In response to MacIntyre, I have argued that the process of "choice" by which one moves from aesthetic to ethical orientations or ways of life consists in personal appropriation of ethical standards through identity-defining commitments that depend on already-recognized ethical ideals: the individual who "chooses" the ethical does not posit to create the authority of ethical norms. Since Kierkegaard After MacIntyre, few scholars still hold that Either/Or portrays the movement from the aesthetic to the ethical stage as an arbitrary radical choice; but proto-Sartrean readings of Kierkegaardian faith remain popular. In this essay I extend my anti-irrationalist interpretation of the ethical to Kierkegaardian faith. I hold that understanding "the religious" in all of Kierkegaard's thought depends on grasping the central idea in Fear and Trembling, without which the Fragments and the Postscript cannot be properly interpreted (though some think we can work back from these later texts to a reading of Fear and Trembling). However, as we will see, there are two quite different approaches to showing that the "theological suspension of the ethical" in Søren Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling is not simply irrational, and I will develop the alternative already outlined in Alastair Hannay's book Kierkegaard and Edward Myer's classic commentary on Fear and Trembling, as well as in his reading of Repetition. In his critique of Fear and Trembling, MacIntyre has largely been alone. For at least half a century since Kierkegaard got into English (as Walter Lowere put it), undergraduates have been taught that Fear and Trembling presents faith as rejecting all natural knowledge and reason in favor of divine commands that can have no content or abrogates any ethical principle with purported universal application. The Danish existentialists, they were told, recommends total obedience to a God who demands our allegiance to his own inescapable authority. This venerable tradition of portraying Kierkegaard as an absolute theologul voluntarist is well represented by Brand Blanshard, who complains that in Fear and Trembling, religious obligation transcends Kantian universal judgment: it may be our duty "to trample down the affections of natural man and all his nicely calculated goods and evils." In acting to sacrifice Isaac, Blanshard says, the only motive Abraham could have is "the command from on high to kill," since "every human consideration" could only provide motives not to commit such a heinous crime. So Abraham "was called upon to renounce the moral for the religious." It is hard to overstate the violence done by this popular portrayal, which reduces Kierkegaardian faith to blind fanaticism. The situation is not helped by some postmodern fans of Fear and Trembling who embrace this misunderstand and celebrate the alleged irrationalism of Kierkegaardian faith as an early forerunner of anti-universalist positions in contemporary alterity ethics. John Caputo, for instance, tells us that "Abraham is the father of all those who dare to raise their voice against ethics," meaning against any theory of moral norms involving rational grounds and universality tests. So understood, Abraham
is not really rejecting the kind of infinite responsibility for singular others that Levinas proposes; he is only suspending the fine line of universality in the name of heterogeneity and incommensurability. Thus Kierkegaard, or at least Silinoti, is used to support a radically antitheological version of agnostic ethics. But the teleological suspension of the ethical in Fear and Trembling is just primarily about substituting an ethics of alterity, or any other ethics, for a rationalistic ethics of universal norms or natural law. Both Kierkegaard's traditional knockers and his postmodern tinderboxes misconstrue the function of divine commands in Kierkegaard's conception of religion and in Silinot's version of the Akedah in particular. They entirely obscure the main point of Fear and Trembling, which is to present the essence of "faith" as eschatological trust. As will become clear, I use "eschatology" here in a broad sense that abstracts from the differences among religious creeds concerning salvation, "last things," or the hereafter. Drawing on a comparative analysis of eschatological hope as the distinguishing feature of revealed religion in general, my inclusive sense of eschatological hope does not Christianize Abraham, nor take his significance in Fear and Trembling to be only an anagogical anticipation of Christian religiousness.

This is important, because contemporary Jewish commentators on the Akedah narrative often assume that Kierkegaard is defending the strongest kind of theological voluntarism, which they reject again. For example, Louis Jacobs notes Kierkegaard's "ethical attack on the Danish thinker's interpretation of the Akedah," in which "Steinberg ... expressly declares that there is nothing in Judaism to correspond to Kierkegaard's teleological suspension of the ethical." Jacobs himself argues that there are "three different attitudes" to the Akedah in Jewish thought: the first emphasizing the "happy ending," the second emphasizing the "original command," and the third dwelling on both these aspects. He aligns the teaching of Fear and Trembling with the second of these three approaches.

This view, very close to Kierkegaard's attitude, can imagine God commanding Abraham to kill his son. True, the order is evoked at the last moment, but the point has been made, nonetheless: that, in Kierkegaard's terminology, there can be, so far as the "knights of faith" is concerned, a "teleological suspension of the ethical." 

In this passage Jacobs clearly follows the prevailing view that the "teleological suspension" in the first Problem refers to overruling objective ethical norms for the sake of obedience to singular divine commands as the absolute telos. On this reading, obedience to God as the highest end is totally independent of the surprising reversal when God stops Abraham just as he raises the knife: the reprieve is reduced to a pleasant afterthought that plays no essential role in the structure of faith for Kierkegaard.

On the contrary, I argue that Kierkegaard meant to present the Akedah according to the first of Jacob's three attitudes, emphasizing that Abraham's abstinence depends on Isaac being spared. In my view, Silinoti's understanding of "faith" does not include the belief that God's commanding X makes X right, no matter what X is—a belief that is incompatible with most Jewish readings of Genesis and probably with Kierkegaard's own teaching in Works of Love that one must have outward expressions. Rather, the telos toward which the ethical is suspended in Kierkegaardian faith is the promised eschatological outcome in which the highest ethical norms will be fulfilled by an Absolute power that transcends human capacities and promises to actualize goods otherwise accessible to human beings only as ideal forms in Platonic eternity. At the beginning of Problem I, Silinoti clearly identifies a person's highest telos with his "eternal salvation" (S4), which is an eschatological concept, and his goal is to argue that such an eschatological telos cannot be reduced to "the ethical," as Hegel's system implies. As we will see, this eschatological reading retains an important role for divine commands. But if absolute reliance on God's eschatological promise is the essence of faith, then faith is possible only in relation to ethical ideals that are not rejected in favor of some other standard, but rather preserved within and complemented by religious hope. The argument for this interpretation begins with the eschatological element in the Akedah narrative. In section III, it is followed by a detailed critique of "higher ethical" interpretations of Kierkegaardian faith, which are currently the most well-known and respected ways of answering the irrationalist charge. In section IV, the problems found in these readings are avoided by the eschatological explanation of the "teleological suspension" and the "absolute relation to the absolute." This alternative account depends on a clear understanding of "infinite resignation," on which there is even more serious confusion in recent scholarship as explained in section V. The essay concludes with above-used remarks on the motivational and epistemic role of divine commands in existential faith.

The Absurd, Eschatological Possibility, and Eucatastrophe

Expecancy
In his first edifying discourse on "The Expectancy of Faith," Kierkegaard argues (in his own name) that faith as the highest good is a kind of "expectancy," employing our innate capacity to find meaning in the future. In particular, faith requires that we "conquer" the future. But this seems impossible because "the future is everything," and in its manifoldness of open possibilities, "the future is not a particular, but the whole." Moreover, since the future burrows its
meanings in part from the being who would conquer it, it cannot be conquered by her predictions, since "fear accompanies guessing, anxiety conjecture, and uneasiness (companions) inference." Yet despite the apparent impossibility of calculating the future, "by the eternal, one can conquer the future, because the eternal is the ground of the future." It is in relation to the eternal, therefore, that faith is defined:

What, then, is the eternal power in a human being? It is faith. What is the expectancy of faith? Victory—or, as Scripture so earnestly and so movingly teaches us, that all things must serve for good those who love God. But an expectancy of the future that expects victory—this has indeed conquered the future. Expectancy, then, is hopeful trust in a kind of victory. In a later edifying discourse on "Patience in Expectancy," Kierkegaard clarifies that religious expectancy is not hope for this or that contingent particular fortune, but rather a lifelong trust in "the eternal, which is waiting every moment and at the end of time." In short, the expectancy of faith is eschatological, in the broad sense of believing in the final vindication of ethical goodness by divine power and intervention. Different historical religions teach hope for different types of ultimate salvation: for example, individual escape from time via death without reincarnation (Nirvana), or a cosmic conclusion of time as a whole (returning us to a timeless/eternal state), or a final renewal and perfection of the physical cosmos itself, beginning a new temporal series. In the latter terms, eschatological faith looks forward to a time when ethical ideals will be realized in the concrete reality of the created universe. In Kierkegaardian terms, we might call this a kind of synthesis of the ethical and the aesthetic, since it is imagined either as occurring in time or at the beginning of a new time.

"Trust in expectancy" is also how Abraham's faith in God's promise is described (19). Yet in Christian, Islamic, or Norse contexts, "eschatology" is associated with last battles and final judgment, whereas God's promise to Abraham (before Isaac is born) is not that he will be judged and will suffer (or he will be saved) but that the world will be renewed in a cosmic apocalypse. Thus, to recognize the eschatological significance of the Abraham, we have to consider the diverse forms of eschatological victory taught in world religions and the general structure of eschatological hope underlying all these forms: namely, trust in the ultimate accomplishment of the Good by divine power. Kierkegaard sees that the story in Genesis fits this general pattern: God's promise to Abraham is "that in his seed all the generations of the earth would be blessed." (17). Through his son Abraham will become the father of a great nation, which will bring knowledge of the true God to all peoples. The fulfillment of this promise begins in the miracle of Isaac's birth, and it waits in the background when God seems to contradict himself by commanding Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. This divine promise is the reason why

During this time he had faith, he had faith that God would not demand Isaac of him, and yet he was willing to sacrifice him if it was demanded. He had faith by virtue of the absurd, for human calculation was out of the question. He climbed the mountain, and even in the moment when the knife gleamed, he had faith—that God would not require Isaac. No doubt he was surprised in the outcome, but through a double movement, he had sustained his faith condition. (25-26)

This is the most important passage in Fear and Trembling: it shows that Abraham's "faith" consists in his firm conviction that God's revealed promise will be fulfilled: even if Isaac is sacrificed, somehow he will still live and have children leading to a great nation chosen for God's plan. As Sileno says, Abraham's faith does not depend on any calculation of how this could be: he is hardly expecting a son to be substituted for Isaac at the last moment. If he had killed Isaac on Mount Moriah, Abraham would still have trusted that what God promised would somehow come true in time. "He did not have faith that he would be blessed in a future life, but that he would be blessed here in the world. God could give him a new Isaac, could restore to life the one sacrificed. He had faith by virtue of the absurd, for all human calculation was false." 

