual in Christian categories is committing the same offence. Instead of which Diem says the opposite: by <u>not</u> relating himself to doctrine, (which incidentally has been dissolved in <u>existential</u> communication) the christian communicator falls into this trap. It seems to me that Diem

---

(1) H. Diem <u>Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence</u> p.172f

is not very clear about whether he is talking about Christianity, or about Christian truth, that is to say, doctrine; dogma. He seems to think that ideally speaking, Christianity is an existential relationship not to the God-man, but to a set of doctrinal affirmations about the God-man, which have to be asserted with authority; the authority of the dogmatician, before they may be appropriated. This is certainly not what Kierkegaard means by Christianity. It would seem as if Christianity for Diem was a set of propositions about the God-man rather than Christ Himself. Such a view could only arise by giving undue prominence to the historical element in Christianity, and this is precisely what he does, as we now go on to see. It was to do away with this very kind of thinking that Kierkegaard abolished the 1800 years, and so on. He felt that it was one of the signs of corruption in Christendom.

To proceed with Diem's criticism. If authority of the accepted kind is done away with, he says, then Kierkegaard: "must find a decisive break between the historical Jesus and all His followers". And this Kierkegaard does with all desirable clarity through: "the overleaping of the historical process" in the idea of contemporaneity with Christ.(1) And this means that even: "the authority of the Apostle as a link with Christ fades away, for even he has begun to fall away from original Christianity", and so: "the whole history of Christianity

---

(1)H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p.176f

has now become a history of the continuous lapse from Christianity."[1] In order to put matters right, Kierkegaard advocates the restoration of the true situation for discipleship, namely, contemporaneity with Christ. And in order that this may be brought about there must first of all be decisive action which makes the individual feel unworthy and thus appreciate his need for grace. At this Diem remarks: "But consider the consequences of this propaedeutic element of decisive action as the necessary preliminary in the ordo salutis, or rather consider what it means that by his historical removal of Christianity, Kierkegaard has been compelled to push his position thus to its extreme conclusion: through his discipleship man discovers that he 'needs' Christianity. Grace corresponds to a need realized through discipleship. And such discipleship at the same time 'guarantees' that Christianity shall not degenerate into mere poetry, mythology, or abstract thought. This means that the truth of Christianity is referred exclusively to subjectivity."[2] Diem considers that Kierkegaard has inverted the usual relationship between faith and existence.

Here again one suspects that Diem finds fault with Kierkegaard for going against the accepted view of orthodox dogmatics. But does Kierkegaard in fact invert this usual relationship? We have seen in previous chapters how

---

(1) H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence, p.177
(2) Op. Cit. p.177f

Kierkegaard deals with the different spheres of existence. The leap from the aesthetic to the ethico-religious is made by a conscious choice, a decision in which God is already there, on the part of the existing individual. The ethico-religious is a continual striving after subjectivity, which ends in the frustrating knowledge that there is a disrelationship within the self. And so in the ethico-religious sphere at any rate, Subjectivity is not Truth, but Untruth. It is at this point that the consciousness of sin becomes apparent and the individual realizes his need for grace. And so, if he overcomes the offence by means of a definite choice of faith as against scandalization, then he enters the sphere of Christianity. Although the individual comes to realize the need for grace after a period of striving, Kierkegaard would not deny that it was grace itself which led the individual in the end to realize this need. The realization of the need for grace is a different thing from the grace itself which brought about this realization. Just as the consciousness of sin gives the individual the realization that he is a sinner and always has been even although he did not know it, so also the realization of the need of grace confers on the individual the knowledge that in all his striving after subjectivity he has in fact been a disciple under God's grace. It is a misinterpretation of Kierkegaard to think that according to him, grace only comes into operation when the need is realized.

Diem says that through the removal of historical Christianity, the truth of Christianity becomes referred exclusively to subjectivity. He speaks of Kierkegaard being compelled to push his position to its extreme limits. It is as if Kierkegaard were driven to this conclusion almost against his own will. But of course this is the whole aim of Kierkegaard's thought, as we have seen. The thesis: Subjectivity is Truth, finds its ultimate fulfilment and justification only in Christianity. This is not something into which Kierkegaard was 'pushed', but a quite deliberate and clear-sighted matter of policy. Indeed if Kierkegaard had not found that the truth of Christianity is referred exclusively to subjectivity then his whole thesis, his whole thought, would be nothing but a vain academic exercise which did not really work out.

Again I object to Diem's phrase: "the truth of Christianity". I cannot help feeling that he is thinking of a set of doctrines by which the validity of Christianity can be proved true, and it might almost seem as if this were to be distinguished from Christianity itself. It is as if on the one hand there existed Christianity itself, and on the other this apparatus by which it is to be validated. Do we have to use the apparatus of Dogmatics to arrive at true Christianity? We are reminded here most forcibly about what Kierkegaard has to say about lack of primitiveness in The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication.(1) Again

---

(1) Compare Chapter 1 p. 32f

what about all that Kierkegaard has to say with regard to people who regard Christianity as doctrine in part 1 of The Concluding Unscientific Postscript and elsewhere. He says: "The thing of being a Christian is not determined by the what of Christianity but by the how of the Christian."(1)

We continue with Diem's criticism of Kierkegaard. He sees great difficulties following upon Kierkegaard's supposed reversal of existence and faith, and asks: "When man in his existence encounters this truth (the absolute paradox of the God-man), he must recognize himself to be one whose whole being is rooted in untruth, i.e. a sinner. And if he faces up to such a recognition in faith, then he is the forgiven man endowed with grace. But in what way does he become confronted by this absolute paradox?...He must encounter it as an eternal fact which has entered history at a given point. Thus he encounters it in his confrontation by the historical Jesus, in which experience alone now there can be contemporaneity with Christ, since the whole of the rest of Christian history and historical media have been swept aside."(2) Now this, for Diem, raises many problems. Firstly the individual needs to have some introductory knowledge in order to be able to establish the historical fact. But when we take into account everything that Kierkegaard says in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript about the approximative nature of the conclusions attainable by such prolegomena upon which no certainty can be achieved, then we can see how everything

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.540

(2) H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p.181

is endangered.[1] But apart from that, says Diem, the individual can only know that the claims of Jesus of Nazareth are justified: "by his decision to follow Jesus, even though he runs the risk of making a mistake. Thus he certifies the claim as true by his subjective decision. But in his discipleship he finds that he is not capable of meeting this claim, and at the same time he is told that to meet this case Jesus of Nazareth desires to be gracious to him. How does he know that this is true? He decides in faith to believe it to be true, because, confronted by the demands of discipleship, the rightness of which he recognizes, he needs this grace and hence makes use of it. This Jesus of Nazareth says furthermore, however, that he is not only this particular man but at the same time God. In Him God has become man in order to show through His life and suffering and dying that a truly human life can consist only in dying to the world, as a result of which man obtains the good pleasure of God."[2] This, says Diem, means that he places his beliefs in the significance of the event of the God-man on the basis of his experience first and foremost, and only secondly, as a result of this first consideration, does he believe in its historical factuality, and even then: "he believes it in its aspect of 'double potency', i.e. he accepts it as an historical fact which is also an eternal fact. Hence it is faith which through the existential

---

(1) H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p.181f

(2) H. Diem Op. Cit. p.182

fulfilment of the believer transforms a specific historical fact into a revelationary fact, and this change comes about through insight into the meaningfulness of that historical fact."[1] But, asks Diem, how are we to distinguish between the self-understanding of the believer and a philosophical dialectic of existence? There could only be such a difference if it were the case that the individual in his own historical situation was confronted by Jesus of Nazareth as an historical phenomenon, at the same time claiming to be the God-man. This could be done either through His own self, or through an authorized representative. But neither of these possibilities is available. (The authorized representative has been swept away, according to Diem.) "Here", says Diem, "stepping beyond all historical mediation, the believer enters into relation with an historical phenomenon of the past. He becomes aware of its claim to be an historical fact of double potency not through the impact of the claim of anything present, but rather his faith... endows with this meaning an historical fact of the past."[2] Here we discover the real objection of Diem: Kierkegaard has done away with the historical, relegating it to a second place. However, let us for the moment, continue with Diem. He says that Kierkegaard can therefore only invoke the Holy Spirit in order that the above procedure should be authentic, for it is He who has made clear the truth. But, says Diem, although the Holy Spirit can demonstrate that the truth of the historical fact of revelation, when man encounters it,

---

(1) H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p.182f
(2) Op. Cit. p.183

lies in its factuality, and so disclose its significance, yet: "it cannot do the reverse, it cannot infer factuality from meaningfulness, and so disclose its significance, if the effectiveness of the revelation, and this means its factuality, is to be preserved."(1) And he goes on to say: "The one who believes in this way might further claim that in practice Christ meets him not only in that questionable conclusion of introductory research, as the 'historical Jesus', but...in individual Christians who through the demonstrative power of their existential representation would have the authority to confront him with the claim of Christ."(2) Thus Diem concludes that by the sweeping away of history, offence, which for Kierkegaard is so essential a part of Christianity, is also done away with. The fact of scandalization has been replaced by a theory of scandalization. The shock of offence arose, says Diem, because of the historical fact of Christ; the historical fact of primary potency. It is through the fact that this historical figure of a man raises the claim to be also God - in that particular historical situation of time, and so the claim is raised to an historical fact of 'double potency' which compels the disciple living at the same time to choose between offence and faith. "But", says Diem, "this no longer takes place. Now, through an ideal manifested in an historical process which, like all historical facts, as such, is only of primary potency, man

---

(1) H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p.183

(2) Op. Cit. p.184

is invited to allow this ideal to germinate as a possibility in his own existence. He can either do this or fail to do it. But only after, for reasons of his own, he has done so, can he become aware of the importance of his decision through insight into the meaningfulness of the claim with which he has to do and through his consequent recognition of the fact underlying it. But what should now given him cause for offence? If on the other hand, he does not adopt the decision, then he can never experience what he has missed by his neglect and thus is never confronted with the possibility of offence. In either event there is nothing therefore which might arouse scandal. At most its absolute idealism might repel; but that is something quite different from the shock of offence."(1)

As we have seen in the course of this present study, the question of time and the historical are very closely linked up with the problem of Christianity. They are basic presuppositions which underly all Kierkegaard's thinking. And it is precisely here that Diem finds Kierkegaard at fault. It is because of his peculiar views regarding the relationship between Christianity and history, that Kierkegaard, according to Diem, is forced into the dilemma in which he finds himself. Once more it is necessary to point out that Kierkegaard quite deliberately came to the conclusion which Diem finds so disagreeable. These conclusions do not arise out of Kierkegaard's failure to see the consequences following upon his dialectic of time, and so on. They

---

(1) H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p.184f

arise precisely from his careful attention to the basic presuppositions which underly all his thought. Kierkegaard was not blind to what he was saying, nor was he contradicting his point of view as a whole. He is one of the most consistent thinkers who has ever lived, and we may be sure that the conclusions which Diem finds are meant to be there, although not some of Diem's inferences from those conclusions. If, as I believe, Kierkegaard's fundamental principles are rigidly adhered to, and all his thought is governed and controlled thereby, then it is not Kierkegaard who is to be criticised in the light of so-called contradictions and dilemmas, but Diem himself. For Diem starts off from the very presuppositions which Kierkegaard was anxious to repudiate, and therefore it is only natural that he should find fault with Kierkegaard at certain vital points.

Diem objects to the doing away of history and all historical criteria. He says that the present day individual can only relate to an historical figure in the past, according to Kierkegaard, and thus he (Kierkegaard) lands himself up in the dilemma resulting from all historical relationships. He complains that the historical is relegated to second place, and faith takes over first place. But of course this is precisely what Kierkegaard is aiming at. His whole complaint is that by almost exclusive emphasis on the historical element of Christianity which ignores the dialectic of time and the resulting impossibility of arriving at the truth in this way, so called Christianity as it exists in the 19th century (and equally today) is decadent and corrupt. In order to correct

this misplaced emphasis upon the historical, he pushed it into the background, almost as a matter of indifference. In fact Kierkegaard would not mind if the historical evidence concerning Jesus of Nazareth were proved to be completely false from the purely human point of view, in order that to these same accounts should be applied the criterion of faith; so that instead of being accepted by the very questionable method of historical research and judgment, they should be <u>believed</u> as an act of faith. Hence it becomes a matter of indifference whether these historical facts are objectively true or not. In any event it is impossible to find out. For Kierkegaard, the significance of the historical aspect of Christianity is as a possible myth which has to be appropriated, not as a matter of historical fact, like any other historical fact, but as a matter of belief; of faith. It is important to recognize, however, that Kierkegaard does ascribe a necessary place to the historical element in Christianity, as something which has to be presented as an introductory type of knowledge, only to be rejected as a possible myth from the historical point of view; which uses no historical criteria for its acceptance, but requires faith and belief on the part of the individual for its appropriation. Diem is wrong in saying that according to Kierkegaard: "the believer enters into relation with an historical phenomenon <u>of the past</u>".(1), and that: "his faith endows with... meaning an historical fact <u>of the past</u>." This is precisely

---

(1) H. Diem <u>Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence</u> p.183 (My italics)

what Kierkegaard wishes to avoid doing. The precise point of Kierkegaard's whole dialectic of time, and contemporaneousness with Christ, and so on, is that the believer enters into relationship with an historical fact of the present. It is not so much the history of the race that Christ enters into, but the history of the individual living now. It is historical in the sense that He enters into the historical existential situation of the individual living in the present. We must always remember that for Kierkegaard, the historical fact of Christ is the eternal presence of Christ in history, which is something which is valid through the whole of time and not just in the past or in any particular part to the exclusion of other parts. And this comes into particular relationship with the believing individual when it enters his particular historical existential actuality. Diem, in his criticism of Kierkegaard on this score, is upholding the very status quo which Kierkegaard most violently opposed.