Because of his faith in God's original promise to him, Abraham does not believe that sacrificing Isaac on Mount Moriah would change anything. He believed in God's promise and knew that if he sacrificed Isaac, he would be blessed in the world. "In this clearly entails that Abraham believes he can sacrifice Isaac without murdering him." This paradox depends on trust that God's promise is true, even when God's own later command mysteriously tempted him to doubt it. Sileno's efforts to distinguish Abraham from various inferior substitutes in other possible versions of the story are designed precisely to clarify this point (10-14).

The Structure of Eschatological Possibility

Kierkegaard recognizes that even though the content of Abraham's faith (the promise in which he believes) does not refer to a new life in a world to come, it performs the same eschatological functions that true salvation beyond death does for Christians. These faiths share a compound intentional content, which has two main parts:

(a) The future state—ultimate cessation, or final end is a victory of the good, an actualization in finite/temporal existence of the infinite/eternal ideal: the created order of existence converges with what ethically ought to be.

Sileno calls this upon-point "the fullness of time" (18), and the "fulfillment of faith" in the divine promise (19).

(b) (i) Given various kinds of obstacles in their way, the relevant human agents can see no way of bringing about this victory by their own powers.
(2) Nevertheless, it is possible in an inescapable way by divine power.

by 'miracle' transcending any rational prediction.10

Hannay grasps the negative half (h) of this second condition in his explanation of "the absurd," which means not logically impossible but something like "humanly impossible." The other half (b) is the positive content of being 'divinely possible.' This idea is emphasized throughout all Kierkegaard's later works, as in the discourses on expectancy. For example, in Sickness unto Death, Anti-Climacus argues that "authentic hope is not based on human powers, but rather on the idea that God, everyday, is possible."11 Thus the element of radical surprise, even for the faithful agent who believes that in the fullness of time, ethical victory will come true. As Anti-Climacus puts it, "unexpectably, miraculously, divinely, helps do come," and is not the merely humanly possible: "divinely possible." Thus, both conditions (a) and (b) are clarified in the long and justly famous analogy between Abraham and the "young lad who falls in love with a princess."12 Although the lad's passion could be read as simply aesthetic, I read it in light of Judge William's treatment of marriage in Either/Or as a social role exhibiting both proto-virtues of resolution and virtues of love. In Fear and Trembling, the young man's love is more than merely erotic; it becomes "the entire substance of his life." It is a passion that he wholeheartedly endorses with all his will, his central self-defining commitment. This makes it a good analogy for Abraham's parental love for Isaac: both are a resolve volitional commitment and a fulfillment of the universal moral norm that "the father shall love the son more than himself."13 Similarly, while God's pernicious test makes it "humanly" impossible (in Hannay's sense) for Abraham to keep Isaac, society and circumstance make it "humanly" impossible for the young lad to marry his princess. The test is such that it cannot possibly be realized (by the agent's power), "absurd" to be realized from no further and more positive construction. Yet Silentio clearly states that in this tale, marrying the princess is an "absurd" possibility, the very term chosen to indicate how ethiological possibility must appear to those without faith. To understand why the young lad's hope is like ethiological trust, we must extend the motif referred to by the phrase, "in the end," to any narrative turning point with the qualities (a) and (b) above. In other words, when a story ends with an ethical victory made possible only by grace, that story has an ethiological quality: it repeats the pattern that distinguishes all ethiological narratives. In this broad sense, then, mythological stories and fairy tales often have ethiological overtones.

Tolkien on Ecucatastrophe

We can illuminate this point by turning briefly to J. R. R. Tolkien, the twentieth-century author of The Lord of the Rings, in Kierkegaard would have found a kindred spirit. In his highly significant essay "On Fairy-Stories,"14 which philosophers of religion have unfortunately ignored, Tolkien argues that among many reasons for a good fairy tale, the most important is a distinctive sort of "happy ending" that even for adult readers who know the genre, "creates genuine surprise, unexpected joy, and a poignant sense of gratitude." The special kind of happy ending that marks genuine fairy stories in not resentment-filled revenge nor spurious triumph, but rather a miraculous reprieve, beyond all hope, in the midst of apparent disaster. Tolkien describes this kind of happy ending, as a "catastrophe."
Tragedy is the true form of Oedipus. Its highest function, but the opposite is true of Fairy-stories. Since we do not appear to possess a word that expresses this opposite, I will call it Eucatastrophe. The Eucatastrophe is the true form of Fairy-tale, and is its highest function. The consolation of Fairy-stories, the joy of the happy ending, or more correctly, the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous turn (for there is no true end to any fairytale), this joy, which is one of the things which fairy-stories can produce supremely well, is not essentially 'escapist' or 'fugitive'. In its Fairy-tale or otherworld setting, it is a sudden and miraculous grace, never to be counted on to recur. It does not deny the existence of a catastrophe, of sorrow and failure; the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance. It denies the face of much evil, if you will, universal final defeat, and in so far is evangelical, giving a fleeting glimpse of joy, joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief.

The sudden 'turning' or unexpected deliverance in an eucatastrophic happy ending suggests the working of a hidden power that makes possible an indispen-
sable, that no human agency could bring about. Thus the eucatastrophic 'turn' in a good fairy story gets its poignance from its indirect eschatological significance. In a narrative like Gawain and the Green Knight or the Lord of the Rings, when Gawain is spared or Gollum falls in the fire with the One Ring, we sense the hand of the divine, although no angel appears to announce the divine will.

It is easy to see that Kierkegaard's talk of the young lad to love would count as a fairy story in Tolkien's sense if, for example, the lad were suddenly discovered to be a prince and brought to court to marry his princess. A knight of faith trusts precisely in such a eucatastrophe, by virtue of the absurd. "Nevertheless... I... I... I... I... I... I... I... I... I..." Tolkien suggests that the 'turning' moment of grace in a good fairy tale is experienced as poignant because it includes a double-move- ment: tragic recognition of the evil and imperfection of our world is consoled in a joy that transcends the sorrow of time and chance. In this sense Tolkien says, "The Gospels contain a fairy-story, or a story of a larger kind which embraces the essence of all fairy-stories." For Tolkien regards the Resurrection as the paradigm of all eucatastrophes. Similarly, Kierkegaard regards the Incarna-
tion of the God-man as the eucatastrophic fulfillment of prophecy. "Then came the fullness of time: the expected one, whom the kings of the east came to worship, was born, even though he was born in an inn and laid in a manger."

This birth is the fulfillment of faith for Anne, the expectant witness in whom the faith of the patriarchs is represented at the Temple. But there are two important differences between fairy tales in Tolkien's sense and religious narratives. On the latter, (1) the eucatastrophe occurs or will occur in primary reality—in our world—rather than in the 'subcreated' fantasy world, and (2) the eucatastrophe fulfills a promise that comes directly from God or His holy agents. Thus a religious narrative has direct eschatological signifi-
cance: the good to come in "the fullness of time" is promised in revelation and embraced by the faithful servant as ultimate assurance of life's meaning, the foundation of the trust that makes continued ethical striving possible without despair. In a fairy tale, the possibility of eschatological hope is only hinted indi-
directly in the eucatastrophe.

Just as Tolkien's definition of a fairy story applies to Tolkien's tale of the young lad, my definition of an eschatological narrative (the religious analogue of a fairy story) applies to the Akedah as portrayed in Fear and Trembling. In this story of Abraham, the minor eucatastrophe of Isaac's conception and birth is followed in time by the major eucatastrophe: God sends His angel to stay Abraham's hand as he raises the knife, and then He sends the ram to replace Isaac (and along with this ram, implicitly, the message that human sacrifice is now forever forbidden). This emancipation is both a stunning vindication of ethical ideals and an astonishing reprieve—a "turn" that is completely unanticipatable by any human calculation. Isaac is spared, passed over, much as the nation he fathers is later preserved in the great Passover and the eucatastrophe at the Red Sea in Exodus. In such moments of extraordinary gratitude, we have the feeling of being touched directly by divine love, of having our deepest hopes required by grace.

Existentiai Faith

Thus the emancipation of Isaac, rather than the binding of Isaac, is the key to the story in Silencio's account. "Fait..." in Kierkegaard's special sense can be de-
ined as trust in an eschatological promise whose fulfillment will be an ethical eucatastrophe. This fits well with Kierkegaard's discourses on the expectancy of faith: the faithful agent depends on a possibility of a new kind, entirely different from the types of possibilities pursued in science. Tolkien suggests that the 'turning' moment of grace in a future. Likewise, in his "Euchristology on Abraham's greatness can be measured by its "expectancy." "One became great by expect-
ing the possible, another by expecting the eternal: but he who expected the impossible became the greatest of all." (16). As we saw earlier, the "impossible" here does not mean the logically or rationally impossible, but rather that which cannot be brought about by the protagonist's agency, which is also the meaning of the "abused." "Eucharist ends with the good, the God-man who has doubted as he stood there on Mount Moriah" and had been given the ram before he drew the knife, and then his "deliverance" would have been an accident. (22) He would have failed to conquer the future with the only thing that can conquer it: that is, faith in "the absurd"—which in his case means that Isaac would endure to father a great nation even though he has to be sacrificed.

Thus Edward Mooney was exactly right to talk of a "fabricated" narrative: in the latter, (1) the eucatastrophe occurs or will occur in primary reality—in our world—rather than in the 'subcreated' fantasy world, and (2) the eucatastrophe fulfills a promise that comes directly from God or His holy agents. Thus a religious narrative has direct eschatological signifi-
cance: the good to come in "the fullness of time" is promised in revelation and
within the earlier grief of resignation. The faithful agent goes through the painful loss of reliance on his own powers or "proprietor claims" over the object of his devotion; yet maintains his care for the object in readiness to receive it back from God. This also implies, as Hanny says, that "faith" in Kierkegaard's sense is much more than mere belief in the existence of God, of which knights of infinite resignation are also capable: faith is trust that the eternally ideal outcome "is possible even if humanity is not possible." As a kind of trust, faith is a practical rather than merely domestic attitude: the agent does not simply assert the ideas expressed in (a) and (b) as propositions, but stakes the meaning of his life on them.

A Critique of Three Higher-Ethics Interpretations of the Teleological Suspension

As these comparisons suggest, my eschatological reading of Fear and Trembling clarifies and supports ideas concerning Kierkegaardian faith already proposed by others, including not only Mooney and Hanny, but also C. Stephen Evans, Ronald Green, John Lippitt, and John Whitaker, who have all criticized irrationalist readings of Fear and Trembling. Hanny argues that the thesis of Abraham's faith is a resolution that will restore ethically right relationships within the world of finitude: "the faith, he is to prove is that, in the end, he will not be deprived of Isaac even if he carries out God's command to kill him." Abraham's motive depends on his reliance on such a miraculous reprieve beyond mortal hope (based on human powers), a reprieve that is impossible by our agency, yet eschatologically possible. This is an anticipated apocalyptic turning within history, not merely in the next life or the cosmic end of time: for, as Hanny says, "in the end does not include 'in the hereafter'" for Abraham. Whitaker agrees: "Kierkegaard makes it clear that Abraham's faith does not consist in the willingness to sacrifice Isaac, but in the belief that he will somehow get Isaac back." What distinguishes the Akedah from other eschatological stories is the unusual nature of the element that makes fulfillment of the divine promise absurd, or inaccessible to human power and reason. All eschatological and cataclysmic narratives have at least one such element, which we may call the obstacle that the relevant human agents lack the power to overcome. This element is part of condition (a) above, and it is the reason for resignation. In fairy tales, the obstacle usually consists in some set of natural or social circumstances that place the goal out of reach. In Hindu stories, the obstacle may be the temporal world understood as someplace or the world of appearances. In Christianity, the primary obstacle may be sin or the will's inability to free itself from sin. But in the Akedah, the obstacle that makes it humanly impossible to keep Isaac and to save Isaac's posterity is none other than God's own command to sacrifice Isaac. This is why in his journals, Kierkegaard points out that the terrifying element of Abraham's predicament is "that it is not a collision between God's command and man's command, but between God's command and God's command." For God also commands Abraham to love Isaac and to trust in His original promise; so demanding Isaac's life appears as an obstacle both to his human duty and to his reliance on God's promise that a holy nation of descendants will come from Isaac.

Three Versions of Higher Ethics

This special complication in Abraham's case is the root of irrationalist misunderstandings of Fear and Trembling: they focus primarily on the obstacle and assume that accepting or bowing to this obstacle is what Kierkegaard means by faith. Thus they take "faith" in Problem I to mean that Abraham puts aside his lower duty to Isaac (or to human laws) in order to fulfill his higher duty to obey God's command, which they usually assume is identical with the "Absolute Duty to God" discussed in Problem II (70). According to standard irrationalist readings like MacIntyre's or Blaauw's, the revealed ethical calling that trumps secular or humanistic ethics in the "teleological suspension" is what I will call "Strong Divine Command" ethics (SDC): God's power or status as creator is the sole ontological source of right or moral obligation. According to this kind of absolute teleological voluntarism, God's commanding X is necessary and sufficient for X to be obligatory, and God can command anything (even murder).

SDC must be distinguished from two other ways of construing the "teleological suspension" as a movement from a cultural or innate ethics to a higher kind of obligation that transcends all custom and natural law in its authority and/or metaphysical priority. These alternatives to SDC include a more nuanced apocalyptic command ethics (ACE), which regards our highest obligations as deriving from the commands of a living God; and what I will call asecular ethics (AVE), which rejects any universal rules and allows only singular phronetic responses to unique situations. Like the eschatological interpretation, ACE and ALE readings try to avoid the irrationalism of SDC, but unlike the eschatological interpretation, they agree with SDC that for Kierkegaard, religious faith is primarily distinguished by a higher ethical attitude. Table 5.1 summarizes the relationship between the four main alternatives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readings of Fear and Trembling</th>
<th>Irrationalist</th>
<th>Anti-Irrationalist</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher-ethical readings</td>
<td>SDC reading</td>
<td>ACE and ALE readings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith irreducible to higher ethics</td>
<td>Ecological Interpretation</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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The ACE approach has been rigorously developed in Steven Evans's argument that Kierkegaard "combines a divine command theory" of obligations with "a teleological view of human nature." On this view, Abraham has reason to obey God's commands because he trusts "in God's love and goodness." To view moral obligations as divine commands is to believe that those commands
are directed towards good and loving ends, and not bad ends," so an obedient Abraham would think that "God has a plan that will lead to a good end" even if we cannot understand it. A similar ACE reading is given by Merold Westphal, who argues the teleological suspension of the ethical is only completed in the agnostic ethics of "Religiousness C." 33

The ALE approach comes in several versions, found mostly in recent continental thought. One variety is the radically anti-theoretical alterity ethics reading attributed to Caputo above. A slightly older version is found in Jerome Gillman's reading of the teleological suspension as defining a kind of proto-Sartrean individualistic ethic. 34 The mildest version, which is more plausibly attributed to Kierkegaard, is inspired by themes in the revival of virtue ethics, such as Bernard Williams's argument that moral theorists focusing on impartial principles abstract from individual character and identities and give insufficient ethical weight to personal life-projects. This is Edward Mooney's aetical conception of ethical responsiveness as including awareness of dilemmas, sensitivity to the uniqueness of individuals, and wholistic evaluation of concrete circumstances. 35 Although Mooney emphasizes the subjective dimension of personal appropriation, phenomena, and character, his higher ethic is hardly "subjectivist," since he follows Charles Taylor in holding that the significance of choice requires discoverable values. 36 But Mooney's aetical ethic is also not "universalist" in one sense of that polyvalent term: it is not formalist or algorithmic, since it does not expect moral ideals to give us decision procedures. Mooney's existential virtue ethic is similar in many respects to the divine command version of agnostic ethics developed by Evans and Westphal.

Is Only Hegelian Ethics "Suspected?"

I emphatically agree with Mooney, Westphal, and Evans that such an agnostic ethic is central to Christian religiousness as Kierkegaard understands it: it is the heart of his "second ethics." But I still hold that Kierkegaardian faith is distinguished by an element that is not found in such an agnostic or aetical ethics in itself: thus faith does not consist in transcrossing lower or less enlightened normative systems, trumping communal mores, or challenging established human orders, for the sake of higher agnostic ideals. 37 ACE and ALE higher-ethics readings of the teleological suspension are motivated by a worthy desire to distinguish Kierkegaardian religiousness from immodernity: they are also exasperated by clear references to Hegel in Fear and Trembling, from which they conclude that it is only ethics in Hegel's sense that is "suspected" or trumped in faith. The best textual basis for this reading is a passage in Problematics I: "Fear if the ethical that is social morality is the highest, and if there is in a person no residual incommensurability in some way such that this incommensurability is not evil ... then no categories are needed other than what Greek philosophy had." 38

On this basis, Hannah explains that "The pattern of argument in the problemata is a medius tollens: "If A then B, not-B, therefore not-A."", whereby "A is intended as a statement of the Hegelian conception of ethics prevailing in Kierkegaard's time, and B would be the implication that Abraham is a murderer." Westphal concurs, noting that each Problem begins with "the same formula, which goes like this: if such and such is the case, then Hegel is right; but then Abraham is lost." Thus if Abraham's faith is higher, then Hegel must be wrong. 39 Pace critics like MacIntyre and Blanshard, the teleological suspension does not imply any conflict between "my duties to God" and "my duties to my neighbor and myself," rather, its target is Hegel. 40 Likewise, Mooney writes that the teleological suspension is a "gettaill-shift" from a lower "conventional" ethic to a transcendent ethic: "A kind of ethic gets discarded while a superior, more complex sort gets installed." 41 More generally, Evans writes that "the conception of the ethical operative in the book is mainly Hegelian in character." This social ethics is in tension with faith because it claims to exhaust ultimate meaning and morality. 42

I agree that Kierkegaard is arguing that Hegel's ethics is incompatible with Abraham's faith, but that is not only because faith involves an agnostic ethic that is higher than Stitlichkeit or "social morality." To show that the aetical interpretation is more adequate, I will outline several objections to the higher-ethics readings. The objections show that the ACE and ALE readings share several problems with the SDC reading even though they deny that Kierkegaard means to recommend absolute obedience to arbitrary divine fiat.

(1) As Hannah says, Sartrean's argument aims to show that "if you are a Hegelian, then you cannot talk gibbly of faith as something you have fathomed and can proceed beyond." 43 But it does not follow that the ethics codes embroiled in social life-forms (Stitlichkeit) are the kind of "ethics" that is teleologically suspended in faith. Certainly Kierkegaard means to show that faith cannot be a higher stage than ethical consciousness for Hegel, since he regards rational comprehension of the universe in concrete ethical life (Stitliche) as part of the absolute or highest stage of consciousness. But the defense of faith as a higher stage involves more than just the rejection of this Hegelian theory. In particular, it involves an account of how ethical motivation is procured within faith, pace Hegel's view that ethics cannot be auftohren in faith. While there is an important difference between Stitlichkeit in Hegel's system and the agnostic ideals of Works of Love; the difference that Kierkegaard meant to emphasize in Fear and Trembling is that such agnostic devotion can be combined in faith with an eschatological trust that goes beyond agnostic responsibility; while Hegelian ethical conscience cannot.