Again Diem says that by his doing away with the historical in Christianity Kierkegaard has also done away with the element of scandal in Christianity.(1) But he forgets that there is a two-sided element in scandalization which Kierkegaard asserts as a necessary factor in the appropriation of Christianity. Certainly, as Diem says, the offence of the man, Jesus of Nazareth claiming also to be God, which the first disciples heard, may no longer be there for succeeding generations, but the other side is always there: that this God whom we meet in our present historical

---

(1) H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p.184

situation is also man. As Kierkegaard says, although Jesus is ascended into heaven and retains the attributes of the divine, He still also retains the human attributes which belong to the man of Nazareth. And this can still constitute an offence.(1)

But offence is something which belongs to Christianity inherently. It is whatever would constitute a barrier for faith and presents the individual with a choice. This depends upon the individual concerned. Kierkegaard gives some specific examples connected with contemporaneity with Christ, but this does not mean to say that he considers that he has exhausted the matter at this point. There may well be other forms of offence, which are just as strong. One cannot help but wonder if Kierkegaard also meant his whole approach to the historical in relation to Christianity to constitute an offence. His whole object was to make Christianity more difficult. We have observed in a previous chapter that he hoped that his contribution to theological discussion would be to make it more difficult to become a Christian. It certainly seems to have provided offence to Diem and would have done so to Kierkegaard's own contemporaries who relied so much on the historical for the authentication of the Christian experience. And for Kierkegaard, the historical itself, in the accepted meaning of that term, certainly was something which constituted an obstacle to faith and was something which had to be overcome. To men accustomed to ascribing to history and the historical

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Training in Christianity p.84f; 105; 165; 184

their usual supreme importance, all that Kierkegaard has to say on the subject, must go very much against the grain. And if what Kierkegaard says in this connection is true, history and the historical do constitute an offence as he understands the term, although he does not specifically say so. In my opinion it is wrong to say that the possibility of offence is done away with along with the negation of the historical.

There are many other points in Diem's book which betray the same tendencies, but I have only concentrated on a certain part because it deals with Kierkegaard and the communication of Christianity with regard to preaching, authority, and so on. It would seem as if Diem was more concerned to defend himself against Kierkegaard, rather than be his expositor. However there would appear to be a certain amount of inconsistency in Kierkegaard with regard to Christian communication up to the point where Diem has followed him. There do appear to be contradictions and a certain amount of vagueness: in particular with regard to the position of the Christian communicator. On the one hand he is the ordained preacher possessing authority, but also he must take into account that communication is a matter of a relationship between two individuals, which means that there must be an indirect element about it. At the same time we have seen from the previous chapter that indirect communication as it applies to the ethico-religious is unsatisfactory. Is one individual who is endowed with authority also expected to live out the Gospel in his own life as another necessary part of the communication? And

is no-one else except the ordained preacher eligible to communicate Christianity? This point is where everyone seems to leave Kierkegaard. With regard to communication of Christianity in the present day, they find that he deals only with the direct aspect; the direct proclamation of the Word, perhaps backed up by some personal attestation on the part of the preacher, and this is as far as he goes.(1) If this is the case, then there do appear to be a few knots left untied. There must be a feeling of anti-climax after following through the brilliant exposition of indirect communication; subjectivity, and so on. Is this really where it all ends?

When we examine Kierkegaard further, we find that he has still a very great deal more to say, which up to the present time has been largely undiscovered. Why the difficulties which Diem and others mention arise at this stage is because Kierkegaard is not yet finished. They have omitted to see that more is to come. The position which we have come to so far in our study paints only part of the picture; there is still more to be said. Kierkegaard was not the kind of thinker to leave everything hanging in the air. One may be sure that everything in his thinking is fully worked out, having a strict regard to his own fundamental presuppositions. Kierkegaard himself would certainly not be content to let matters stand where Diem and others say he does. If Diem, Lowrie, Thomte and others find it unsatisfactory, then it is absolutely certain that Kierkegaard would have found it more so. He was not a talented amateur who found himself hamstrung by the results

(1) Eg. H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p. 170 f

of his own cleverness, which is what the critics would make of him. He is a towering genius, whose clarity of vision and relentless consistency may have been equalled but certainly never surpassed. If the critics are right and Kierkegaard did in fact go no further in the working out of Christian communication, then really the whole of his thought falls in ruins. The kind of thinker revealed in the criticisms of Diem and the others is not the man who wrote the Concluding Unscientific Postscript or the assured opponent of Hegel, but someone who is not really very sure of his position; who has gone wrong somewhere without being wholly conscious of it, and who needs other people, like Diem for instance, to show it all up. This is not Kierkegaard.

A hint of the kind of further development for which we should look is found in the first section of this chapter where we saw that the essence of God's communication to man through Christ is love. Kierkegaard wrote a book on Christian love called The Works of Love and knowing what we do about his concept of God's love in Christ, it is not surprising to find that the further development for which we seek is set forth in this book. In The Works of Love the dialectic of Christian communication is completed; the whole analysis of Christian communication is fully worked out. Although of course Kierkegaard did not think about such a working out when he wrote the book, nevertheless it is here that it is to be found. So far all that we have understood Kierkegaard to say with regard to Christian communication is only part of the whole dialectic, and this

is what most Kierkegaardian scholars have failed to recognize. In this book both indirect communication and subjectivity receive a further qualification.

We have been dealing with the direct aspect of the communication of Christianity in the present day. But just as love was the expression of God's love in Christ, so must it also be the expression in the indirect aspect of the communication of Christianity in the present day. We now turn to a detailed consideration of this factor in The Works of Love. I shall quote extensively because it is not ground which has been covered before. We need to explore how this book is related to Christian communication or to the problems of communication and subjectivity.

(b) The Indirect Aspect

We have seen that in a primary sense all men who appropriate Christ are receivers of God's love to man or to themselves as individuals. But in a secondary sense they are themselves communicators of Christianity. It is ordained that man himself should have a part to play in the communication. This happened with the God-man Himself. Jesus was a man communicating with other men, only He was also the Sign of Contradiction, the object of which was to draw attention to Himself as God. There was a human and a divine aspect of His communication. So today there is also a human and a divine aspect. Christ no longer exists in the flesh to bring into play the human side of His communication. We have His communication, the human side of His communication, at a definite time and a definite period of history and in a definite geographical location. We have also the Biblical records. But all these things involve

us with the dialectic of time and the historical with the consequent weaknesses.(1) But Christian communication is something which is happening all the time. It is not something which took place once and for all 2000 years ago; something historical which we must get hold of to the last detail before we are in a position to be made aware of the possibility of offence. Offence, and the God-man Himself, now exalted, are ever present realities which persist throughout time. And although in the first instance we receive the condition from God, and so on, yet in the second instance there is contemporary human communication used in the divine communication. This must be so if we are to preserve the principle of indirect reception: any other theory or explanation (the words speak for themselves) makes it all a matter of knowledge and the historical.

God has shown us in Christ the nature of His communication, and of His love; and that He requires love in return. This is the primary communication and it comes from Christ Himself. But for all those who come after Christ there has to be a secondary communication; a communication <u>about</u> this primary communication, which requires the divine assistance before it can become a communication <u>of</u> the communication. That is to say, before it can become effective. History itself constitutes an offence which has to be overcome; faith, not understanding,

---

(1) Compare Chapter 2

is still required for its reception. All that was said with regard to faith and indirect reception applies in the same way to any period of time.

So we have now to examine Christian communication as it is contained in the purely human relationship of one individual to another. But all human communicators of Christianity are first and foremost recipients; they communicate what they have received. Thus we must now go on to see what this primary Christian communication means for the individual who appropriates it; that is to say, before he goes on to communicate it to another. And then we shall examine what effect such communication has on others.

We have already seen how Christianity transforms the whole of life and that it is only in Christ, when the individual accepts Christian categories, that the disrelationship within the self can be abolished. We have seen how this disrelationship inhibits all communication of the truth, which is Subjectivity. It would now seem to follow that when the relationship of the self to the self is put right then the communication of subjectivity will be released from the element of what I have called discommunication which pervades it in the ethico-religious sphere. In other words, it is only in Christ that there can be any hope of the true communication of subjectivity. And further, it would seem that even the direct communication of the Christian is itself indirect, only making the recipient more aware of himself and of how he stands in relation to the communication which lies behind the communication, that is to say, to God Himself.

We have seen above that the expression of God's communication to man as shown in Christ, is love. Love is the mark of Christianity. God is love, Christ is God; if we as Christians are filled with Christ then we must also be filled with love. So just as love played a great part in the analysis of Christ's communication, so it must in any Christian's communication. Love has qualities which are creative with regard to the recipient and therefore can overcome the barriers which were seen to exist when the individual attempted to communicate subjectivity within ethico-religious categories. That Kierkegaard clearly thought along these lines is shown in The Works of Love which he himself regarded as one of his most important books.

This book has often been regarded as Kierkegaard's social ethic, and so on, and it has tended to be regarded as separate from the rest of his works, as if he wrote it to show that there was another side to his nature than the brooding subjective one. (For example, Lowrie, Thomte, and others). Indeed as I have insisted above, the quite vital relationship this book has to his thought as a whole has been largely missed. It has been considered almost as an extra, something which Kierkegaard wrote as a kind of relaxation from his other work. Perhaps it was thought to have a kind of tenuous connection with it but not much more. Nothing could be further from the truth. For after having seen that Subjectivity can only be Truth when it is released from the ethico-religious into the sphere of Christianity and that neither in the aesthetic or the ethico-religious spheres can there be any real communication

of subjectivity, in Works of Love we can see how subjectivity, as it is fulfilled in Christianity, can be communicated. The amount of space which Kierkegaard uses in the Papirer for talking about this book, shows without a doubt that he considered it to be of quite fundamental importance. And when we read the book we do find that Kierkegaard's concept of communication is in fact rounded off. Communication of subjectivity or inwardness becomes possible. Incidentally, is it coincidence, in the light of what we are here asserting that The Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication and The Works of Love were both written in the same year 1747?

To say that The Works of Love contains Kierkegaard's social ethic, and so on, tends to give the impression that the other side of Kierkegaard's thought is non-social: that Kierkegaard saw the futility of his theory of subjectivity, or at least that it was not practicable, and wrote this book as a kind of proof that he was not entirely without social awareness. Works of Love is in fact the culmination of inwardness in which the attempt to communicate the truth can at last be realized. It deals with the communication of subjectivity between individual and individual. Subjectivity, as we have seen, is only fully attainable in Christianity. So it concerns the communication of Christianity between man and man. But Christianity is love; thus it concerns the communication of Christian love between man and man.

Now if we examine Works of Love closely we see that the two parts of the book refer to the two individuals involved where there is any question of communication. That is to say, part 1[1] refers to Christian love as it affects the subjectivity of the communicator: part 2[2] refers to Christian love as it affects the subjectivity of the recipient. Of course as I have already pointed out with regard to Christianity, we are all recipients with regard to God, Who gives the condition; but in a secondary sense there is a communication between man and man; a communication about this primary communication. But before the communication of subjectivity can take place between man and man, there must first of all be the transformation of the self which Christianity brings about within the communicator. This means that the communication of subjectivity is itself affected. It would also appear as if, in giving the condition, God uses human agency. A man in Christ who communicates love communicates Christ, and if it is Christ who is communicated then the recipient receives the communication from God, but involved in that communication is another individual, who is acting as it were as a kind of medium. The communication of inwardness; of subjectivity, can only be brought about by the exercise of Christian love. So we now turn to consider Works of Love.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.23-196

(2) Op. Cit. p.199-343

Love and the Communicator

One of the first things to notice, says Kierkegaard, about Christian love is that it is something which is hidden within the individual and that the only way in which it is to be recognized by others is by its fruits; that is to say, by an entirely different form. The expression which love takes in action, in the working out into practice, is not the love itself, but only a manifestation of that love. "Yet when one says that love is recognized by its fruits, one also says thereby that love itself is in a certain sense in hiding and therefore can only be known by its revealing fruits. This is precisely the case. Every life, love's life also, is as such hidden; the fruit is the manifestation."(1) However this love or this manifestation of love through its fruits is unable to be measured: it is "unfathomable" because it is grounded in something deeper, namely, the love of God.(2) It is the love of God which infuses the Christian, it is something which does not find its origin in him, but in God who is working within him.

Here we see that Christian love meets one of the primary requirements of subjectivity; the requirement that in the communication the subjectivity of the individual should be kept intact. Subjectivity is therefore not just a matter of the inwardness of the individual, for it would seem from this that to be truly

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.26

(2) Op. Cit. p.27

subjective the individual has to be influenced by something beyond himself; something outside himself. True subjectivity can only exist in Christ. It is something which is given to the individual, not something which exists within him because he is a human being. There is something like subjectivity existing within the individual within purely human categories, but this can only point to an essential disrelationship within the self, as we have seen, and there cannot be any true communication of it; only a discommunication.

As with all matters relating to subjectivity it is not the <u>what</u> that matters but the <u>how</u> in the communication of Christian love or Christianity. The action, or the fruit, in Christian love is not dependent for its validity upon recognition. Indeed no-one can tell unequivocally that such and such a deed is the result of Christian love.(1) The Christian does not act so that his love may become recognizable by some tangible form but only that it becomes <u>capable</u> of being recognized as such by its fruits, whether it is actually recognized as such or not.(2)

It is therefore impossible for the individual in his own strength to give <u>complete</u> expression to subjectivity in Christian love, for there is always something deeper which lies behind: the love of God. In other words, no matter what happens, Christian love can never receive complete outward expression. But taking this into account, the expression which is manifested, the fruit, is not the love

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Works of Love</u> p.30

(2) Op. Cit. p.31

itself but only something which is caused by that love. In the ethico-religious sphere irony and humour brought into focus the contradiction of giving expression to what by its very nature must not be expressed. In Christianity inwardness is shown by its effects, its fruits; which is not inwardness itself, but which still preserves love within the very depths of the eternal.