This crucial point deserves elaboration. For Kierkegaard, a "higher" stage of human existence (or way of being) always includes transformed versions of the lower stages that developmentally precede it; their valuable contribution remains a necessary component of the higher stage. In Kierkegaard's existential
Ronald Green has argued, there is evidence that he includes "Kant's notion of the ethical." While Anthony Rudd argues that Kierkegaard is focused on Hegelian role-based obligations or "the sphere of positional ethics," he also recognizes that "Abraham is as much a scandal to Kantian Morality as to Hegelian Stiltlichkeit." To agree that the ethical view presented in Fear and Trembling as in Either/or, is not simply Hegelian but rather "to combine them from the entire rationalist tradition begun by Kant," the term "universal" is also not restricted to "the concrete universal of the social order," it is often used in reference to natural law and deontological norms. As Ulrich-Schnapp argues in detail, the portrayal of the ethical in Fear and Trembling is closely related to Kant's categorical imperative, and Kant's insistence that Abraham should be condemned as a murderer is interpreted as central to the purely ethical perspective.

The ethical is also used for the universality of the love commands. For example, Silas, tells us that although individuals differ physically and psychologically, since they are "sentimentally and psychologically qualified in immediacy, from the perspective of ethics each "has hisLisa in the universal" (54). This has much in common with the admonition in Works of Love that agape love transcends all fainance, not by formalistic indifference or "slyly turning back into itself", but by "wringing itself outwards, all yet loving everyone in particular but none in partiality." Thus I endorse Earl McLane's insight that "There is implicit in ... Fear and Trembling an ethic of 'upw' an ethic based on the Royal Law, an ethic that points forward to the Works of Love." The obligations to love God and neighbor are invoked and interpreted in Fear and Trembling. What Silas says that "In ethical terms, Abraham's relation to Isaac is quite simple this: that the father shall love the son more than himself" (57). The duty to motions would be supported by biblical love-commandments even more clearly than by Hegel's analysis of the family in the Philosophy of Right." In an effort to show that the ethical stage of existence requires that Abraham abide by the agape ethic, and "by suspending faith within faith, Kierkegaard's conception of the existenial stages requires this. But these ethical attitudes retained in faith cannot be those of Stiltlichkeit, because conventional or communal ethics is superceded in Kierkegaardian faith. Nor can the ethical element retained and transformed within faith be the higher agape or aesthetic attitudes that ACE and ALE readings equate with post-suspension faith. For the higher ethical ideals are not ausgehen on a view: rather, they are the ideals for which the ethical stage of existence persist yet are also transfigured within faith, as the logic of the stages of existence requires. One possible answer is "infinite resignation," but why would resignation need to remain within faith, if faith is simply personal appropriation of a higher ethical life-view?

(3) Despite the admitted emphasis on establishing a dilemma for Hegelians, Stiltlichkeit is not the only sense of "ethics" that Silas addresses. As
with perplexity that his situation might better be described as "a 'teleological suspension of the religious' by the religious."  

The eschatological interpretation resolves this problem by explaining how God's universal love commands or agnic norms are not revoked or overridden by the singular command to sacrifice Isaac. The latter command constitutes the obstacle rather than the telos toward which the ethical (in all its sense) is suspended; Abraham's fulfillment of the universal obligation to love one's child is apparently blocked by the singular command to Abraham. This command to give Isaac back forces him to rely on an eschatological telos toward which the universal is "suspended"—a telos whose possibility depends on God's action. Thus God plays three formally distinct roles in the Abrahamic scenario as Kierkegaard understands it: as always, God is the ground of universal ethical norms; in faith, he is also the singular source of eschatological possibilities; and in this special case, he is even the origin of the mysterious obstacle.  

This adds to Abraham's greatness, for he maintains faith even in the face of a maimos rather than a merely earthly obstacle to the good outcome.

V. Suspicion: Violating Sittlichkeit for the Sake of Obedience to God

The three objections detailed above undermine the initial assumption of all higher-ethics views, namely, that it is only Hegelian or conventional ethics that gets "suspended." There are three further objections to SDC and ACE readings in particular. Both SDC and ACE readings hold that:

(i) Abraham must violate the social obligation to love Isaac in order to give highest priority to his love of God, where

(ii) loving God consists primarily in obeying God's singular and general commandments as the highest source of moral obligation (either because of God's cosmogenic power, or because of his agnic goodness).

(4) The most powerful objection to this conception of the absolute duty, as John Lippitt notes, is the counterexample found in "the four sub-Abrahams" of the 'Atumment'."—who are all "prepared to obey God's command" but nevertheless do not count as knighs of faith.  

(5) Moreover, if the telos toward which the ethical is "suspended" were simply the duty to obey divine command, it would in principle be possible and intelligible without any reference to the "abashed" possibility at the heart of Kierkegaard's conception of religious faith. As Lippitt points out, all divine command readings ignore this key element in the story: they leave unclear "the significance of God's substituting the ram" for Isaac. For example, Blesshard writes that "the fact that at the last moment he was relieved of the need to strike is irrelevant in appraising him." But why then is there so much emphasis on the eucatastrophe in Fear and Trembling?

This is ironicaly similar to the main problem with Hegelian accounts of religiosity; they give no decisive role to eschatological possibilities. As Westphal, Hegel thought of the modern "social order" as the embodiment of reason. "Hegelian rationalism thus has a realized eschatology built into it." But this means that eschatology (and revealed religion in general) is reduced to religious rationalization: a realization of the good that is deduced or comprehended by human reason or achieved by human power is not eschatological, in the sense defined above. Divine command readings give this crucial part of Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel no role in Fear and Trembling.

(6) A final reason to think that the divine command interpretations are looking in the wrong direction is that the duty to love God, as interpreted in clauses (ii) above, is simply a universal duty to take His word as law. Hence, this explanation reduces "faith" to the willingness to put aside traditional inter-human duties for the sake of a higher but still universal obligation to follow divine commands. But Sillento speaks much of Problems 1 arguing precisely that the "teleological suspension" involved in faith is not simply the abnegation of a lower universal norm for a higher universal principle, or the violation of lower cultural mores for the sake of ethical ideals with higher authority or significance. He runs through a list of heroes who performed actions that violated honor codes of family loyalty for the sake of higher purposes required for their nations: Agamemnon sacrificing Iphigenia, Jephthah giving up his daughter, and Brutus protecting his son. They are only heroes of resignation, not of faith, because their tales is still an ethical one. "The tragic hero is still within the ethical. He allows an expression of the ethical to have its status in a higher expression of the ethical."
The Absolute Relation: the Dogmatic Schema, and Existential Suspension

We have seen that if "faith" were correctly described on the SDC reading as acceptance of a moral duty with no rational foundations—an unconditional duty to obey arbitrary divine commands—then Kierkegaard must be subject to MacPherson's objection (and to Plato's objection in the Euthyphro). ACE readings avoid this problem, but they deny any suspension of morality as a whole: only duties based on custom and tradition (or perhaps even natural law) are suspended for the sake of the revealed universal and singular commands. But this result conflicts with the text. Westphal is doubtless correct that for Kierkegaard, "the ordinator is to have a higher allegiance than to my people and their conception of the Good," or to "the Law of the Lord," in which I join. But this "higher allegiance" cannot consist simply in a higher ethical attitude, as ACE interpretations imply. Thus we need a more nuanced way of understanding the crucial relationship between the following three concepts in Fear and Trembling:

- love of neighbor (including love of family and proper self-love),
- love of God,
- faith in God.

Faith as a Singularizing Relation to the Absolute

The relationship between these three terms is the central issue in Problema II. This section begins with the point that, assuming them, universal duties can always be understood formally as "duties to God" without requiring a dutiful agent to have any essentially particularistic devotion to God as a personal creator, redeemer, or maker of covenants.

The duty becomes a duty by being traced back to God, but in the duty itself I do not enter into relation to God. For example, a man enters into Christ's nephex. It is a duty by being traced back to God, but in the duty I enter into relation not to God but to the nephex I love. (In this connection) I then say that it is my duty to love God. I am actually only pronouncing a tautology: namely, that "God" is a totally abstract term here understood as the divine—that is,
the universal. . . God comes to be an invisible vanishing point, an impotent thought; his power is only in the ethical (68).

The eschatological interpretation explains why faith is more than such an abstract relation to ethical ideals for faith involves direct reliance on a personal promise made by God as-finisher, the content of which goes beyond ethical idealism to its actualization in time (a synthesis of the ethical and the aesthetic). In putting trust in such an eschatological promise, the human person is related "absolutely"—that is, directly, immediately—to God as an agent of infinite power whose promises, commandments, and questions are always pervaded by numinous mystery. As Augustine puts it in a phrase that probably inspired Rabier, the "king of faith" becomes "God's confident, the Lord's friend. . . in saying "You' to God in heaven, whereas even the tragic hero addresses him only in the third person" (77). In other words, faith takes God as the eschatological Thou, as the personal source of prophecy and singular eschatological promises, whose miraculous fulfillment (as Tolkien put it) is never to be repeated. This contrasts with God as defined in natural theology by an Aristotelian list of material properties (including perfect goodness). The Divine in the covenantal sense means more than the Divine conceived as the metaphysical and metaphysical principle or foundation of being and goodness, and this revealed surplus requires an absolute response from the human agent. Standing as a single individual in an absolute relation to the absolute means loving God as a personal maker and keeper of singular promises (120).

This duty to God is the duty to have faith in Him (53). When faith is defined existentially as absolute trust in God's eschatological promise to us as unique individuals, then our duty to love God must in turn mean more than simply obeying God as the metaphysical Alpha or source of moral norms; it also means trusting in God as Omega, the actualizer of revealed eschatological possibilities. This is what Siskin means in claiming that faith involves a singularizing relation above all universal ethical requirements: we trust in an ultimate fulfillment of moral ideals that transcends our powers and that ethical normativity cannot assure us in time, which is only possible by virtue of God as Omega. In this light, let us examine the key passage in Problems II.

The paradox of faith, then, is this: that the single individual is higher than the universal, that the single individual—to recall a distinction in dogmatics rare these days—determines his relation to the universal by his relation to the absolute, not his relation to the absolute by his relation to the universal. The paradox may also be expressed this way: that there is an absolute duty to God, for in this relationship of duty the individual relates himself as the single individual absolutely to the absolute. In this connection, to say that it is a duty to love God means something different from the above—a universal principle, for if this duty is absolute, the ethical is reduced to the relative. From this it does not follow that the ethical should be invalidated; rather, the ethical receives a completely different expression . . . for example, that love to [one o]f God may bring the knight of faith to give love to the neighbor. (50).

Again, our task is to discern the right relation between our three critical terms, and my prior arguments suggest the following points. First, that "the individual relates himself as the single individual absolutely to the absolute" means that the individual is singularized in eschatological trust, which is an essentially particularistic attitude toward God as Thou. This singularizing relation is existential faith: the absolute duty to love God singles us out because it includes a "duty" to have faith in God as the ultimate person. Thus the eschatological seeing does recognize a direct duty to God, which is paradoxical: it may apply universally to all human persons, but (as Philosophical Fragments explains) to hear the promise in which we are made to have faith is already to have gone beyond naturally knowable things (81). By stark contrast, in the actualizing sense of asserting a factuary proposition, it demands a wholehearted volitional response. Unless it is appropriated in that way, the content of the promise will seem absurd. For promises are not purely factual statements: we reapplied to a promise partly determines what it means to us.

Second, this also explains why proper love of God involves an attitude that is not required for agnostic love of human beings: our agnostic duty to God involves worshiping Him as creator and having faith in Him as the final actualizer of the promised ultimate good. Third, "the absolute" (used as a definite description) means "the source of eschatological possibilities." But determining one’s relation to "the absolute" (as rigid designator for God) by way of one’s relation to the universal means taking God normally as the foundation of universal norms. This attitude does not regard God as "the absolute" in the descriptive sense of being the source and fulfiller of eschatological promises. In acting on the motive of duty, I relate qua the universally human to God qua universal ground of the Right. By contrast, in existential faith the individual "determines his relation to the universal by his relation to the absolute"; this means that his relationship to duties of neighbor-love is in some sense (that we must explain) conditional upon his love of God.

The Dogmatic Schema: How the Universal Depends on the Absolute

Silentio calls this the dogmatic schema of faith: it can be put in diagrammatic form as a relation of relations:

A human person qua instantiation of responsible agency = God qua Universal
A human person qua unique individual = God qua Absolute (personal).

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Faith as Eschatological Trust in Fear and Trembling
The first universal relation (responsibility and free response to obligation) depends on the second absolute relation to God in some way. This second-order relation of dependence (1) cannot be that which holds between a singular prescription or command and the single agent to whom it is addressed (as when I say to my daughter, "help clean up the table"). For if it were, then the faithful individual would love his fellow human beings only in obedience to a singular divine imperative that he do, and loving God (the God relation) would be reduced to obeying singular commands. As Ronald Dworkin has said, this would be a "frightening and frightening ethic," for it would imply that the human agent really has no duties that derive from his instantiating terrible conditions that figure in the antecedents of universal laws applying to all persons; all such universal imperatives would be converted into singular imperatives. But this would amount to saying that the absolute relation to God revokes the human agent's first relation to universal ethical ideality rather than supporting it, as the dogmatic schema requires.

Understanding the first relation as the agent's volitional response to moral ideals (such as loving those entrusted to her care), and the second relation as established by an eschatological promise reciprocated in trust helps explain how the first relation can be supported by the second, as the dogmatic schema asserts. If the second relation exists in existential faith—if loving God means trusting in Him as the ultimate fulfiller of His covenants and promises—then the second relation provides assurance that our striving for ethical ideals is not for all, not destined to be meaningless in the final scheme of things. Our response to universal duty is upheld and sustained in existential faith because it denies "universal final defeat," as Tüskien put it.

On this reading, the second relation cannot conflict with the first. Faith cannot consist in our being willing to violate our duties to love other persons in order to do something inspired by trust in an eschatological promise. For, as we have seen, the content of such a promise is precisely the ultimate fulfillment of agnostic ideals. In fact, faith in such a fulfillment cannot require us to do anything beyond continuing to strive for ethical perfection: what it adds is a reason to trust—against all odds or apparent evidence—our ethical wishes can come true. When decided, then, the dogmatic schema for faith in Proverbs 3:5 means that our eschatological relation to the ethical, in which we work to fulfill universal ethical ideals, is supported and sustained by the trust that our efforts will not ultimately be in vain, that these ideals are not finally limited to an ideal meaning outside of time, that they can be realized in the end. In other words, we reappreciate our moral obligations in the new light of eschatological hope. Thus the suspension of the reference to God as a figure is dependent for its appearance on the background in which it sits. A gestalt-shift occurs in the meaning of universal ethical ideals when they are seen against the background of existential faith; although their formal content is unchanged, their ultimate significance for human life has changed. The ethical will is reshaped in religious hope. Thus the eschatological interpretation, unlike its rivals, succeeds in explaining how the ethical is retained yet transformed in the religious stage, as the logic of the stages requires.

K-Suspension

I have argued that the "suspension" of the ethical involved in existential faith does not mean suspension in the sense of violating a valid ethical norm as a means to being about a higher ethical goal. Nor does it mean being released from a normally valid obligation because of the practical impossibility of fulfilling it in the circumstances. This Kierkegaard reading of the "suspension" may seem appealing because Abraham's two loves are described as being in tension (74); his love for God, who commands him to sacrifice Isaac, seems to make it impossible for Abraham to fulfill the requirements of his love for Isaac. Let us say that agent A's moral duty is "suspended" in the K-sense when it is practically or morally impossible for A to fulfill this particular obligation by his own initiative. K-suspension then amounts to a valid exception or limit on the scope of a moral's application. But such exceptions are a normal part of any system of universal norms, including agnostic systems. Moreover, on this proposal, "faith" would involve a K-suspension of Abraham's duty to love Isaac only because God happens to have commanded him to do so; what seems tantamount to "hating" Isaac [72]. But, as emphasized earlier, that God's command and plays the role of obstacle is a special feature of Abraham's case (which gives it its special horror). The nature of the obstacle obviously differs in other cases, such as the "demonic" circumstances that may disable a person from participation in ordinary human concourse and dialogue, which "has its beginning in this originality being set outside the universe by nature or by a historical circumstance" [106]. Such persons are not simply exempted from moral requirements, however. Existential faith is not limited to the few people who experience an apparent divine or "demonic" obstacle to fulfilling their moral obligations. So Sinfelt gives us no reason to think that every case of existential faith must involve a K-suspension of some ethical obligation. No, not the text consistent with the K-suspension reading. In commenting on the difficult passage from the Gospel of Luke on "satiating" one's family in order to cleave to God, Sinfelt notes that although the duty to God can lead one to do actions that "ethics would forbid," that people are not finally limited to an ideal meaning outside of time, that they can be realized in the end. In other words, we reappreciate our moral obligations in the new light of eschatological hope. Thus the suspension-of-reference to God as a figure is dependent for its appearance on the background in which it sits. A gestalt-shift occurs in the meaning of universal ethical ideals when they are seen against the background of existential faith; although their formal content is unchanged, their ultimate significance for human life has changed. The ethical will is reshaped in religious hope. Thus the eschatological interpretation, unlike its rivals, succeeds in explaining how the ethical is retained yet transformed in the religious stage, as the logic of the stages requires.
answer to the ultimate question: in the end, are ethical ideals just an eternal dream doomed to tragic failure, or will they be realized in new reality, in a world transformed by God?

Hannay Was Right
This account of the E-suspension of ethics supports and deepens Hannay's own interpretation of Fear and Trembling:

Abraham, as long as he remains firm in his faith, would not say that he was rendering himself incapable of accomplishing the universe but that he is reaffirming his capacity to accomplish it—for after all, his belief is that he is going to get Isaac back even when he sacrifices him. In his faith, Abraham does not think he is putting himself outside the universe, his belief is that showing God how faithful he is means putting the possibility of his continuing to exercise his fatherly love into God's hands.10

This passage contains in summary form the thesis I've developed: Abraham's fatherly love is suspended in the sense that it depends on God fulfilling his promise. His righteousness in relation to a universal moral ideal depends on the validity of his faith, not because faith is obedience to singular divine commands, but rather because faith is trust in an eschatological victory that will fulfill the infinite requirements of the ethical. This makes sense of Hannay's claim that Abraham's "constitutive act...to serve the universe on the strength of the absurd."10 Rather than rejecting universal norms in favor of a higher law, Abraham is "retaining or reaffirming his capacity to realize the universal."10 Although Abraham's circumstances are special, from a point of view higher than Siento's (e.g., Climacius'), every individual faces the limits of his imperfect will as an obstacle; anyone who accepts the reality of sin must E-suspend "the ethical," even in its highest ascetic sense, in eschatological faith.