But Christian love further recognizes the principle that in communication, the other, the recipient, is closely bound up with the self. So that in any communication of Christianity the supreme importance of the self is still adhered to, thus once more obviating any question of contradiction in giving expression to something which must not be expressed. In the command to love one's neighbour <u>as oneself</u> this is brought about. In the ethico-religious sphere self-love is a necessary qualification, but it excludes any question of love towards others by the very nature of the ethico-religious itself. But in the Christian command to love one's neighbour as oneself this completely selfish conception of love is entirely abolished. Self-love in the ordinary sense is taken away and substituted by a love of self which finds its expression only through love of the neighbour. Thus Christianity recognizes that subjectivity demands that self-love is of primary importance, but this self-love can only truly be fulfilled through love of the neighbour.[1] In every other sense self-love is taken away from the individual. To quote Kierkegaard:

---

[1] S. Kierkegaard <u>Works of Love</u> p.34

"...Is it possible for anyone to misunderstand Christianity ...as if it were the intention of Christianity to proclaim self-love as a prescriptive right? On the contrary it is its purpose to wrest self-love away from us human beings. This implies loving one's self; but if one must love his neighbour as himself, then the command, like a pick, wrenches open the lock of self-love and thereby wrenches it away from a man...This as yourself does not waver in its aim, and with the firmness of the eternal it critically penetrates to the innermost hiding place where a man loves himself; it does not leave self-love the slightest excuse or the tiniest escape hatch."(1)

Kierkegaard now seeks to make this clearer by defining more specifically what or who is meant by "neighbour". When the individual loves someone in preference to others; the beloved, the friend, and so on, then this cannot be said to be neighbourly love: it is really only self-love. They are loved because they appeal to some aspect of the self; because they satisfy some aspect of the self. They are loved in the same way almost as a box of chocolates is loved, or a favourite dish for eating. As Kierkegaard says: "The object of both erotic love and friendship has therefore also the favourite's name, the beloved, the friend, who is loved in distinction from the rest of the world. On the other hand the Christian teaching is to love one's neighbour, to love all mankind, all men, even enemies, and not to make exceptions, neither in favouritism nor in aversion."(2) What Kierkegaard means by this is brought

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.34f
(2) Op. Cit. p.36

out again later on in the book, where he is talking about worldly distinction. In loving the neighbour as himself the individual makes no distinctions. Every man is neighbour regardless of distinction. Human love is, as we have seen, preferential. "Erotic love and friendship are preferential and the passion of preference."(1) But this is simply a form of self-love (in the non-Christian sense) Kierkegaard explains: "Love and friendship are the very height of feeling, the I intoxicated with the other-I. The more securely the two I's come together to become one I, the more this united I selfishly cuts itself off from all the others. At the peak of love and friendship the two really become one self, one I. This is explainable only because in this exclusive love there are natural determinants...and self-love, which can selfishly unite the two in a new selfish self."(2) Purely human love loves: "in virtue of differences or likenesses which are grounded in differences (as when two friends love one another on the basis of likeness in customs, character, occupation, education, etc., consequently on the basis of the likeness by which they are different from other men)"(3) Such love does not bring us one step closer to neighbour, but only to the self. As Kierkegaard says: "Whether we talk of the first-I or the other-I, we do not come a step closer to one's neighbour, for one's neighbour is the first-Thou."(4)

&&

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.65

(2) Op. Cit. p.68

(3) Op. Cit. p.69

(4) Op. Cit. p.69

If we examine the etymological implication of the word "neighbour" we can learn something of what it is supposed to mean. "Who, then, is one's neighbour? The word is clearly derived from neahgebur (near-dweller); consequently your neighbour is he who dwells nearer than anyone else, yet not in the sense of partiality, for to love him who through favouritism is nearer to you than all others is self-love...Your neighbour, then, is nearer to you than all others. But is he also nearer to you than you are to yourself? No, that he is not, but he is just as near, or ought to be just as near to you as you are to yourself. The concept of neighbour really means the duplicity of one's own self."(1) Such an attitude of mind means that an actual individual neighbour need not exist. "If a man living on a desert island formed his mind according to the command, he could by forsaking self-love be said to love his neighbour."(2)

The kind of self-love involved in loving one's neighbour is different from self-love in the usual sense. As we have seen, it wrests every other form of self-love away from him. This means that in order to be able to love one's neighbour as oneself, then one must first of all love oneself in the right way. "If anyone therefore, refuses to learn from Christianity how to love himself in the right way, he cannot love his neighbour either...To love oneself in the right way and to love one's neighbour correspond perfectly to one another; fundamentally they

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.37 (Translator's brackets)
(2) Op. Cit. p.37

are one and the same thing."[1] It is only when self-love in the selfish misguided sense has been taken away by Christianity, that the individual can really be said to love himself. In other words, ~~it is~~ only when the self becomes related to itself by being grounded in the Power which formed it, that is to say, God. Again, the command of Christianity to love one's neighbour as himself really means that the individual should love his neighbour as he ought to love himself. Included in the concept of subjectivity therefore, is the concept of neighbour. Subjectivity is not merely a matter of the inwardness of the existing individual, as it is exclusively in the ethico-religious sphere of existence, but in Christianity it becomes involved with the command to love one's neighbour. In other words, Subjectivity has of necessity an out-going quality. But even so the inwardness of the individual in such a case is fully preserved because the other has become a duplication of his own self and account must be taken of the neighbour if the subjectivity of the individual is to be truly fulfilled.

There is another point to notice. Whereas in the ethico-religious sphere the communication of subjectivity is purely a matter of personal inclination, in the Christian sphere, where Subjectivity is Truth, it becomes a matter of <u>duty</u>. It is the individual's duty to love.[2]

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Works of Love</u> p.39

(2) Op. Cit. p.40f

Now from the purely human point of view this might appear to be an impossibility or even a contradiction, and from the purely human point of view it is an impossibility. But Christianity is not something which belongs to the purely human as such, as we have seen; it is something which is created by God. Christian love does not arise naturally within the human soul, but only when that soul is transparently grounded in God. As Kierkegaard says: "For there at the boundary where human speech halts and courage forsakes one, there revelation breaks forth with divine creativeness and proclaims what is not difficult to understand in the sense of profundity or human parallels, but which still did not rise up in any human heart."(1) If we are Christian then we possess love. In talking of Christian love we must not think of it as something abstract but as something we possess in inwardness. Although it is something which has been given to countless others before him this does not mean to say that it is in any way less original for the individual.(2) To love oneself in the right way is to love one's neighbour and is to be truly subjective. The two correspond. Therefore in Christianity love towards one's neighbour is a task, a duty, something which must be accomplished if the individual is to be truly subjective. If we are to be Christian then within that term of reference love of neighbour is a must, a duty. Love is something which is implanted within the

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.41

(2) Op. Cit. p.41f

Christian, so that it could almost be said that not only is there a command to love, but even a compulsion. The Christian must by definition love his neighbour. This is what is meant by duty.

But there is something further to notice with regard to this Christian love. It endures. Because it comes from God Himself and lies deeper than the individual himself it is therefore secured against any change. God is eternal and the love which comes from Him is likewise eternal. It is something which does not belong to the individual naturally as part of his existence, but is generated within him by God. If it were an immanent part of the individual's subjectivity, then it would be subject to change just as the existence of the individual is subject to change and to the ravages of time. Christian love has something more than existence, that is to say, the existence of the individual, connected with it. Ordinary love can be said to exist within a man but it is always subject to the possibility of change, the change of time, and so on. It can come to an end. Even when no change has actually taken place there is still the possibility that it might do so. As Kierkegaard points out: "Whatever has undergone no change certainly has continuance but it does not have continuity."(1) And he goes on: "Only the eternal can be and become and remain contemporaneous with every age; temporality, on the other hand, divides within

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.46

itself and the present cannot become contemporary with the future, or the future with the past, or the past with the present."[1] We cannot be certain that that which belongs to the temporal will always survive, as in fact we know that it cannot, for it must end with the passing of time. Ordinary love, even when it is apparent is always subject to the passing of time and it cannot, by that criterion, survive. But: "when love has undergone the transformation of the eternal by being made duty, it has won continuity, and then it follows of itself that it survives. It is not evident that what exists in this moment will exist in the next moment, but it is self-evident that the continuous survives." Kierkegaard deduces that: "only when it is a duty to love, only then is love eternally secure."[2] Ordinary love can turn into something else. It can become hate,[3] jealousy,[4] or through force of habit it can lose its original passion and become stale.[5] When the love that is within the individual is a duty then it is protected against all change. It remains forever the same.

But the command and the duty to love has a further consequence for the subjectivity of the individual. It means that Christian love is entirely free and independent.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.47
(2) Op. Cit. p.47
(3) Op. Cit. p.49
(4) Op. Cit. p.49f
(5) Op. Cit. p.50f

"Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love made free in blessed independence."(1) In other words, ordinary love is dependent upon a special object of love; wife, friend, and so on, and although it may think itself absolutely free and independent, for example, by refusing to be bound, submitting to no bond and so on, it is still in fact dependent. The Christian, on the other hand, feels the need to love but it is that very need which makes him free from all human dependence. It is a need which comes from having to fulfil his subjectivity within Christian categories. He has to love whether there is an object or not. Ordinary love thinks in terms of possession of the beloved; it is related to something outside itself. "But the love which has undergone the transformation of the eternal by becoming duty and which loves because it shall love - this love is independent; it has the law of its existence in the relationship of love itself to the eternal."(2) The whole thing can be summed up thus: Christian love: "Stands and does not fall with variations in the object of love; it stands and falls with eternity's law, but therefore it never falls. Such a love is not dependent upon this or that. It is dependent upon the one thing - that alone which makes for freedom - and therefore it is eternally independent."(3) It follows

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.52

(2) Op. Cit. p.53

(3) Op. Cit. p.53

from this that Christian love persists even although the object of love may be lost. The command and the duty to love also guards against despair. "Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love eternally and happily secured against despair."(1) Christian love loves in such a way that the loss of the beloved would make no difference.(2)

We have already seen that the command to love one's neighbour precludes any question of preference. The command is to love all men. It makes absolutely no distinctions. The further consequence of this is now shown. The fundamental difference between ordinary love and Christian love is God. In ordinary love: "preference is the middle term; in love to one's neighbour, God is the middle term. Love God above all else, and then love your neighbour, and in your neighbour every man."(3) So in Christian love we do not love because the other is different either socially, or from the educational point of view, nor yet because he is the same, but because we have to love and because we love all men equally before God. Kierkegaard puts it thus: "Your neighbour is every man, for on the basis of distinctions he is not your neighbour, nor on the basis of likeness to you as being different from other men. He is your neighbour on the basis of equality with you before God; but this equality absolutely every man has, and he has it absolutely."(4)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.54
(2) Op. Cit. p.55
(3) Op. Cit. p.70
(4) Op. Cit. p.72

Now although Christian love has no preferences and makes no distinctions it would be foolish to deny that earthly distinctions do exist: rich and poor, high and low, privileged and under-privileged. But Christianity teaches that all are equal before God; it does not take away earthly distinctions. "Christianity has not taken distinctions away - any more than Christ Himself would or would pray God to take disciples out of the world - and these remain one and the same thing...just as the Christian does not and cannot live without the body, so he cannot live without the distinctions of earthly life which belong to each individual...it wants only to make men pure...The distinctions of earthly life it has not taken away. These must continue as long as time continues and must continue to tempt every man who enters into the world, for by being a Christian he does not become free from distinctions, but by winning the victory over the temptation of distinctions he becomes a Christian."(1) In short: "Christianity lets all the distinctions of earthly existence stand, but in the command of love, in loving one's neighbour, this equality of lifting oneself above the distinctions of earthly existence, is implicit." Everyone, as far as Christianity is concerned: "must lift himself above earthly distinctions."(2)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.80f

(2) Op. Cit. p.83

It is easy to accept the idea of loving one's neighbour, but when the individual comes to put it into practice he discovers that the people with whom he has to deal in everyday life are his neighbours. As Kierkegaard puts it so well: "At a distance one's neighbour is a shadow which in imagination enters every man's thought and walks by - but alas, one perhaps does not discover that the man who at the same moment walks by him is his neighbour, and yet it is impossible to see him at a distance. If you do not see him so close that you unconditionally before God see him in every man, you do not see him at all."(1) It is all summed up in one sentence: "To love one's neighbour means, while remaining within the earthly distinctions allotted to one, essentially to will to exist equally for every human being without exception."(2)

From what has been said so far it will be apparent that communication is a compulsion for the Christian. It is of the very <u>esse</u> of Christianity to communicate. Love is the expression of this communication: if one is Christian one cannot help loving. So one does not discriminate in one's communication; one does not select another individual and resolve to communicate Christianity to him; to love him. Such a course only involves the communicator in earthly distinctions and to resort back to selfish categories. In ethico-religious communication

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Works of Love</u> p.89

(2) Op. Cit. p.92

one has to have a target; a specific individual. In Christianity, everyone who is my neighbour, receives the communication. The whole point about Christianity is that the individual is what he communicates. His communication is the natural expression of what is within him. Only then is a right relationship established between the individual and other individuals. This is what Christ showed us. As Kierkegaard says: "Christ was the fulfilling of the law. From Him we should learn to understand this thought, for He was the explanation. Only when the explanation is what it explains, when the one who explains is that which is explained, when the explanation is the transfiguration, only then is the right relationship."(1) So when one is a Christian one communicates that fact without discrimination and therefore to every man, who is one's neighbour. To think that we must communicate to each individual whom we meet or with whom we come into contact, is to discriminate. In other words, one must not think of communicating, one must be Christian and then one automatically communicates while at the same time, by so doing, preserving one's inwardness. For the person and the communication are one. The only concern of the Christian is his relationship to God at this very instant.

Christian communication, therefore, unlike ethico-religious communication, is not only a question of relationship between two people - the communicator and the recipient or the neighbour - there must of necessity

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.108

be also a relationship to God. The love which is the form which the communication takes comes through the communicator from God. If we leave God out, then the purely human love which we practice[5] is a selfish and discriminatory thing. The only way in which subjectivity can be fulfilled, the only way in which we can love ourselves in truth, is to love God - and this is the goal of all inwardness. In the ethico-religious sphere this came to be recognized but it could not be adequately accomplished because of the disrelationship which existed within the self. The Communicator in Christian communication has ultimately received the communication from God through Christ even although human agency may have been used in an intermediate sense to convey it, and we have seen earlier on in this chapter that the object of God's communication is to bring about a reciprocal love relationship. Therefore the sole object of the communicator in Christian communication is to love God; his relationship to other men comes through that. God is therefore the middle term in the relationship. As Kierkegaard says: "Wordly wisdom thinks that love is a relationship between man and man. Christianity teaches that love is a relationship between: man-God-man, that is that God is the middle term. However beautiful the love relationship has been between two or more people, however complete their enjoyment and all their bliss in mutual devotion and affection have been for them...if God and the relationship to God have been left out, then Christianly understood, this has not been love but a mutual and enchanting illusion of love. For to love God is to love oneself in

truth; to help another human being to love God is to love God is to love another man; to be helped by another human being to love God is to be loved."(1)

There is a form of human love which sacrifices a great deal of natural inclination and selfishness for the sake of the group to which the individual belongs. One can think of men who have given up life itself for the sake of the community or group. But this is what the group demands from an individual if he is to be called loving. Kierkegaard calls this: "group-selfishness". For the group: "demands that he shall sacrifice a portion of his own selfishness in order to maintain the united group-selfishness."(2) It may even require him to sacrifice his God-relationship. On the other hand, what God understands by love is something: "which sacrifices everything in order to make room for God, even if a heavy sacrifice were to become heavier because no-one understands it, which in yet another sense belongs to true sacrifice. The sacrifice which is understood by men has its reward in the approval of men and to that extent is no true sacrifice, for a true sacrifice must unconditionally be without reward."(3)

When we leave God out of account in human relationships then we are subject to a purely human conception of what constitutes love, what we wish to require of one another. "As soon as one leaves out the God-relationship the merely human conception of what the participants mean by love, what they

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.112f

(2) Op. Cit. p.123

(3) Op. Cit. p.123

wish to require of each other, their mutual judgement in the power thereof becomes the highest judgement."[1] Everyone, if love is to show forth the highest, must first of all relate himself to God and the God-demand before he relates himself to wife or friend, and so on. Then the concept of what constitutes love is raised above the human level to the divine. In Christianity, therefore, God is not merely the middle term between man and man but is the sole object of love. And what constitutes true love between human beings is mutual help in loving God.[2] We remind ourselves that in Christianity the sole object of God's love is love of God in return. Therefore every other love must be subservient to this overriding purpose. So that when two human beings, before relating to one another in love, relate first of all to God, the love of God becomes the sole task which supercedes all else; and therefore the highest love which one human being can show to another is by loving God and thereby showing forth the love of God to his neighbour, assisting the other to love God in addition. When this is something mutual with two human beings then the love which exists between them must be true indeed.

It is true that there is a certain amount of inwardness in purely human love, but this is determined by the need of the beloved and is therefore dependent upon something external; and cannot therefore be said to be true inwardness.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.117

(2) Op. Cit. p.124

In such a case the inwardness is determined by the love-relationship, and this, as we have seen, makes love dependent upon purely human determinants. In Christianity the inwardness of love is determined by the God-relationship. Now this means that when the inwardness of Christian love is not determined by the need of the beloved, but only by reference to helping the beloved to love God, even although this may not be the beloved's conception of love, then the individual must be willing to be hated by the beloved. Christian love looks for no reward, not even the reward of being eventually recognized as true love. "In this way it belongs wholly to God, or the person belongs wholly to God."(1) The expression for the inwardness is not directed outwardly but finds outlet in a relationship to God. There may not be, indeed there need not be, recognition of Christian love or Christian communication on the part of the others.

Kierkegaard goes on to show that love is a matter of conscience.(2) Now for him conscience would appear to mean simply the inner recesses of a man's being. Conscience is something which penetrates every fibre of his nature; it is his own inwardness. But although by definition Christianity makes everything new, yet in a sense everything remains the same. There is a tremendous inner transformation yet outwardly all remains as it was and is. This means that in Christ all relationship between man and man is a

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.132f

(2) Op. Cit. p.136f

relationship of conscience. "Just as the blood throbs in every nerve, so will Christianity in the relationship of conscience penetrate everything. The change is not in the external, not in the visible, and yet the change is infinite."(1) Now we have seen that in the ethico-religious sphere any attempt to give expression to inwardness brings about a contradiction. We are brought to the point where there might be said to be a discommunication. As Kierkegaard says: "There are certain things, among them in particular the secrets of inwardness, which lose something by being made public and are completely lost when one makes publication the most important thing."(2) This is avoided in Christianity and in Christian love, because, although everything within is completely transformed through love, yet it remains the same. In other words it remains the man's essential inwardness. Christianity belongs to the inner man - indeed it is his subjectivity - where it transforms in a subtle way, but at the same time preserves his inwardness. It makes his subjectivity Subjectivity; that is to say subjectivity in the full sense. It does not seek to make changes in the visible. "Christianity never seeks to make changes in externals; neither does it seek to abolish impulse or inclination; it seeks only to make an infinite change in the inward man."(3)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.137

(2) Op. Cit. p.137

(3) Op. Cit. p.140

Here again we are brought back to the fact that Christian love makes no distinctions; is not discriminatory. For it follows from the fact that the infinite change which Christianity brings about in the inwardness of the individual, making love a matter of conscience, that love is: "not a matter of impulse or inclination or a matter of feeling or a matter of intellectual calculation."(1) Thus it makes no distinctions in its love, which is something spiritual and which penetrates all else.(2) Human love can only act in a discriminatory way. There are certain things or people it does not love because it cannot find in them a cause for love, or the necessary qualification. If this were to happen then the person would have to change in order to measure up to the requirements of love. But Christianity: "does not seek to bring about external changes in the external; it wants to seize it, purify it, sanctify it, and thus make everything new while nevertheless everything is old."(3) The change does not occur in the object to be loved but has happened in the inwardness of the communicator who looks on all men in a new light. As Kierkegaard puts it: "...the task is not: to find - the lovable object; but the task is: to find the object already given or chosen -lovable, and to be able to continue finding him lovable, no matter how he becomes changed."(4) We have

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.143
(2) Op. Cit. p.144
(3) Op. Cit. p.145
(4) Op. Cit. p.158

to: "give up all fanciful and extravagant ideas about a dream-world where the object of love is to be sought and found; that is, one must become sober, win actuality and truth by finding and continuing in the world of actuality as the task assigned to one."(1) In other words we have to love all whom we see, as they are, and not as we would wish them to be. If we love a potential, then we do not love the man we see, or what is before us, but something invisible, or something in our imagination and so on.(2)

This means that Christian love has no limits. Love: "is unchanged, no matter how the object becomes changed."(3) Or, to use Kierkegaard's words again: "Christianly understood, loving is loving the very person one sees. The emphasis is not in loving the perfections one sees in a person, but on loving the person one sees, whether or not one sees perfections or imperfections, yes, however distressingly he has changed, inasmuch as he certainly has not ceased to be the same man...Christian love grants to the beloved all his imperfections and weaknesses and in all his changes remains with him, loving the person it sees."(4)

Finally in this anlysis of Christian love as it works in the subjectivity of the communicator, Kierkegaard says that there can be no question of comparison or calculation with regard to Christian love. In ordinary human love it it quite common to talk about being in debt. When children

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.159
(2) Op. Cit. p.161
(3) Op. Cit. p.164
(4) Op. Cit. p.169

are loved by their parents we talk of the debt which the children owe to them because of it.(1) If two people are in love in the purely human sense, they feel that they incur a debt to each other which can never be repaid. By receiving the love of another in purely human terms we become indebted. But in Christianity precisely the opposite is the case. It is not the receiver of love who is in debt, but the giver. "It is the one who loves who is in debt; because he is aware of being gripped by love, he perceives this as being in infinite debt...One can therefore say that this is the essential characteristic of love: that the lover by giving infinitely comes into - infinite debt."(2) We can talk in this strange way only because we are dealing with Christian categories. For the love which is the expression of Christianity, which is the very communication of Christianity, is something which lies deeper than the individual and beyond the inwardness of any individual. It is not his own love which is being shown forth - that would be a purely human thing: it is the love of God, to whom he is in infinite debt. We owe to God a debt which never can be repaid. And this love which comes through the Christian is something which he has to express in order to be able to fulfil his own inwardness; it is a necessity for him if he is to remain a Christian. Therefore he is indebted to his neighbour for contributing towards his own subjectivity by being there to be loved without distinction, discrimination, and so on.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.172

(2) Op. Cit. p.172

When this is the case then there can be no question of comparisons, and so forth, with other Christians or other kinds of love. "When it is a duty to remain in the debt of love to everyone, there must be eternal vigilance, early and late, so that love never comes to dwell upon itself or to compare itself with love in other men or to compare itself with the deeds which it has accomplished."(1) When the individual starts doing this he is starting to make distinctions once more, which, as we have seen, Christian love cannot do. To compare means to distinguish between. To dwell upon itself means that it is diverted from its outgoing direction to dwell upon its own effectiveness or otherwise. It is in fact comparing itself with itself. It is stopping in its tracks. It becomes an object for itself, and thus we are tempted into aesthetic categories in just the same way as when subjectivity is considered from an objective point of view. The true dimension of love is infinity, for it comes from God, and when love is taken out of this element it withers and dies, just like a fish out of water. "But love's element is infinitude, inexhaustibility, immeasurability. If you will keep your love, then by the help of debt's infinitude, imprisoned in freedom and love, you must take care that it remains in its element; otherwise, it droops and dies - not after a time, for it dies at once - which itself is a sign of its perfection, that it can live only in infinitude."(2) In concentrating upon itself and

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.174

(2) Op. Cit. p.176

comparing itself with itself love becomes finite, an object for itself. It is impossible infinitely to compare. As Kierkegaard says: "...if love concentrates upon itself, it must become an object for itself in its individual expression, or another and separate love becomes its object, love in this person or on that person. When the object is thus finite, love concentrates upon itself...But when love finitely concentrates upon itself, everything is lost."(1)

It cannot love by way of comparison with other men or other lovers. To do this is to stop in its tracks - to become subject to the dialectic of time. Comparison always loses the moment. "It loses the moment when it should be filled with an expression of the life of love. But to lose the moment is to become episodic and momentary. A moment lost, and the chain of the eternal is broken...a moment wasted in comparison, then everything is lost."(2) It is lost, says Kierkegaard, because: "love is made finite, the debt something to repay. Regardless of position, whether or not it be the highest, love expects by way of comparison to get status in relationship to others' love or in relationship to its own achievements."(3) Again: "To love by way of comparison more than all other men, even if this were the case, is: not to love. To love is to remain in infinite debt; the infinitude of the debt is the bond of perfection."(4)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.177

(2) Op. Cit. p.178

(3) Op. Cit. p.178

(4) Op. Cit. p.179

By bringing in comparison, we are bringing in relativity which is the very opposite of the absolute, the mark of the eternal, the hall-mark of Christian love.

Being in debt in the performance of Christian love means, as we have seen, that there is no time to stop and make comparisons of any kind. And this in turn implies that the Christian is continuously employed in the carrying out of the task. Love's task is never completed; when the one objective is achieved the individual is already engaged upon the next. This means that Christian love is synonymous with action. To stop is to become involved in finitude and therefore to lose everything. "Christianity says it is a duty to be in debt and thereby it says it is an act - not an expression about, not a theoretical conception of love. Christianly understood, no man has accomplished the utmost in love; and even if this possibility were so fulfilled, there would in the same moment, Christianly understood, be a new task. But if in the same moment there is a new task, it is impossible to find out whether one has done the utmost, for the moment in which one might find this out he is engaged in the service of the task, and consequently he is prevented from finding out about the preceding moment; he has no time for it since he is occupied in the course of action..."(1) Indeed God engenders love within the individual, not so that he can rejoice: "On the contrary, He does it in order to send love out into the world, continually occupied in the task."(2)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.182

(2) Op. Cit. p.184

And this is a thankless task. The Christian need not expect any reward; he does not look for any. He loves because it is something which he cannot help, because it is his duty. He does not distinguish in his love, or make comparisons. His every energy is devoted to loving God, and as a consequence of this he must love his neighbour. This love, because it is not governed by purely human qualifications of what love is, is often misunderstood and stirs up hatred. This is something which the Christian has to be prepared to face. It is part of his self-renunciation. Human self-renunciation faces danger and so on for the sake of honour and glory and approbation. Christian self-renunciation goes into danger even where the world does not recognize that there is any honour to be won. The self-renunciation experienced by the Christian in coming to love himself in the right way, and thus becoming truly subjective, is often hatred by the world. He incurs the world's opposition.(1) Particularly the so-called Christian world.

So we come to the end of the first part of the Works of Love. I have tried to emphasise the fact that all that is said about Christian love applies to the Subjectivity of the Communicator. I have tried to bring it into relationship with Kierkegaard's concepts of Communication and Subjectivity. Even when Kierkegaard is talking about loving the other, the neighbour, which is in fact communicating Christianity to him,

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love pp.189ff

he deals with it from the point of view of the effect it will have upon the subjectivity of the communicator. The subjectivity of the communicator can only be fully preserved by expressing what might be called his sanctified subjectivity in Christian love going out towards all men. In the ethico-religious sphere, any attempt to give expression to his subjectivity meant paradox and contradiction for the individual, because he was trying to give expression to something which by its very definition could not be expressed, and became something other than subjectivity by receiving expression. In Christianity the difficulty is overcome by the fact that in order to be fully subjective the inwardness of the individual must receive expression. If it does not then there is something lacking and we are back once more in ethico-religious categories, where subjectivity is untruth. Christian love guarantees that subjectivity shall receive expression, while at the same time preserving intact the inwardness of the individual. The communication of Subjectivity in Christian love is a necessity for the Christian, for it is of the very nature of true Subjectivity, that is to say, subjectivity which has been transformed by Christ, to be communicated.

Love and the Recipient

We have seen how love meets the requirements of subjectivity in the communication of Christianity as far as the communicator is concerned. But it must also meet the requirements of subjectivity from the point of view of the recipient, and at the same time be effective as a

communication. It is all very well for the communicator in his love towards God, to be compelled to communicate this love to every man regardless of whether it is going to be recognized as a Christian communication or not. But if such a communication is completely ineffective in getting through to the neighbour or at least to some neighbour, then it cannot really be called a communication.

The second part of the Works of Love deals with the effect of Christian love upon the subjectivity of the recipient. As soon as we begin to read part two we can recognize a subtle change of emphasis. We are dealing here with the effect of Christian love upon the non-Christian, or even upon the other who is a Christian. There is however an inter-relationship here as in the case of love and the communicator.