A Response to Green
In making this point about the universal need for faith, however, I am not endorsing Green's anagogical reading of the teleological suspension as primarily a figure for the overcoming of sin through grace.10 Fear and Trembling certainly anticipates the treatment of these themes in the Fragments, Postscript, and other later pseudonymous works; the human agent who recognizes sin as an obstacle to righteousness that he cannot overcome, yet has faith that sin can be overcome by virtue of divine grace, instantiates the same psychological structure of existential faith for which Abraham is the paradigm illustration. Thus the "paradox of sin" and redemption contains an "analogy" to Abraham (112). But unlike God's command to sacrifice Isaac is only read anagogically as a figure for human sinfulness, the specific nature of the obstacle and thus the specific content
of the eschatologically possible reprieve differ in these Jewish and Christian examples, which is precisely why Silentio repeatedly insists that sin is not the issue for Abraham (112). Thus I would also modify Whittaker's conclusion that Abraham's faith should be understood primarily as a metaphor for the faith of one "who dares to believe that he is forgiven by God." The structure of existential faith is more general than Christianity or Religioseness B; it describes the subjective attitude of faithful persons in many religions, such as the Zoroastrian, who trusted absolutely in perfect justice to be found in a hereafter, and socrates similar trust that a good man cannot really be harmed, in the end.

There are two other problems, in my view, with Green's claim that "Abraham stands for every person of faith who in believing in forgiveness accepts something which by moral standards of just desert is absurd." First, as Lippitt points out, Green's analogy compares divine and human action: "just as Abraham ideologically suspends the ethical... God can ideologically suspend his justice (read: 'the ethical') in service of a higher telos: his love for humanity." But this is an account of divine mercy to human beings, not of human faith in God, which is the target of Silentio's analogy. Second, it takes the strict reticulativist Law of the Torah as suspended in the love that Christ says is the whole of the Law. But love of Isaac, and not merely the law that the parent shall cherish the child, is what Abraham suspends in faith—however we understand "suspension." Reconciliation achieved through accepted forgiveness is not a violation of the ideal of agape love, but rather figures among its highest expressions. Abraham's faith involves agape love and more: it involves trust in the miraculous possibility of Isaac's restoration.

In sum, the eschatological reading explains how soteriology can be the central theme of Fear and Trembling, as Green rightly insists, without implausibly adding that Christian redemption is the only kind of soteriology that Kierkegaard intended to include within his conception of existential faith. Outhwaite is right that Green tries "to assimilate Fear and Trembling too unqualifiedly into the classical Pauline-Lutheran doctrine of justification through faith alone." Existential faith as eschatological trust can come in other forms too. Thus Abraham's faith is not merely a figure for the Atonement, nor for divine mercy that transcends the rigorous of universal law. Even Kierkegaard's own agape ethics is E-suspended: existential faith is trust in a revealed promise that goes beyond the content of the love-commandments to the idea that amor vincit omnia: love wins in the end.

The relation between our three crucial terms is now clear. Success in the task of loving our neighbors as ourselves depends on the love and support promised to us by God, and trusting ourselves to this promise is the most important part of the love we owe to God. Our duty is not only to worship God as our creator, but to have faith in the final outcome of God's creation. Thus we cannot fully love our neighbor without this personal or singular (non-iterable) relation to the divine as Absolute, as the mysterious source of eschatological promises and absurd possibilities.

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Infinite Resignation as an Essential Condition of Existential Faith

We have now seen how Abraham's trust in God's promise that Isaac will live, introduced in the long "Preliminary Expectation," provides the key to understanding both the teleological suspension of the ethical in Problem 2 and the absolute duty to God in Problem 2. The same is true in Problem 3 for the impossibility of communicating faith in a way that makes its content rationally comprehensible (though I only discuss Problem 3 briefly in section V below). It should not be imagined that because the theme of eschatological hope is developed in a section titled "Preliminary," it is left behind in the later sections. Rather, the "preliminary" section provides the frame for all three Problems: they all "draw out" the same paradox that seems to make murder acceptable by giving "Isaac back to Abraham again, which no thought can grasp" (53). The various themes of the Problemata, such as the refutation of Hegel, are all developed as subthemes within the central eschatological theme. In particular, the contrasts between the tragic heroism of Problem 1 and Abraham are instances of the general distinction between the heights of faith and infinite resignation discussed in the "preliminary" section.

This implies that infinite resignation is not only a concern of the Preliminary section: its relation to faith remains crucial for understanding the aspects of faith discussed in the three Problemata. Yet the eschatological reading seems to be the only interpretation that adequately explains why, as Hannay writes, "There is no faith without prior resignation." Rival accounts are usually unable to explain why infinite resignation remains an ongoing component of faith.

Cross and Lippitt

Though a full defense of this decisive point would require discussing much of the voluminous scholarship on Fear and Trembling, a few examples will illustrate the difficulties that non-eschatological readings encounter with infinite resignation. Now, my reading seems to be a more developed version of a view that Andrew Cross describes as follows: Abraham "believes that Isaac will remain with him, believes this 'on faith alone' and so does not understand his act as murdering Isaac." Against this, Cross happily believes that he will get Isaac back, then he makes no real sacrifice, and is only "calling God's bluff, to speak." For his resignation to be real, Cross thinks that "Abraham must be interpreted as being completely convinced that Isaac will die
by his hand," even though this action is wrong and the voice that commands it therefore cannot be God! Cross is forced to this counter-textual conclusion because he sets up a false dichotomy, holding that either Abraham must be certain the Isaac will die permanently, or he is merely manipulating God. Since the latter disjunct is unacceptable, he opts for the former and concludes that "Abraham's faith cannot manifest itself as a belief, say, that God will not demand Isaac of him after all."119

Against Cross, John Lippitt has ably defended the view that Abraham does not see his act as murder. Lippitt points out there is "no problem with imagining an Abraham who would be prepared to go through with the sacrifice if need be, but whose trust in God is such that he continues to believe that Isaac will be spared."120 This is exactly right, since Silenti states that Abraham is not engaging in any calculation about how the divine promise will be fulfilled (which is why the ram is sacrificial). Abraham believes that God's promise will be fulfilled (even if it is in an unexpected way even if Isaac dies by his own hand on Mount Moriah), he is not trying to trigger any divine action, as a magician might try to conjure a spirit. That Isaac will not be permanently lost is the object of faith, not knowledge, the only thing he knows for certain is that he is carrying out the sacrifice as commanded (119).

Cross is certainly right that anyone who would play a game of 'chicken' with the Absolute, betting that God will blink before the knife hits, or that he will repair the wound after the knife hits, etc., is not what Kierkegaard means by a knight of faith. But that is because bluff-callers and chicken-gamers are manipulators of their opponent who believe these strategies are likely to be effective means of securing their desired ends. The eschatological reading makes clear that the knight of faith does not believe that he has any such way of forcing the divine hand. However he responds to the obstacle, he does not believe that his ethical goal will be realized as a controlled consequence of his action, but he nevertheless believes it will be realized miraculously. Thus he does not intend or act to produce this miraculous outcome. Once we distinguish between intended and expected outcomes, Cross's false dichotomy is dissolved.

Lippitt still worries that his interpretation might conflict with a passage near the end of the Lesson of Abraham suggesting that "Abraham must know that Isaac is to be sacrificed."121 This perfect future tense phrase is slightly misleading, though, since all that Abraham knows is that he cannot save Isaac. If God demands him, Lippitt's solution is to say that Abraham has resigned Isaac in the sense that "he has sealed himself for the eventuality that if his faith is misplaced, then he will sacrifice Isaac."122 I argue that Abraham expects to lose Isaac forever if his faith is wrong.123 But this is not what Silenti means by the movement of infinite resignation. Abraham is not resigned to losing Isaac forever, but rather to the practical impossibility of saving Isaac by his own effort. In Kierkegaard's sense, my resigning an end about which I care deeply does not entail my believing that it definitely will not occur (which would be inconsistent with faith that God can bring it about) rather, it means accepting that I cannot bring it about,124 even with reasonably pursuable human aid or feasible enforcements to my own powers.

Cross argues that such explanations leave Abraham "with still too much to say in defense of what he is doing," and thus fail to account for the insistence in the Lesson of Abraham that the knight of faith cannot explain himself, even to other faithful believers.125 Now this objection is a result of having force against higher-ethics readings. The SDC approach, for example, amounts to making faith into a universal moral obligation,126 which implies that the knight of faith should be able to explain herself (at least to anyone who knows God's power gives him absolute authority). But the eschatological reading says that Abraham cannot "speak" because he cannot betray God's confidence. The eschatological promise of Isaac's progeny is secret, given to him alone: "silence is also divinity's mutual understanding with the single individual."127 (And in some inscrutable way even if Isaac dies by his own hand on Mount Moriah, he is not trying to trigger any divine action, as a magician might try to conjure a spirit. That Isaac will not be permanently lost is the object of faith, not knowledge, the only thing he knows for certain is that he is carrying out the sacrifice as commanded (119).)

These points explain how eschatological trust is compatible with infinite resignation. Because Cross holds that they are not compatible, Abraham is not resigned unless he believes that Isaac will die and never return—he is forced to the implausible conclusion that Abraham's faith is a non-cognitive "trust" that consists with being certain that God will disappoint him.128 To avoid this, Lippitt follows Ronald Hall's analysis of infinite resignation as an "ever-present temptation that must be continually annulled" by faith.129 But Hall's approach seems to agree with Cross that resignation is an all-things-considered conviction that the object of the agent's care (e.g. Isaac) is totally lost. Hall differs from Cross only in holding that faith is a rejection of this kind of "resignation" (which Cross would combine with a trust that almost contradicts it). Abraham's faith thus involves continually annuling "the temptation to give in to 'total resignation' to take heed of the evidence, lose hope and trust in God, and resign himself to the loss of Isaac."130

Now, certainly this kind of doubt is an ever-present temptation for exis-
tential faith; but a all-things-considered judgment that Isaac is forever lost—a judgment that faith logically must annul—would constitute despair. Resigna-
tion simpliciter must be distinguished from the complex resignation that is
identified as a form of despair in Sickness unto Death; namely, "to be unwilling to
hope in the possibility that an earthly need, a temporal crisis, can come to an
end." 14 This is resignation plus the refusal to "hope in the possibility of help, especially by virtue of the absurd, that for God everything is possible." 15
Clearly this compound attitude is incompatible with existential faith; but resig-
nation simpliciter has to be compatible with faith. For Sisitno says plainly and
repeatedly that faith includes the tragic/herculean movement of resignation as
its necessary but not sufficient condition: resignation in this sense is essential to
the very fabric of faith. Indeed, Sisitno argues that without resignation, faith
collapses into the "first immediacy" or aestheticism because resignation is the
essential component that the aesthetic immediacy lacks. So the right reading
must explain how faith builds cumulatively on continuing resignation, but the
explanations offered by Cross, Hall, and Lippit all fail on this score.