The first point to notice about the effect of Christian love upon the inwardness of the recipient - and a most important point it is - is that the love which belongs to the communicator has the effect of inducing love in the inwardness of the recipient. It "builds up" love. In ordinary every-day speech we talk of building up. We build a room on to a house but we do not say that we build it up, we merely build it on. Similarly when we talk of adding another storey to a high house we do not talk of building up, but simply building on another storey. Building up refers usually to building right from the ground up. But before a building can be built up from the ground the foundations must first of all be dug; thus in the concept of building up, depth is also included. If we are going

to talk of building up, we have also to take into consideration that this means building fundamentally.(1)

Now, says Kierkegaard, we can use the same expression about building up with regard to Christian love. The Danish word for building up is opbygge and it also means to edify. I suppose that one could speak of edifying an edifice, using "edify" in a strictly etymological sense, but the whole of this section in Works of Love is a play on the two meanings of opbygge. Love, according to Kierkegaard, has the characteristic of edifying and also of building up. There are many things which appear to have this quality of building up. For example, when we see a large family living in cramped and difficult circumstances, yet making it a warm, cosy, friendly place: "then we say that it is up-building to see, because we see the love which must be present in each and every individual..."(2) The sight is edifying, that is to say it is uplifting to the beholder. It builds up something within him. But, says Kierkegaard, on every occasion where such edification is to be found there is also to be found love, and it is the love which causes the occasion or sight to be up-building. He says in fact that: "every person, through his life, his conduct, through his behaviour in common things, through his relationship with his fellows, through his language, his expression, should

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.200f

(2) Op. Cit. p.203

and can build up, and every person would do this if love were actually in him."[1] Building up is exclusively a characteristic of love; where there is no love there is no building up. Even knowledge can have this edifying quality and the communication of knowledge, but if they do, says Kierkegaard: "it is because love is present."[2]

Now to build up means, as we have seen above, to construct something right from the very foundations, from the ground up. Everyone knows what we mean by the ground, and the foundation of a house, but when it is applied to the spiritual sphere what does it mean? Kierkegaard answers: "In very fact it is love; love is the origin of everything, and spiritually understood love is the deepest ground of the spirit. Spiritually understood, the foundation is laid in every person in whom there is love. "And the edifice which, spiritually understood, is to be constructed is again love; and it is love which edifies."[3] Where love exists, as we have seen, it has this power to build up love; it has the power to create love. To be edified means to be filled with a favourable impression, an impression of attraction and a desire to emulate; this is love. Love is the foundation, and what happens is that upon that foundation an edifice of love is built up. "Love is the ground; love is the building; love builds up. To build up is to build up love, and it is love which builds up."[4]

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.202
(2) Op. Cit. p.204
(3) Op. Cit. p.205
(4) Op. Cit. p.205

But when we come to consider the communication of Christianity, of Christian love, then we have to consider the implications of this creative power of love. When we say that love has the characteristic of being able to build up, we must mean either that it has the power to implant love in the other individual, where there was no love before or that there is already assumed to be some kind of love present in the heart of the other person. The first alternative is ruled out as far as Kierkegaard is concerned, because only God can implant love in the heart of a person where no love already exists. So we must take it to mean that the person who loves assumes that there is love in the heart of the other person. This does not mean to say that love necessarily exists in the heart of the recipient. What Kierkegaard is saying is that the communicator assumes that it exists. This is the important thing. So we come to the point in the communication of Christian love where: "the lover presupposes that love is in the other person's heart, and by this very presupposition he builds up love in him - from the ground up, insofar as in love he presupposes it present as the ground."(1)

We must be careful not to adopt the attitude that the lover or the communicator sets out with the deliberate intention of building up love in the other person. Any such talk is, as we have seen, discriminatory and in the end only exists for self-satisfaction. He does not think

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.206

about constraining love to come forth in the other but only in himself. He can only presuppose that love is already there and by so doing: "he entices forth the good; he 'loves up' love; he builds up."(1) The Danish word translated "loves up" is opelsker. This means that in presupposing that love was there, the lover can only say that he knew it was there all the time. The builder can look at his house and say: "look what I have built", but after the communicator has finished building up love, he: "stands aside and humbly says 'Indeed, I presupposed this all the time.'"(2)

Now even when from a purely human point of view love does not appear to be there, the communicator has to presuppose it; he has still to assume that it is present. The natural inclination is to try to do something about altering the other so that love can get a chance, but this would be wrong. For this would mean that there would have to be a process of tearing down, which is the very opposite of building up. It means that the communicator is proposing to do something with the other. But, says Kierkegaard: "when the lover builds up it is the very opposite of tearing down, for the lover does something about himself: he presupposes that love is present in the other person - which is quite the opposite of doing something about the other person."(3)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.206

(2) Op. Cit. p.206

(3) Op. Cit. p.208

We are faced here with an apparent contradiction. For on the one hand it is said that in order that love can build up there must be love present in the heart of the recipient. On the other hand it is said that even if there is no love there from the purely human point of view, then love is still upbuilding if it is presupposed on the part of the communicator. Again it is said that only God can implant love in the heart of the person where there is no love already. But no man can be sure that there is no love existing in the other's heart. We are not in any position to judge. And anyhow if we do judge we are once more becoming discriminatory and so defeating God's purpose. The only other thing we can do if we are to love all men as neighbours and so on, is to assume that love exists within them, that they are capable of loving. The only way of building up love is to assume that love is already there. If we start assuming that it is not there then we are removing the very foundations from which love can be built up. You cannot build up if the ground-work is taken away.

Kierkegaard illustrates this by an analysis of 1 Corinthians Chapter 13.(1) Love is patient: that is to say it perseveres in presupposing that love is present in the other. Anyone who judges or comes gradually to the conclusion that love is not present, takes the ground-work away. Love is not irritable or resentful: These things deny love in the other person, and here again the ground-

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.208f

work necessary for the building up of love is done away with. Love does not insist on its own way. To do this means that the lover pushes everything else aside in order to get his own way. In other words he must demolish - destroy the foundations. Love does not rejoice at wrong. The very idea that things need altering in the life of the recipient before love can get a chance to build up, means that there is a rejoicing, a desire to be prominent through the idea that it is necessary to tear down. On the contrary love rejoices that love is fundamentally present. Love bears all things means that it finds in even the most unlovable and unlikely things about the other, cause for presupposing that love is fundamentally present. Love believes all things. Mistrust takes away the ground-work by presupposing that love is not present. Even although love does not appear to be present, love must presuppose that it is. Love hopes all things. Even although no love is apparent, even although the very opposite is the case, love hopes that this is not true, it presupposes that somewhere there is love. The father of the prodigal son believed this in contrast to the elder brother. Love endures all things means in fact that it presupposes love is fundamentally present in spite of all indication being to the contrary. It is prepared to endure because it assumes that underneath is a fundamental love. Love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude; it is not irritable or resentful. Kierkegaard says: "It is not boastful over the thought that it should create love in the other person. It is not impatiently resentful or arrogant, almost hopelessly busy with first

tearing down in order to build up again. No, it continually presupposes that love is fundamentally present."(1)

If someone presupposes that love is fundamentally present in the recipient, then, says Kierkegaard, this has an uplifting effect. When anyone acts in such a way that I feel built up this means that that person fundamentally presupposed love to exist within me and that I recognized this presupposition in him. This is something which we can recognize from personal experience. Let Kierkegaard speak for himself: "Or what kind of a person do you think another man might be who could in truth build you up? Is it not true that you would wish him to have insight, knowledge, talent, and experience? But still you would not consider these to be decisive but rather that he was a reliable, loving person, that is, truly a loving person. Consequently you consider that up-building depends decisively and essentially upon loving or having love to such a degree that one can abandon himself to it. But what, then, is love? Love means to presuppose love in others; to be loving means to presuppose that others are loving."(2)

This quality of the power of love to build up is of vital importance for all that follows. And what follows is a kind of explanation of how this works out. Just as the chapter on loving the neighbour is the king-pin in the

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.210

(2) Op. Cit. p.210f

first part of the book, so is this in a similar position in the second part. It will be apparent how important this is for the communication of love on the side of the recipient. For if he is loved by the communicator, without distinction, without reservation, then this in itself is going to be the means of inducing love within his heart, when there is love there already. Thus the subjectivity of the recipient is protected: what takes place in the communication of love takes place independently within him although it might respond to an outside stimulus. But the point is that the response comes from within and it is a response to something which is already there. This love which is within him responds to love in order that love may be built up. In fact it is necessary for him to be loved so that love can grow within him. The communication and his subjectivity are thus linked up with that of the communicator. We must remember that the communicator directs his love to all men and not to the recipient in particular. Therefore if the communication is effective, then it is because he took the initiative. It will become more apparent what Kierkegaard means as we proceed.

If love builds up love by presupposing love in the other, it follows that it believes all things and yet is never deceived. There is a kind of naivety which believes everything that is said and done and accepts them at their face value. It does not see below the surface. The opposite of this is mistrust which believes nothing at all.(1) Mistrust knows better. It has a knowledge of what really

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.214f

is the case. Kierkegaard says that this is a misuse of knowledge. All that knowledge can do is to present us with the facts. Mistrust uses this knowledge to make a statement of belief. "What mistrust says or presents is really only knowledge: the secret or the falsity lies in this that it straightway converts this knowledge into a belief, making belief appear to be nothing at all, making it appear as if it were something requiring no attention, since surely everyone who has the same knowledge 'must necessarily come to the same conclusion' as if it were therefore eternally certain and absolutely decided that when knowledge is given the conclusion is also decided."(1) This attitude is a deception, says Kierkegaard, because on the basis of the same knowledge about the other it is possible to believe the very opposite. Love is like that: it is not naive enough to gloss over what it gains from knowledge but it puts an entirely different interpretation upon it. The point is that in the belief, in the resultant attitude, whether belief or mistrust is to be in evidence, knowledge presents the individual with a choice; whether to believe or whether to be mistrustful. And in the choice which is made, the individual stands revealed; that is to say, the individual who is making the judgement: whether he loves or not. "Precisely because existence will test you, test your love or whether there is love in you, for this very reason with the help of the understanding it

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.215

presents you with truth and deception as two equal possibilities in contrast to each other, so that there must be a revelation of what is in you since you judge, that is, since in judging you choose."(1) Knowledge has nothing to do with decision. It is neutral, infinitely detatched. "In knowledge there is no decision; decision, the determinedness and determining characteristic of personalities is first in ergo, in faith...Knowledge is not mistrust, for knowledge is infinitely detatched, the infinite indifference in equalibrium...The mistrustful person and the lover have knowledge in common, and neither is the mistrustful person mistrustful because of knowledge nor the loving person loving because of knowledge. But when a man's knowledge has placed contrasting possibilities in equalibrium and he wants or has to judge, then what he believes in becomes apparent; who he is, whether he is mistrustful or loving."(2) Both the mistrustful and the loving person see the same thing and then they make a choice which reveals whether they are mistrustful or loving. Love does not foolishly believe everything it sees in the same way that frivolity or inexperience does. It takes all the facts fully into account, and then deliberately chooses to believe.

Now this means that he who deliberately chooses to believe in love can never be deceived. Even if he were to presuppose that love was there when in fact there was no love, yet he is not deceived. In relation to God a man

---

(1) S.Kierkegaard Works of Love p.215
(2) Op. Cit. p.218

can deceive himself, but he can never deceive God. This is because: "the God-relationship is the highest good in such a way that he who deceives God frightfully deceives himself."(1) A child cannot deceive his parents, at least if they are wise and discerning. He may think that he does but in fact they know what is going on all the time. The child is therefore only deceiving himself. In relation to the child the parents have a superior knowledge and wisdom. True subjectivity can never be deceived, and Kierkegaard concludes that: "in relationship to everything which is not love, therefore in relationship to every deception, true love is unconditionally superior; consequently it can never be deceived if in believing all things it remains true to itself or continues to be true love."(2) If a person who loves is deceived it simply means that they cease to love. They have abandoned love in and for its own sake.(3) And therefore they have ceased to love. In such a case it was not true love but discriminatory human love.

The true lover cannot be deceived. If someone sets out to deceive him he only succeeds in deceiving himself, like the child with his parents. The deceiver wishes to deceive by getting himself loved but not loving in return. He may succeed in this - his deception may work. But the true lover loves everyone, and he regards it as a weakness

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.222
(2) Op. Cit. p.222
(3) Op. Cit. p.223

to be anxious to be loved in return. The craftiness of the deceiver is of no avail, for the true lover loves him in just the same way whether he deceives him or not. As Kierkegaard puts it: "Naturally the deception consists in this that while the lover loves him, he coldly and proudly and mockingly enjoys the self-satisfaction of not loving in return, in addition to enjoying the good of being loved. Naturally it completely escapes him...that he is involved with the true lover, who loves without making any demand of reciprocity, who grounds love and its blessedness precisely in not requiring reciprocity. The deceiver, therefore, has cunningly gotten the lover to love him - but this is just what the lover is infinitely willing to do; the deceiver has presumably fooled him by not loving in return - but the true lover regards the very requirement of reciprocity to be a contamination, a devaluation, and loving without the reward of reciprocal love to be the highest blessedness. Who, then, is the deceiver?"(1)

It is therefore impossible to deceive the true lover for his love is infinite, it comes from God. Although he may himself see that from the human point of view he is deceived, but for him it is still possible that the deceiver is not a deceiver. He believes all things. The Christian must hold on to this true love which it is all too easy to give up. We are easily drawn down to purely human conceptions of love, but such a course is to lose everything.(2)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.226
(2) Op. Cit. p.230

By presupposing love in the heart of the other, it becomes impossible for the other to deceive the communicator. Even where there is no love, the deceiver is loved just the same. The presupposition of love acts as the foundation upon which to build up love. There is always the possibility for the Christian that love may be there.

Therefore love hopes all things as well as believes all things. This does not simply mean that it hopes for the best, that one day everything will turn out all right; that love will exist where before it was only presumed to exist. It means that it: "takes upon itself the work of hope or takes hope upon itself as the work of hoping for others. It is itself built up and nourished by this hope of the eternal and then acts loving in this hope towards them."(1) Hope always relates to the future. Hoping is something which is composed of the temporal and the eternal. But when the eternal comes into the temporal it appears not as the present, but as the future. The future is always possibility; there is always a duality about it; it will turn out one way or the other. Now when an individual relates himself to the duality of the future equally, that is to say, when he is prepared for either eventuality, we say that "he expects". "To expect contains in it the same duality which possibility has, and to expect is to relate oneself to the possible simply and purely as such."(2) If on the other hand the individual relates himself to the possibility of the good, then we say that "he hopes".

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.233
(2) Op. Cit. p.234

"Which therefore cannot be some temporal expectancy but rather an eternal hope."(1) When the individual relates himself to the possibility of evil, we say "he fears".

Hope has therefore something of the eternal in it. And this is what distinguishes it from what ordinary speech so often calls hope: "desire, longing, longing-filled, expectancy, now of one thing, now of another, in short, the relationship of an expectant person to a manifold possibility."(2) This is to speak of hope unqualified by love. But, says Kierkegaard: "in love to hope all things signifies the lover's relationship to other men, that in relationship to them, hoping for them, he continually keeps possibility open for them with infinite partiality for this possibility of the good."(3) This means that he continually hopes that love will blossom in the other's heart; that, according to him who loves, there is hope for even the most degenerate.(4) Here is one more consequence of presupposing that love exists within the heart of the other.

Now we come to a most important chapter in Works of Love: "Love seeks not is own." This simply means that Christian love is completely sacrificial in nature. For love to seek its own simply means that it seeks love. Now in the relationship between God and man it is right

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.234
(2) Op. Cit. p.234
(3) Op. Cit. p.237
(4) Op. Cit. p.243

and proper for love to seek its own. For man to seek the love of God is entirely right and proper. But between man and man this is not the case. It would mean then that love would be seeking love in return - love from another human being, and this would mean that it was only interested in being loved - a form of self-love.(1)

No, says Kierkegaard, Christian love does not look for anything which could belong to itself, or does not seek for anything for itself. This means that it must be completely sacrificial. It does not look for love in others, and it does not look for anything in others which could nourish itself. The distinction between "mine" and "yours" disappears altogether. This may be said to happen in purely erotic human love where the two lovers become one and everything becomes "ours". But, says Kierkegaard, this is only a form of united selfishness where everything which is not "ours" is excluded.(2) The concepts "mine" and "yours" exist <u>in polarity</u>.(3) That is to say, they are dependent upon each other for their existence. If you take one away then the other disappears. If we take away "yours" and leave only "mine", then, says Kierkegaard, we have the criminal outlook which regards everything as belonging to "me" and wants to take everything from "you". The robber recognizes no "yours" but only "mine". But in this case there is no more question of "mine", since "mine" can have no meaning if there is no "yours" to counteract it.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Works of Love</u> p.247
(2) Op. Cit. p.68
(3) Op. Cit. p.250

When the "yours" is done away with then there is no further point to the "mine". If, on the other hand, we take away "mine" and leave only "yours" then we have complete self-sacrifice. Everything becomes "yours" - belongs to the other. But in this case, if we take away "mine", the concept "yours" ceases to have any meaning. If we cease to regard anything as belonging to the self, then it all becomes the possession of "yours". But hereagain "mine" becomes meaningless for there is no such thing - only "yours" to whom <u>everything</u> of "mine" has been given. It is a relationship of polarity. Take away one, and you take away the other.

But when we give everything up then everything becomes ours, because by loving we have gained the love of God - which is everything and is necessary for the fulfilment of our subjectivity, our individuality. To quote Kierkegaard: "Then something wonderful happens, heaven's blessing on self-renunciation's love: in the mysterious understanding of blessedness everything becomes his, belongs to him who has no mine, who in self-renunciation made all of his yours. God is indeed everything, and precisely by having no mine at all self-renunciation's love wins God and wins everything."(1)

Now although the Christian does find his soul, his subjectivity, by giving up everything to others, by loving others without discrimination, yet he does not love his own individuality. But for the other person: "his own

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Works of Love</u> p.251

individuality is precisely 'his own', and consequently the lover does not seek his own; quite the opposite, in others he loves 'their own'."(1) This means that he considers the other to be a unique subject in himself, he presupposes love within him. For it is Christian love which confers true subjectivity. He loves in such a way that he gives the other true individuality, or subjectivity, or love. That is to say (to return to a previous conception), he builds up love. It is only through Christ that subjectivity is truth. "The small-minded individual has never had the courage of this God-pleasing venturesomeness of humility and pride: before God to be oneself - for the accent rests upon 'before God', since this is the source and origin of all individuality. He who has dared to do this has authentic individuality and has come to know what God has already given to him; in the same sense he believes completely in the individuality of every single person. To have individuality is to believe in the individuality of every other person; for individuality is not mine but is God's gift by which He gives me being and gives being to all, gives being to everything."(2) So in Christian love individuality is given to the recipient. Christian love is the reflection of God's love; it is grounded in the love of God; and God wishes to give true subjectivity, for that is the truth. So it follows that the Christian in loving, must also wish to confer it.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.252
(2) Op. Cit. p.253.

But when we come to the question of conferring subjectivity we are brought back to the problems arising from indirect communication. For a person to achieve true individuality, it must appear as if he had achieved it by himself. So: "Love seeks not its own; for it rather gives in such a way that the gift appears as if it were the receiver's possession."(1) In other words, the subjectivity of the recipient must be respected; there must not be influences from outside. If we say: "This man, by my help, stands alone", then we are saying that he has not achieved his independence by himself but by my help, which means that he has in fact to be indebted to some outside agency to achieve individuality, which is a contradiction. But if we say: "This man stands alone - by my help", it means that he really does stand alone as an individual, and although I have helped him yet he does not know it. The communicator has done for the other person: "the highest that one man can do for another: he has made him free, independent, unto himself, unto his own, and simply by hiding his help helped him to stand alone."(2) This is exactly what Socrates sought to do within the categories of the ethico-religious but we have seen that if it is left there it can only result in a discommunication. Socrates called himself a midwife;(3) but the difference between Socrates and the communication

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.255
(2) Op. Cit. p.256
(3) Op. Cit. p.257

of Subjectivity in Christianity is that the Christian loves and in that love recognizes that another has been helped to stand alone, not by his (the communicator's) efforts, but by God's help - God working through love, through him. The labour of the Christian consists in this: "to aid one or another human being to become his own, which in a certain sense they were on the way to becoming. But when one through another's help <u>really</u> has become his own, it is quite impossible to detect the help of the other, for if I see the other's help, then I really see that the one helped has not become his own."(1) The communication of the Christian is directed towards all men and not just to one particular individual, although it is directed towards making all become what they already are in a certain sense, that is to say, subjective; and this can only be done by God working within the other. It is directed to making him loving, to building up love within him. But the recipient does not detect this for in any case the love is not directed solely at him. But there is about Christian love something which, if there is love already there, makes the other more aware of himself and thus one step nearer to realizing that he cannot find God by his own efforts, and so puthim in the position to receive the condition for loving God from God Himself.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Works of Love</u> p.260

We are thus brought back to the idea of "reduplication" with regard to Christian love. What love is, so it does, and what love does, so it is. There is always a "double mode" in love. The more it gives out, the more it preserves itself in inwardness; the more it loves others, the more it is preserved in love. Christian love is the eternal in man, coming as it does from God. As Kierkegaard says: "If...the eternal is in a man, the eternal reduplicates itself within him in such a way that every moment it is in him it is in him in a double mode: in an outward direction and in an inward direction back into itself but in such a way that it is one and the same, for otherwise it is not reduplication", and he goes on: "So it is with love. What love does, it is; what it is, it does - at one and the same moment, simultaneously as it goes out beyond itself (in an outward direction) it is in itself (in an inward direction), and simultaneously as it is in itself, it thereby goes beyond itself in such a way that this going beyond and this inward turning, this inward turning and this going beyond, are simultaneously one and the same."(1) This means that subjectivity and the communication of subjectivity are one and the same thing. We have already seen it in the preculiar relationship which exists between communicator and recipient in the practice of Christian love. It is in loving the neighbour that the communicator loves himself in the right way. He gives love only to acquire it. This is the important principle which has become apparent in all that has so far been said.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.261

And when we come to the forgiveness of sins it is the same. To forgive is to be forgiven. In the Works of Love Kierkegaard talks about this in the chapter called: Love Hides a Multiplicity of Sins. He points out that love turns a blind eye to the sins of others; it knows that they are there, but pretends they are not; and so hides the sins of others - the kind of thing we do in certain children's games.(1) If it cannot avoid seeing the sins then it keeps quiet about it,(2) or offers a mitigating explanation. As: "clothes make the man, likewise one can truly say that the explanation makes the object of explanation what it is. With regard to another man's words, acts, and ways of thought there is no certainty, and to suppose it means to choose. Conceptions and explanations therefore exist, simply because a variation in explanation is possible - a choice. But if it is a choice, it is continually in my power, if I am a lover, to choose the most mitigating explanation."(3) This is only natural if love believes and hopes all things.(4) And finally, if the sin is so obvious that it cannot be hidden or no mitigating circumstances be found, then the Christian can forgive in love.(5) To forgive means that the Christian believes that forgiveness takes it away;(6)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.267
(2) Op. Cit. p.269
(3) Op. Cit. p.271
(4) Op. Cit. p.273
(5) Op. Cit. p.273f
(6) Op. Cit. p.274

takes away its vitality[1] and so smothers it at birth.[2] When sin is encompassed by love it is out of its element.[3] And so it cannot hold out against love in the long run, for love never gives up. Love and the forgiveness which love has are "rehabilitating" for the sinner. In other words they help him towards salvation. Of course it follows from the reduplication which takes place within the Christian individual in whom love is present, that as he forgives so is he forgiven.

Kierkegaard now goes on to speak of the abiding quality of love; of God's love, and therefore the love which comes through the Christian.[4] This love never changes and therefore it is impossible for the recipient to fall away from the love.[5] There is no such thing as a breaking point in Christian love, for if love ceases then it cannot be Christian. When the recipient rejects the love of the Christian this does not mean that the love ceases, it still abides, waiting for the other to return.[6] The Christian lover abides: "he abides on the path of the one who hates him, consequently there is still no break."[7]

Christian love never wastes away because it: "contains in itself the spring which flows unto eternal life."[8] That is to say, the love which the Christian

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.275
(2) Op. Cit. p.276
(3) Op. Cit. p.277
(4) Op. Cit. p.279-291
(5) Op. Cit. p.283
(6) Op. Cit. p.285
(7) Op. Cit. p.286
(8) Op. Cit. p.288

shows forth is not something immanent but comes through him from God. It can never waste away because the source is always deeper than himself. Consequently the love is always there for the recipient to return to should he reject it.(1)

I have not said much about this chapter, and will only lightly touch on the subsequent chapters of Works of Love because they cover ground which has already been covered in the first part of the book; or what has been said is more by way of illustration of a principle firmly established than anything else. For example the Chapter on: Mercifulness a Work of Love(2) merely shows that it is a qualification of Christian love to show mercy, and that this is not dependent upon goods or money. Mercy is an attitude of mind or soul. An individual may be able to do nothing to relieve the material circumstances of the other, but he can show mercy. If the Good Samaritan had only been walking and not riding, had had nothing to bind up the wounds of the man lying bleeding by the side of the road, had had no money to pay for board and lodging, but simply showed mercy by sitting down and comforting the man; even if the man had died in his arms because nothing more was able to be done, Kierkegaard asks: would he not have been just as merciful?(3) Again many a person has it in their power to offer money and material help of all kinds, and

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.290
(2) Op. Cit. p.292-305
(3) Op. Cit. p.294

they do so, but without showing mercy.(1) As Kierkegaard says: "Does mercifulness consist in giving hundreds of thousands to the poor? No. Is it mercifulness to give a halfpenny to the poor? No. Mercifulness is how it is given."(2) Yet this does not debar the giving of money and so on, in mercy. Mercy can be shown either in the giving of material help, or when no material help is available.(3) The Christian lover shows mercifulness. This is of course only to be expected after what we have learnt about Christian love from what has gone before. It is something which is close to forgiveness; something which embraces the recipient in all-enveloping love; something which does not depend upon the what but upon the how.

From what we have seen of the nature of Christian love it is also almost self-evident that there must be a: "Victory of Reconciliation which Wins the Vanquished."(4) One can almost predict the line of argument which Kierkegaard is going to take. We have seen that no matter how unloving the recipient of Christian love may be, and some of the recipients must be in this position because Christian love goes out to all men, yet Christian love endures; it never changes; it is eternal; and so it cannot be destroyed. The unloving one and even the sinful one cannot win. Nothing can destroy Christian love.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.301f
(2) Op. Cit. p.312
(3) Op. Cit. p.304
(4) Op. Cit. p.306-316

So in the end it is love which has the victory. But from the Christian point of view the battle is only beginning. For the Christian desires not only that love shall triumph, but: "he battles reconcilingly in order that the good might be victorious in the unloving one, or he battles in order to win the vanquished."(1) He wishes that the other, too, might be filled with Christian love. And so having attained the victory through love he must be very careful not to let the whole thing slip by becoming proud of his achievement or thinking of the unloving one as lower and so on. In ordinary warfare it is the victor who is the important one, the vanquished is the one who is less important, who is humbled. But not so with Christianity. Precisely the opposite is the case: the vanquished becomes the important one while the victor recedes into the background.(2) But this he does by positing something higher than himself between himself and the recipient, namely, the God-relationship.(3) If it were a matter simply of one man gaining the victory over another by love, then the vanquished would always feel inferior and humbled no matter how well-intentioned the other might be.(4) But by giving no indication that it is he who has conquered, indeed not even being aware of this fact, he: "interpolates something higher between the unloving one and himself and thereby gets himself out of the way."(5)

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.309
(2) Op. Cit. p.311
(3) Op. Cit. p.313
(4) Op. Cit. p.312
(5) Op. Cit. p.313

Now both are equally humbled in the presence of God. The lover hides himself in order to show forth God. This is what Kierkegaard calls "holy shyness" which is inseparable from all true love.(1) So that in the end, says Kierkegaard, the lover really succeeds in winning the love of the vanquished, who finally stops asking for forgiveness or if he has really been forgiven.(2) And the lover asks: "Do you now really love me?"(3) To which the reply must now be: "I do".