The model of existential faith as eschatological trust neatly solves this prob-
lem by defining resignation as the (3) component of existential faith (see p. 201 above); the resigned agent accepts that he cannot bring about the ethically
required end, that no accessible human power would be enough to enable him
to realize the good that he wills. For example, if Agamemnon told Iphigenia that
"by human reckoning" it was impossible to save her, then she could understand
him, but then he "would not have made the infinite movement of resignation
and thus would not be a hero" in Sisitno's moral sense (115). To be resigned,
Agamemnon only needs to believe wholeheartedly that Iphigenia's salvation is
humans impossible, moe that it is impossible in all moral senses, or that it
certainly will not happen. The former belief (b) by itself is consistent with both
(a), the despairing conclusion that Iphigenia will be forever lost, and with the
opposite belief (a') that she can be saved by the gods nevertheless. 16 The confu-
sion we found in Cross and Hall runs through the secondary literature because
faith (as the conjunction of a and b) and religious despair (c and h) are certainly
incompatible, but commentators fail to see that this is only because (a) and (c)
are logically inconsistent, while (b) is necessary for both existential faith and
religious despair. Faith annuls despair, but does not annul resignation in the (b)
sense. The (a) condition is thus what faith adds to resignation, blending tragic
recognition of human limits together with a joy that comes from "hope beyond
hope." Now there is no difficulty in understanding how "Abraham makes two
movements" at once (115), without the latter annulring or contradicting the
former. He wills Isaac's good with infinite resignation, yet despite the peculiar
obstacle, he also trusts in the absurd possibility of Isaac's growing up to have
children of his own. As Whitaker puts it, "Abraham believed himself to be
participating in a drama directed by God, a drama whose ultimate outcome
would not be tragic." 17

Two Types of Infinite Resignation
We have seen that infinite resignation is in itself neutral between faith and re-
ligious despair; though it is a precondition for either. In explaining this, I have
focused on the negative aspect of resignation as a recognition of bonehead or
limits, but resignation also has a positive aspect that distinguishes it from mere
quietism: it is a state of volitional commitment to good ends or ethical striv-
ing, and so its presence within existential faith implies that a kind of ethical
"work" must be resigning in faith. One does not just leave it all up to God without
first making an effort to bring about the ideal good. As Lippit says, "Saul's
loving divine grace cannot involve self-deception or spiritual laziness." 18 The
negative experience of limitation can only follow upon authentic love or devotion
to something worthwhile in this world. Louis Dupre explains this point in the
specifically Christian terms of Kierkegaard's later works:

Only a failure in the innermost depths of his own being can persuasively
reveal to him his true condition and put him in the proper situation for
experiencing God's redemption. The failure of faith must necessarily pre-
cede the coming of grace. In his later years, Kierkegaard became more and
more convinced that Luther... did not attach sufficient importance to this
preparation. 19.

I believe that Kierkegaard's signed religious writings support Dupre's point; his
frequent emphasis on ethical works is anticipated by Sisitno's insistence that
"infinite resignation is the last stage before faith, so that anyone who has not
made this movement does not have faith." 20 Because it is necessary for re-
signation, earnest moral willing is a prerequisite of faith, even though it cannot
guarantee faith, even salvation, or control any divine response.

"Infinite resignation," then, should be understood as involving volitional
dedication to a person, social role, vocation, or other valuable end that is under-
written by perfectionist ideals of exemplary virtue. This sort of spiritual au-
tority is the natural "will of heroes" in the human will (and of autonomy
in Kant's sense). It is an infinite passion to a "form of life for which it requires the strongest
kind of resolve: the agent must identify wholeheartedly with her real for
the sake of its ethical value." 21 The knight will then have the power to concentrate
the whole substance of his life and the meaning of existence into one single
desire (or motive). If a person lacks this focus, his soul is dissipated in multi-
plicity from the beginning (42-43). Sisitno requires a passion "in which the
individual has concentrated the whole reality of actuality" for himself (41 note
1). This is obviously related to Kierkegaard's ideal of volitional unification in
his famous discourse on The Purity of Heart and to the discussion of "induce
passion" in Stages on Life's Way. 22

This passion is resigned in the sense that the knight retains his commit-
tment to his noble end as central to the meaning of his life, even though he
already knowing what the outcome will be. In this kind of resignation, it is clear that the hero has not given up caring about his ethical ideal, even though he believes that his efforts cannot succeed.

But there is another kind of "resignation" covered by Sileno's concept that comes closer to the ordinary meaning of this English word, which applies to the young lad in Fear and Trembling, and possibly also to Kierkegaard in releasing Religion:

Elevic Resignation
(i) (same)
(ii) I disengage from actively pursuing my end E in time.
(iii) I do nothing contrary to E's value, which I still prize, but give up actively striving for E in this life.

Because this kind of resignation brackets active expression of one's continued commitment, it can sometimes lapse into sentimentalism, or what I call bad romanticism: Werther-like hand-wringing and enjoyment of one's sorrow. Kierkegaard's Either/Or explores such prevarications of spirit, and this is why some critics imagine that Kierkegaard's young lad has really ceased to care about his princess in giving up the pursuit of her. But this is a misinterpretation: we know from common experience that elevic resignation can be enacted without the least diminishment of love. Think, for instance, of a person finally "accepting" that her dearest friend has died, or that her Alzheimer-afflicted spouse's last memories are finally gone, and similar tragedies. The love for the friend or spouse remains an infinite passion to which the agent is wholeheartedly committed, but she is resigned to the reality that they lie beyond her reach. Such resignation is a state of will involving evaluative judgment it accepts that no valuable statement is made by keeping a vigil forever at the irredeemable, or continuing to press the completely sterile spouse for some neurologically impossible flicker of recall. There is genuine heroism here also, a heroism that is not well symbolized by Beowulf going to die with his dragon. The will disengages from active pursuit, but the love remains. And just as it remains possible, by virtue of the absurd, for Thersites or Beowulf to win their battles,46 it remains existentially possible for the friend and the spouse to be resurrected in their perfected nature. Both kinds of resignation are compatible with such existential faith, since neither in themselves entails despair: disengaging from active pursuit of the humbly impossible end, when appropriate, is not the same as despairing ultimately of it (though it is compatible with that too).

Resignation in either the Beowulfian or Elevic sense presses this spirit toward a choice between despair or faith, but neither type of resignation forces or determines the agent's transition to a religious life-view.

Elevic resignation is what I think Kierkegaard meant in describing a resigned Abraham as giving up his desire.48 Such a "tragic hero" (44) still cares
wholesale about Isaac; Siefert says that if he had been in Abraham's position, then in "my immense resignation" I would have "loved him with my whole soul," yet failed to love him in the way that Abraham did (55), that is, through loving faith in God. The young lad infinitely resigns his princess in the elegiac sense when the object of his love is transformed from a living historical woman into "an eternal form that no actuality can take away" (43). His hope is reduced to an abstraction: "in an infinite sense it was possible, that is, relinquishing it" (47). This means that he stops trying to win her hand in marriage, but not that he stops caring about her: "he does not give up his love" (42), nor change his deepest volitional devotion to her (43). He only accepts that this purpose, which continues to define his identity, is no longer to be pursued "within time" (22). Likewise, Siefert emphasizes that the lad's "renouncing" his princess only means disengaging from the worldly pursuit of her, not diminishing his devotion. His love is "turned inward, but it is not therefore lost, nor is it forgotten" (44). This renouncing or disengaging is an act of will (45), just like the other options of continuing to pursue the goal without hope as an expressive act (Beowulfian resignation), or radically rejecting one's love (in despair). As Hannay says, in "renouncing the possibility" of achieving her highest end, "the person does not give up the wish and try to forget it. Thus resignation is not abandoning one's heart's desire."²⁴²

This interpretation also supports Evans's argument that the portrayal of faith in Fear and Trembling is consistent with Kierkegaard's later writings, which stress agape ideals. Evans concludes that Siefert "highlights the ways in which a transcendent religious faith cannot be captured by the categories of a rational morality."²⁴³ But while we cannot bring about our own salvation, Fear and Trembling portrays the human self as able to will the good at least enough to discover its own limits and perfection; without this, it cannot turn to God in hope that the good it wills (however defectively) may be perfected and fulfilled by virtue of the absurd. Without our ethical striving, eucatastrophe's grace would have nothing to meet.²⁴⁴ The faithful human agent experiences her trust as direct dependence on God, and will experience the eucatastrophe that justifies her faith as a unique moment in time when she is touched by the transcendent, upheld by the hand that created her. Such a numinous encounter is impossible for an aesthetic agent who has willed nothing with ethical seriousness, just as it cannot be experienced in joy by a resigned agent who received an eschatological promise but failed to make the movement of faith. Ethical passion must come first, before the resigned will can look toward an answer from God, a fulfillment of God's will in time. We could diagram this complex relation as shown in chart 15:

Conclusion: The Next Steps

Let me conclude by addressing two likely objections. One apparent problem with this argument that resignation as an ethical passion is a necessary yet not sufficient condition of existential faith is Siefert's admission that a sinful individual is already outside the universal, even though a sinful individual can come to faith (98). However, the individual is not entirely passive in the recognition of sinfulness; in fact, accepting the need for grace involves infinite resignation. Although we may give in to temptations, our higher-order will to rectitude can be pure, even though resigned to its own inadequacy without grace.²⁴⁵ Thus Rumble is quite right that "sinlessness before the universal is not a prerequisite of faith,"²⁴⁶ but resignation defined as a volitional state does not entail sinlessness. I have argued that we can think of sin as a different type of obstacle within the same basic structure of existential faith. But this obstacle does not imply that we are utterly incapable of any ethical effort, as we could not even come up against such an obstacle (as I argued in the previous section). As Siefert says, "sin is not the first immediacy; sin is a later immediacy," like faith, because it involves awareness of ethical responsibility that the agent cannot meet. Thus an entirely absolute aesthetic could not receive the revelation of his sinfulness. Again, the cumulative relation of the existential categories implies that we cannot eliminate ethical consciousness from the universal state of awareness of sin. In Repulsiveness B, infinite resignation takes the form of the will to repentance, which becomes "the highest ethical expression" (98, note 4).