I must confess that I find the final two pages of this chapter slightly puzzling. Kierkegaard speaks as if it were the object of the loving one to get the other to love him, and that the miracle of reconciliation will have taken place when this has been accomplished. When he can get the other to stop speaking about forgiveness, then he knows that the reconciliation has finally been brought about; the reconciliation between himself and the other. Kierkegaard describes the joy with which the Christian regards the other whom he has just won over.(4) Now it seems to me, that according to Kierkegaard himself, as we have seen above, the objective of Christian love is <u>not</u> to win the other to love the Christian who is the communicator, but to <u>help him towards a love of God</u>. The lover does <u>not</u> seek the love of the vanquished, but seeks that the vanquished should love God. Although if

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard <u>Works of Love</u> p.314
(2) Op. Cit. p.316
(3) Op. Cit. p.316
(4) Op. Cit. p.215
(

in fact the vanquished does succeed in coming to a love of God in Christ, then of course it follows from what we have learnt about Christian love that the vanquished will love the victor - for the Christian loves all men. In other words, a reconciliation is brought about between communicator and recipient because they are both united in a common love of God and of all men. Perhaps this is no more than Kierkegaard means to imply in these last few paragraphs, but it is certainly not apparent on the surface.

If we want to test whether our love is truly Christian or not, then we should consider how we react to the memory of one who is dead;(1) not even to the memory but to the present reality. A dead person cannot reciprocate love in any way. Therefore the love which we show to them must be completely unselfish.(2) We cannot hope to gain anything for ourselves by loving the dead. Such love is completely free.(3) There is nothing about the dead which constrains us to love: there is no special quality about them which may constrain us to love them in preference to another, for example, as there might be in someone living whom we loved. Such love towards the dead must of necessity be faithful love.(4) If we love one who is dead then it shows that our love is changeless and enduring. Kierkegaard says that if we can love the dead in such a way, then this is how we ought to love the living. For the dead have no pull over us;

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.317-329
(2) Op. Cit. p.320f
(3) Op. Cit. p.322f
(4) Op. Cit. p.325f

neither ought the living. "The work of love in remembering one who is dead is thus a work of the most disinterested, the freest, the most faithful love. Therefore go out and practice it; remember one dead and learn in just this way to love the living disinterestedly, freely, faithfully. In the relationship to one dead you have the criterion whereby you can test yourself."(1)

It is natural that Kierkegaard should end Works of Love by speaking of: The Works of Love in Praising Love.(2) His whole book has been in praise of love, and at the very end he shows that to love in truth one must praise love. Now according to all that he says about love, this could not possibly mean that the Christian must in poetic fashion write a book or a poem in praise of love - a kind of hymn to love. Kierkegaard has in fact done this, but according to his own terms of reference this in itself is not a work of love. Really to praise love is to act - to be loving - to be the lover. To write a book or a poem or a hymn, requires art which is related to talent. Christian love is not related to talent, but to what every man is able to become, "the universally human".(3) (Not to be thought of in any Hegelian sense!) As Kierkegaard says: "Everyone who wishes to have love to him it is given, and if he wishes to undertake the work of praising it, he will

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.328
(2) Op. Cit. p.330-343
(3) Op. Cit. p.330

be able to do this also."[1] To speak about love, however glowingly, is not the same as to love. A dumb, illiterate person can praise love by loving, just as much as the most learned professor.

As one might expect in acting out love as a eulogy to love, Kierkegaard reiterates what he has already said in the course of the book. It is first of all a matter of inwardness. It: "must be done inwardly in self-renunciation."[2] We are reminded here about what he says about renunciation in connection with the ethico-religious sphere of existence. We need to concentrate upon the self; upon getting a right relationship to God. This is subjectivity. We have to concentrate upon "self-deepening" so that we make: "a discovery about our own situation."[3] This right relationship can only come in Christianity which means that we are loved, that we are aware of God's love for us, and therefore we must love. This means, as we have seen, that we must love ourselves in the right way; all selfishness of any kind must be destroyed, so that we can gain "the one thing needful"; our true self, subjectivity. This of course requires self-renunciation. Only in self-renunciation can one effectively praise love, that is to say, can one truly love. "What a human being of himself knows about love is very superficial; he must get to know the deeper love from God, that is, in self-denial he must become what every human being can become...an instrument of God. Therefore

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.331
(2) Op. Cit. p.331
(3) Op. Cit. p.332

every human being can get to know that he is, as every human being is, loved by God."(1)

But not only has the act of loving an inward direction, but it has also an outward direction, without which true inwardness cannot be realized. It is involved in loving oneself in the right way. "The work of praising love must OUTWARDLY be done in sacrificial disinterestedness."(2) If everything selfish, from the purely human point of view, has been renounced, it follows that in every manifestation of love towards the neighbour, any selfish motive is automatically ruled out. The loving must be completely disinterested. Self-renunciation and sacrificial disinterestedness are really one and the same thing. "In self-renunciation one achieves the ability to be the instrument by inwardly making himself nothing before God; in sacrificial disinterestedness he externally makes himself nothing, an unprofitable servant: inwardly he does not become important to himself, for he is nothing, and externally he does not become important to himself either, for he is nothing - nothing before God, right where he is."(3)

Sacrificial disinterestedness means that the Christian must love even when he finds the object of his love unlovable. The neighbour is the unlovable one, when we do not know him or about him, or when what we see about him

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.334
(2) Op. Cit. p.336
(3) Op. Cit. p.336

is not attractive. Socrates spoke not only about loving the beautiful but also about loving the ugly.(1) But in terms of love the beautiful is the: "choice of inclination and passion", the attractive one: while the ugly: "is the neighbour, whom one SHALL love."(2) As Kierkegaard says: "...the true love is precisely love to one's neighbour, or it is finding, not the lovable object, but finding the unlovable object to be lovable."(3)

All the material for this final chapter arises out of what has gone before in the book.

I have said above that in a subtle way the first part of the Works of Love deals with love and the Communicator, while the second part deals with love and the Recipient. Perhaps it would be well to point out just how subtle is Kierkegaard's method. It might appear from a superficial reading that the second part deals very much with love and the communicator in just the same way as the first part. But the recipient, the person to whom the love is directed is mentioned much more in the second than in the first part; mostly as the unreceptive, the unloving one, and so on. There does seem to be an emphasis on what the love of the communicator does to the recipient. Thus, it builds up love within him; it overcomes his wickedness by forgiveness and love, it shows mercy to him; it is there to receive him should he decide to respond; it seeks out the Good that is in him;

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.342
(2) Op. Cit. p.342
(3) Op. Cit. p.343

thinks the best, and so on. All of which things have an effect upon the subjectivity of the recipient, even if it is only the negative one of vanquishing in spite of every opposition. But of course all this has a much more decisive effect upon the subjectivity of the communicator, for it all goes to deepen and perfect his love and thus his subjectivity. The Christian communicator and the recipient of that communication are indissolubly linked together in love, even when the recipient is filled with resentment and hate, because nothing can make him escape from the love of the communicator which is changeless and extends to all men.

In the final analysis the recipient cannot be separated from the communicator, the one is necessary to the other. We cannot talk of a relationship between the two, but only of an inter-relationship. And even when there is unloving, hatred, opposition on the part of the recipient there is still a third Person in the dialogue - God. For He is there in relationship to the communicator. Indeed it is only by relating himself to God that the communicator can have any relationship in subjectivity to the recipient. Our relationship to the recipient depends upon what Kierkegaard calls: "<u>the Christian like-for-like, the like-for-like of the eternal</u>." And he goes on to explain: "Christianity turns attention completely away from the external, turns it inward, makes your every relationship to other human beings into a God-relationship. Therefore you shall receive sufficient like-for-like according to both the one and the other

understanding. Christianly understood one has ultimately and essentially to do with God in everything, although one must nevertheless remain in the world and in the relationships of earthly life allotted to him."(1) When the Christian forgives so is he forgiven.(2) It is with the Christian just as it would be with the imaginary case of a criminal who stole a hundred-dollar bill, and gave it to another criminal to get change. This second criminal swindled him out of it, so the first criminal took the matter to court and the second criminal was punished. But during the proceedings it transpired that the money had been stolen in the first place. So a second trial took place in which the first criminal was brought to justice. "So it is with respect to God", says Kierkegaard: "When before God you accuse another man, there straightway are two cases; simply because you come and report another man, God happens to think of how it involves you."(3) Kierkegaard puts it so well that I cannot forbear to quote one last passage from Works of Love. "How rigorous is this Christian like-for-like! The Jewish, the worldly, the activist like-for-like is: see to it that in the long run you do unto others what others do unto you. But the Christian like-for-like is: as you do unto others, God does unto you in the very same mode. Christianly understood you have absolutely nothing to do with what others do to you; it does not concern you; it is curiosity, an impertinence,

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.348
(2) Op. Cit. p.351
(3) Op. Cit. p.353

a lack of consciousness to mix into things which are no more your business than if you were absent. This world of inwardness, the new version of what other men call reality, this is reality. In this world of inwardness the Christian like-for-like is at home. It wants to turn you away from the external (but without taking you out of the world), upwards or inwards. For, Christianly understood, to love human beings is to love God and to love God is to love human beings; what you do unto men you do unto God, and therefore what you do unto men God does unto you."(1)

From all that has been said it is obvious that the only way in which the communication of subjectivity can be treated from the point of view of the recipient, is as a factor pertaining to the subjectivity of the communicator. This is the reason why in the second part of Works of Love, while the emphasis does seem to rest upon the recipient, yet the communicator is never very far away from Kierkegaard's thoughts.

Thus at last we are able to see how Kierkegaard answers the problem of the communication of subjectivity. Only through Christian love, which is the love of God to man as shown through Christ, can a person achieve subjectivity. By communicating this love to his neighbour, by giving forth his subjectivity as love, or in the form of love, to others, only so can he maintain his own subjectivity; only by

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Works of Love p.355

becoming the channel of God's love can he truly become himself. To communicate in the medium of Christian love is to achieve and maintain subjectivity, and to achieve and maintain subjectivity is to communicate in Christian love. Subjectivity is communication: communication is subjectivity.

CONCLUSION

This study has been devoted to following through the concepts of Communication and Subjectivity as they are to be found in the writings of Kierkegaard. It has been necessary first of all to see what is meant by Subjectivity; how Kierkegaard came to formulate the thesis: Subjectivity is Truth as a result of his criticism of Hegel; how this was worked out in ethico-religious categories, which proved to be unsatisfactory; and finally how it found its fulfilment in Christianity where the thesis was seen to be fully justified. Next we had to consider how this subjectivity was to be communicated. In the ethico-religious sphere the fact that everything lay within the boundaries of immanence meant that there could be no satisfactory answer to the problem. But in Christianity a new quality was introduced which successfully overcame the difficulty of communicating subjectivity. We saw how love is the communication of God to man, and how this worked out in relation to the God-man. When we come to the present day however, we find that Kierkegaard outlines two aspects in Christian communication: the direct aspect of preaching; and the indirect aspect of the communication of love between individual and individual. As this latter aspect has been largely ignored or missed by interpreters of Kierkegaard, it was necessary to deal with it at some length, showing how it is worked out in Works of Love.

But are we any nearer an answer to the problem of how Christianity is to be communicated in the present day? All we have seen is that there are to be found two distinct strands in the thought of Kierkegaard: the direct aspect of

preaching and so on, and the up-building power of Christian love between individual and individual, which is the indirect aspect of Christian communication. One might be tempted to think that here Kierkegaard was not too sure which one he preferred. The two strands of thought are unmistakably there. Which is the one that reveals the true Kierkegaard? We might be tempted, like Diem, to try to discover the "real Kierkegaard". Is it the Kierkegaard of Authority and Revelation, or the Kierkegaard of Works of Love? It might appear that we are left to choose between the two, and in any event whichever we choose would leave something out. If it is the indirect method of communication as outlined in Works of Love, where does preaching and the historical aspect of Christianity come in? If it is the direct authoritative preaching of the Word where does indirect communication come in? Are we meant to try to work the indirect communication, which belongs to the ethico-religious communication, somehow into the direct proclamation? Diem seems to think so,(1) and we must remember that when he spoke of indirect communication he was thinking of it as applied to the ethico-religious sphere. But although the Works of Love opens up to us a whole new approach to the indirect aspect of Christian communication, it does not seem as if we are any better off. It would seem as if the choice between the two aspects of Kierkegaard's thought was only more obvious.

---

(1) H. Diem Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence p.194

I believe that this is a completely mistaken way of considering the question. For the truth is, in the light of Kierkegaard's own handling of the problem, that both are essential for a full dialectic of Christian communication in the present day. Far from being opposed to one another, or expressing two different aspects of Kierkegaard, they are in fact complimentary. The one is essential to the other; the one is incomplete without the other. We cannot have a true communication of Christianity without the two together. The communication of Christianity requires, not one or other of these two aspects, but both of them. To my mind this is another example of what Kierkegaard means by "direct-indirect" in the Dialectic of Ethico-Religious Communication.(1) The direct and the indirect both play a part in the communication. I do not think that Kierkegaard means the two to be separated or rather opposed, or alternatives.

When we are considering how the two are related, then we must be careful to take into account what Christianity is as it is revealed in Christ. It is the Love of God whose sole aim is to receive love in return. This is God's communication to man, and salvation consists in accepting this love after recognizing that one is a sinner, which is a necessity for the salvation from and forgiveness of sins. And the objective of this communication, as we have said, is to get the recipient to love in return. This much might be apparent to anyone who was familiar with the Biblical

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer Volume VIII^{2}B. 89 p.190

accounts or in some way or another with the historical facts about Christ. This much is familiar from the teaching of the Church. This is the direct aspect of Christian communication which in one way or another is authoritatively proclaimed. Kierkegaard assumed that the vast majority of the people living in his day were already familiar with this direct aspect; the knowledge of the historical facts of Christianity, although perhaps the same could not be said today. But this introductory knowledge, for that is all it is, is all that can be given by these direct means. Nevertheless the individual must have this introductory knowledge, otherwise how is he to be made aware of God's love to him and his need for that love? But it is one thing to be intellectually in agreement with all this, but quite another to appropriate it. And the one does not automatically follow from the other. Kierkegaard assumed that Christendom knew the historical aspect, but the tragedy for him was that they did not go further and appropriate God's love. This is why he goes to such great lengths to explain what such appropriation signifies for the individual. It brings about the inward transformation which is fashioned by God's love. It also brings about, along with it and part of it, a communication to others - to all others, of this love.

How else is the individual to acquire this love which is the very essence of Christianity, but through the indirect influence of the love of other Christians upon him? When he has been convinced of sin, he is now in a condition (given by God) to receive the indirect communication of love from other Christians. He learns about the love of God in

Christ and desires to be free from his sin. He sees that the love of God is what he needs, for God has put the condition for accepting it within him. But this in itself is not enough; there must now also work within him the powerful indirect communication of love from other Christians, which builds up within him his own God-relationship. But in addition that which is being built up within him must find an outlet in the form of love on his part, otherwise it remains something which is purely immanent and ethico-religious. In this way he becomes part of the Body of Christ - the Christian community. This is my deduction, not Kierkegaard's.

Do we not here in fact have a scriptural view of the nature of the Church? Kierkegaard is often criticized for having done away with the Church and left nothing in its place. It is said that there is no view about the nature of the Church to be found in his thought, except negatively in criticism. But although he does not relate Christian love to any specific idea of the true Church, is not his picture of the love of Christians nourishing and sustaining one another, and also the world as a whole, which love is the love of God working in and through them, and which they in turn accord to Him, in truth a picture of the Community of Saints of the New Testament Church? This idea certainly does away with any concept of the Church as an institution, but it replaces it with something deeper and more in keeping with the New Testament. However this could constitute a special study in itself.

Now it may be asserted that there are many people who become Christian as the result of sudden conversion; through the impact of preaching or even the reading of the Bible. Where is the indirect aspect of Christian love here? Surely here is one example where the indirect aspect is not really necessary? This is precisely one of the things which Kierkegaard was against. To him this was to accord to Christianity aesthetic enthusiasm. The individual becomes enthusiastic in much the same way as he would about golf or some other hobby. We remind ourselves of what he has to say regarding confusing the Christian and the aesthetic in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript.(1) We must beware lest Christianity has not appeared to the recipient as: "a glittering somewhat".(2) There is nothing wrong about receiving a conviction from the preacher, when presented with the historical facts of Christianity, or with a description of one's position as a sinner; and there is nothing wrong with any aesthetic reaction to such a message. After all it is only a matter of knowledge as it is a direct communication, but this is only the beginning. Those who enthusiastically think that after such a conversion experience ~~that~~ now they are Christian are mistaken. According to Kierkegaard's view of the matter they have still to receive the basic communication of existence which is what Christianity is, through the indirect operation of Christian love.

---

(1) For Example S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript pp.352; 348; 388ff; 361

(2) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.249

Now we are not accustomed to thinking in these terms today any more than 100 years ago or more in Kierkegaard's day. We tend to think of people being converted by the direct proclamation of the Word, and perhaps, if we go a little deeper into it, becoming transformed by the love of God as a direct result of that preaching. We speak of coming to a knowledge of Christ - the phrase is significant, and we do not stop to consider the influence of the Love manifested through other Christians upon him. Although of course that community of Christians who love all men has been at work for some time; and who can tell the part they have to play in bringing others to the point of decision? In Kierkegaard's day, and today, the Christian community is simply not like that. There are only a few to whom the indirect aspect of Christian communication, that is to say Christian love, which is Christianity, has any meaning; and who are therefore communicating Christianity in truth. To the vast majority Christianity means the historical aspect of our faith: both Jesus of Nazareth, as a Figure idealized and objectivized, and the Church as an historical institution, idealized and objectivized.

Kierkegaard's plea is that this historical aspect - this direct aspect - is not enough. He is constantly speaking about the lack of Christianity in Christendom. What is needed in addition to the direct aspect which is already familiar to everyone, is the indirect operation of Christian love. We have only to read his articles in The Instant now translated under the title Attack upon Christendom to see that he did not consider that Christianity was being

properly communicated in the present day. The same theme is constantly recurring throughout his writings.

However we must not forget that Kierkegaard considered that the direct aspect did have a definite part to play. As he says: "There is a moment of Knowledge and, as far as it goes, an object. But it is only a beginning. The communication is surely not essentially of knowledge but a communication of ability. That there is a moment of knowledge applies in relation to the Christian, which must for the time being be communication as a knowledge of Christianity. But it is only a stop-gap."(1)

Now Kierkegaard was not naive enough to think that the direct-indirect communication of Christianity should be thought of as invariably taking place through one individual. It could come from the same source, where a preacher of the direct historical aspect also communicated the indirect aspect of Christian love through his own personal attestation of it in his life, but this does not always happen. According to Kierkegaard's own argument if the majority of people today were to receive a full communication of Christianity, it would be this indirect communication which would have to take place, for they have already been made aware of the direct aspect through upbringing or some other means. It would be highly unlikely therefore that they would also receive the indirect impact of love from the same source, as in all probability they will be separated by many years. But

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Papirer Volume VIII^{2}B 85^{29} p.167

anyhow, to assume that the two must always emanate from the same source is to say that all who receive Christianity (which is love) and therefore because of that become communicators of it, must also proclaim it directly. But this is obviously not the case, and Kierkegaard would not support such a view. The direct proclaimation can be received from one source while the indirect may come from another, or even many others. Obviously it ought to be the case that in Christendom the one who preaches must also be a Christian, that is to say, filled with Christian love, or the love of God. But as a communication of knowledge it could just as well be given by an atheist. More often than not the direct and the indirect aspects come from different sources, although they could come from the same source. I believe that Kierkegaard recognizes that the two sources need not be the same by not identifying both direct and indirect with one and the same communicator. And this is one reason why there is apt to be confusion as to his meaning among Kierkegaard commentators.

We must conclude that Kierkegaard is perfectly consistent with regard to both communication and subjectivity in his writings. There are no contradictions or second thoughts about them. We have seen from the present study that it is possible to work out a perfectly consistent dialectic of both communication and subjectivity from an examination of his writings as a whole. The problems which they both raise can only be answered in the way that Kierkegaard answers them, and his answers very precisely meet the requirements of the problems which are

produced. The thesis: Subjectivity is Truth, can only find its fulfilment and final validity in Christianity. True subjectivity is a gift from God in Christ: indeed it is the love of God. But it is of the very esse of Christian love to communicate to all men. In order that there may be true subjectivity there must also be this communication. There must of necessity be a relationship of love between the Christian and his neighbour in order that the thesis: Subjectivity is Truth should be vindicated from the point of view of the Christian. What we learn about Christian love and its bearing on communication in the Works of Love is almost the culmination of Kierkegaard's argument. It is the king-pin upon which the validity of his whole thesis hinges. If we do not take Works of Love into consideration in any examination of Kierkegaard's thought on communication or subjectivity then we can only end up in a dilemma, because we have left out a vital part in the whole jig-saw puzzle (if I may put it thus). To be a Christian is to communicate. He who has attained subjectivity through being filled with Christian love, eo ipso communicates. As Kierkegaard says: "...Christianity is an existence-communication."(1) That is to say, it is at the same time existence par excellence and the communication of that existence. In Christianity a qualification of both communication and subjectivity takes place in which they both become complimentary aspects of the same thing, namely, Christian love. In Christianity to communicate is of the essence of subjectivity and subjectivity is of the essence of communication. They become synonymous.

---

(1) S. Kierkegaard Concluding Unscientific Postscript p.497

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Danish and Swedish

Søren Kierkegaard, Samlede Vaerker, 20 vols., ed. A.B. Drachman, J.L. Heiberg, and H.O. Lange. Gyldendal, København, 1962.

Søren Kierkegaard, Papirer, 20 vols., ed. P.A. Heiberg, V. Khur, and E. Forsting. Gyldendalske Boghandel Nordisk Forlag, 1909 ff.

Frithiof Brandt, Søren Kierkegaard. Natur och Kultur, Världsförfattare, Stockholm, 1955.

Villads Christensen, Søren Kierkegaard's Vej til Kristendommen, Munksgaards Forlag, København, 1955.

Villads Christensen, Søren Kierkegaard's Motiver til Kirkekampen, Munksgaards Forlag, Kobenhavn, 1959.

Eduard Geismar, Søren Kierkegaard. Hans Livsudvikling og Forfattervirksomhed, 6 vols., G.E.C. Gads Forlag, København, 1927.

Søren Holm, Søren Kierkegaard's Historiefilosofi, Bianco Lunos, Bogtrykkeri, København, 1952.

F.J. Billeskov Jansen, Hvordan Skal vi Studere Søren Kierkegaard, Ejnar Munksgaard, København, 1952.

Peter P. Rhode, Søren Kierkegaard. Et Geni i en Købstad, Gyldendal, København, 1962.

N.H. Søe, Subjektiviteten er Sanheden, Ejnar Munksgaard, København, 1952.

Periodical, Kierkegaardiana, Vol. III, Udgive af Søren Kierkegaard Selskabet, Munksgaard, København, 1959.

French

Jean Wahl, Etudes Kierkegaardiennes, Philosophie de l'Esprit, Fernand Aubier, Paris, 1938.

English

Søren Kierkegaard, Either/Or, 2 vols., vol. 1 trans. D. and L. Swenson, vol. 2 trans. Walter Lowrie, Oxford University Press, 1946.

Søren Kierkegaard, Repetition, trans. Walter Lowrie, Oxford University Press, 1942.

Søren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, trans. Walter Lowrie, Oxford University Press, 1944.

Søren Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, trans. D. Swenson, Princeton, 1936 (7th printing 1958).

Søren Kierkegaard, Concept of Dread, trans. Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, 1944.

Søren Kierkegaard, Stages on Life's Way, trans. Walter Lowrie, Oxford University Press, 1945.

Søren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, trans. David Swenson and Walter Lowrie, Oxford University Press, 1945.

Søren Kierkegaard, On Authority and Revelation, trans. Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, 1955.

Søren Kierkegaard, The Works of Love, trans. Howard and Edna Hong, Collins, 1962.

Søren Kierkegaard, Christian Discourses, trans. Walter Lowrie, Oxford University Press, 1939.

Søren Kierkegaard, The Point of View Etc., trans. Walter Lowrie, Oxford University Press, 1939.

Søren Kierkegaard, Sickness unto Death, trans. Walter Lowrie, Oxford University Press, 1941.

Søren Kierkegaard, Training in Christianity, trans. Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, reprinted 1957.

Søren Kierkegaard, For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourselves, trans. Walter Lowrie, Oxford University Press, 1941.

Søren Kierkegaard, Attack upon Christendom, trans. Walter Lowrie, Oxford University Press, 1946.

Søren Kierkegaard, De Omnibus Dubitandum Est, trans. T.H. Croxhall, A. & C. Black Ltd., 1958.

Søren Kierkegaard, Gospel of Sufferings, trans. A.S. Aldworth and W.S. Ferrie, James Clarke & Co.Ltd., 1955.

Søren Kierkegaard, The Present Age, trans. Alexander Dru, Collins, Fontana Library, 1962.

Søren Kierkegaard, Edifying Discourses, trans. D. and L. Swenson, Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1943.

E.L. Allen, Kierkegaard, Stanley Mott, 1935.

Chambers's Encyclopaedia, Vol. IV, George Newnes Ltd., 1950.

David Cairns, The Image of God in Man, S.C.M. Press

A.C. Craig, Preaching in a Scientific Age, S.C.M. Press, 1954.

T.H. Croxall, Kierkegaard Commentary, James Nisbet & Co., Ltd., London, 1956.

Hermann Diem, Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence, trans. Harold Knight, Oliver and Boyd, 1959.

Louis Dupre, Kierkegaard as Theologian, Sheed and Ward, 1964.

Jose Ortega y Gasset, The Revolt of the Masses, trans. anonymous, Allen and Unwin, 1951.

Jose Ortega y Gasset, Man and Crisis, trans. Mildred Adams, Allen and Unwin, 1958.

Jose Ortega y Gasset, Man and People, trans. Willard R. Trask, Allen and Unwin, 1957.

John Kenneth Galbraith, The Affluent Society, Hamish Hamilton, 1958.

Eduard Geismar, Lectures on the Religious Thought of Søren Kierkegaard, Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1938.

Theodore Haecker, Søren Kierkegaard, trans. Alexander Dru, Oxford University Press, 1937.

Theodore Haecker, Kierkegaard the Cripple, trans. C. Van O.Bruyn, The Harvill Press, 1948.

G.W.F. Hegel, The Science of Logic, 2 vols., trans. W.H. Johnson and L.G. Struthers, Allen and Unwin, 1929.

G.W.F. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, trans. E.B. Speirs and J. Burdon Sanderson, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.Ltd., 1895.

Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy, Chatto and Windus (Penguin Edition), 1958.

Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, S.C.M. Press, 1962.

Kerl Jaspers, Reason and Existenz, trans. William Earle, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956.

Howard A. Johnson and Niels Thulstrup (Editors), A Kierkegaard Critique, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1962.

R. Jolivet, Introduction to Kierkegaard, trans. W.H. Barber, Frederick Muller Ltd., 1950.

D. Lamont, Christ and the World of Thought, T. & T. Clark, 1935.

W. Lowrie, Kierkegaard, Oxford University Press, 1938.

John M'Intyre, On the Love of God, Collins, 1962.

John Macquarrie, The Scope of Demythologizing, S.C.M. Press, 1960.

H.R. MacKintosh, Types of Modern Theology, Nisbet & Co., reprinted 1945.

Schubert M. Ogden, Christ without Myth, Collins, 1962.

Vance Packhard, The Hidden Persuaders, Longmans Green (Penguin Special), 1960.

Denzil G.M. Patrick, Pascal and Kierkegaard, Vol. II, Lutterworth Press, 1947.

George Price, The Narrow Pass, Hutchinson & Co.Ltd., 1963.

David H.C. Read, The Communication of the Gospel, S.C.M. Press, 1952.

David E. Roberts, Existentialism and Religious Belief, Oxford University Press, 1957.

David F. Swenson, Something about Kierkegaard, Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 4th printing, 1956.

J. Heywood Thomas, Subjectivity and Paradox, Blackwell, 1957.

Reidar Thomte, Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion, Princeton University Press, 1948.

Charles West, Communism and the Theologians, S.C.M. Press, 1958.