Another reasonable question is whether my account denies divine commands a central role in Kierkegaardian faith. For surely Kierkegaard's later religious worldview that he rejected Kantsian and Hegelian theories for some kind of a divine command ethic.²⁴⁷ In response, it is important to emphasize that my eschatological reading is consistent with divine commands being indispensable for human understanding of agape ideals, and with grace playing an essential role in our capacity for moral motivation. My reading is also consistent with the idea in ACE reading that the will of a loving God is metaphorically constitutive of moral righteousness, though I do not believe that this is the "teleological suspension of the ethical" means: it is a trusting response to a divine promise concerning actual realization of ethical possibilities in this world (or in its end
The distinctive positive thesis in the philosophy of God and the world holds that God is both the source and the ground of all existence, and the ultimate principle of all being. This thesis is often referred to as the "cosmological argument" for the existence of God. It is based on the idea that the existence of the universe requires a cause, and that this cause must be God, who is the source of all existence.

The cosmological argument is generally divided into two main types: the ontological argument and the teleological argument. The ontological argument seeks to prove God's existence by reasoning about the nature of reality itself, while the teleological argument seeks to prove God's existence by reasoning about the purpose and design of the universe.

The cosmological argument is often criticized for its reliance on the assumption that the universe has a beginning. However, this assumption is not necessary for the argument, and it is possible to construct a version of the cosmological argument that does not rely on this assumption. For example, one version of the cosmological argument is based on the idea that the universe is not self-sufficient, and that it requires a cause outside of itself in order to exist.

The cosmological argument is often seen as a difficult and controversial argument, and it is not generally accepted by all philosophers. However, it remains an important and influential argument in the philosophy of God and the world, and it continues to be studied and debated by philosophers and theologians alike.
14. Abraham's Final Word

1. All reference to, and citations from, the text of Fear and Trembling are drawn from the Danish translation. In no case, however, do the translations, or anything in the translation, correspond to Isaac's surrender suggested by Jacobs.

2. I am indebted here to the excellent discussion by Jensen, especially chapter 4.

3. Within an excursion devoted to the faith of Abraham on Mount Moriah, Jacques Lacan embeds a passing reference to Socrates and Gomorrah, saying that Abraham "did not pray for Socrates, trying to influence the Lord, but only when righteousness was threatened with erosion, Abraham came forward with his prayer" (212). Following this brief paragraph, Jacques turns immediately to the story of Abraham as it is told in Chapter 22 of the Book of Genesis.

4. Allston Brown and references to the Hebrew Bible are drawn from Tanakh. All references identify the book, chapter, and verse in which the cited passage appears.

5. With the exception of the imaginative sketches in his Amorpha, where he recreate Abraham's fearful attempts to reenact the love relationship with his God, Iohnston most likely skulks about Abraham's relationship to Isaac. For an excellent account of Abraham receiving Isaac back again, see Moore, chapter 6.

6. That Abraham did not speak to Ishbaugh; that he cannot speak in even more difficult.

*See Lipps, p. 313.*

7. See Millet, p. 219.

8. See Lipps, p. 207.

9. See Lipps, p. 79.

10. See Millet, p. 404.

11. As Lipps observes, Abraham's alleged motivation to bring "hardly any words to petition Abraham's way beyond the reach of language" (213). Meanwhile, hence the "determinative indeterminacy of Abraham's words" (213-214).

12. In a similar attempt to sketch the determination of his temporality, Michaela points to the "determinative indeterminacy of Abraham's words" (213-214).

13. Abraham's explanation, though faithful to Johnson's interpretation of the biblical passage, must still remain somewhat confused. "Isaiah tells with Israely nothing looking for anything for his "interpretative voice," namely, "the literal meaning of the words (narrative)" (214).

14. See Lipps, pp. 263, and Millet, p. 419.

15. Meanwhile, he continues to develop an "interpretative alternative" of God's initial command to Abraham, who is "God's servant" to bring his son to Mount Moriah for the purpose of making a burnt offering of him, but did not command him to carry out the sacrificial death of his son.

*See Millet, p. 219.*

16. See Millet, p. 216.

17. See Millet, p. 219.

18. See Millet, p. 215.

19. On the importance of measure, see MacKay, pp. 306, 308-309.

20. While I certainly agree with Lipps that Johnson places "mysterious ignorance" in the "narrative of the "ethical" (210), I would also maintain that Johnson's dérangement of this notion, whether conscious or not, is inferable from his discussion and occasionally differs his argumentation.

21. My suggestion that Johnson's sense, even as something as a "knowledge of morality" is consistent, I take, with Millet's claim that "in rejecting Abraham's act of faith, de Sade . . . is reflecting his account of faith in a way which is precisely consistent to Hegel's distorted character of the ethical as an abstract, and the only inchoate form, of spiritually meaningful human existence" (309).

22. See Lipps, p. 40-46.

23. Due to his discussion of Fear and Trembling by engaging what he takes to be Kierkegaard's ethical (and lilitianely limiting) allegiance to the Christian Gospel, de Sade, as well as that as a Catholic, most likely the belief in the Christian Gospel by being the only religious act, is, in a certain eschatological form that seeks to detract from Kierkegaard's incoherency (8). Thus, one is at the point of Kierkegaard's discussion of that "pregnant madness" (237-238).

24. A notable exception here is Ken, p. 27.

25. Iohnston notes, "Let us not forget. We let basic activity be sacrificed. Abraham had faith. He did not have faith that he would be killed in a retiter fire but that he would be branded in the world. God could give his new man, could restore to life the one sacrificed" (28).

26. See Lipps, p. 375.

27. Levinas, p. 27, emphasis added. See Coon, pp. 95-97.

28. For fear, however, Johnson maintains the concept of "real moment" is not the ideologized invention of Auguste, as recorded in the Psalms, but the post-interpretive experience recorded at Syllog, pp.

29. For related expressions of punishment, see Lipps, p. 179, and Millet, p. 334.

30. In an assertion of his frequent contacts, Johnson explains that Socrates "consummated himself in the celebrated response that he is prepared to have been condemned by a majority of three votes" (217).

31. Johnson regards Abraham as some kind of hero, emphasizing his recognition of the limits of his own existence, suggested through Fear and Trembling, most notably in the "diology on Abraham."

32. While I agree with Millet that "Johanan's words make a reference to act his spirital spirit" (198), I also add that Johnson does not want his words to work at the stage, but also if doing so might lead to an even more satisfying outcome elsewhere, e.g., in the Hebrew Bible, as in the Christian Gospel, as they are conventionally interpreted. As a disciple of bridge, Johnson makes similar to Socrates' and his "transcendental" (210), who firmly ground real bridge (along with this notion of freedom), making only his back desc- ent from being for spiritual bridge. Johnson would like to see his characters picture a book for their spiritual illumination, but he does not want them to outlive their time. Johnson is relatively reductive. He thus presents the faith of Abraham as an actual, even not just the spiritual world, but as a stage that still their spiritual world for the Christian Gospel.

33. I explore the relationship of Isabella to the unreal phases in my essay "Seeing in Inferior. Narrative Visualization in Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling" (33).

15. Faith as Eschatological Trust in Fear and Trembling

This essay has a long history. A very early version, titled "The Absurd as Lucifer in Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling," was presented at a general program of the Eastern Division meeting of the American Philosophical Association. It was amended to criticisms made by Vincent Ruggieri of this work. I would also like to express my thanks to Amdote Lawson for comments on the earlier version, as well as for his more recent
In the divine (Kierkegaard and Hartman 1974: 103). Yet, against Gans, Lippitt argues against Monet that "...the end of fear and trembling is to question the idea that 'she existed in the universal'" (191).


42. ibid., p. 166.

43. Monet, Selves in Daudet and Jules, p. 10.


45. Haney, Introductions to Fear and Trembling, p. 38.

46. For example, when Nietzsche talks about "beyond good and evil," becomes a set of attitudes that reflect both Christian ethics as having a massive effect upon our ability to see in those extremes themselves becomes, although we have to reject through this set of ethical attitudes to see them as literal statements and capable of reaching the highest conclusions of the other, which, as a good and desirable stance that can be even more strongly thrown away. It is the opposite for Kierkegaard: if faith is "beyond morality" in any sense, it is only as a (monological) addition to utility that forms a higher or better mental goal. This is what I mean by a completely 221 self-conscious appeal.

47. Haney, "Faith as the Test of Morality," p. 9. Such a cumulative relation is what it means when Nietzsche argues that "the sphere of truth should be viewed . . . as having a "logical" (or "theoretical") object (Kierkegaard's "Light of Life," 1907: 150) to form the term "conclusively" because it means only the conscious conclusion, as an actual conscience (192).

48. The cumulative relation of the aesthetic and the ethical is paradigmatically evident in Kierkegaard's phrase "The Aesthetic Anxiety of Morality" in Fávila (1910), Vol. II. In, our view, Fear and Trembling serves a parallel purpose: it can be regarded as a demonstration of the "Ethical Validity of Falsity."

49. Haney, Kierkegaard, p. 28.

50. Monett, Knights of Fear and Trembling, p. 11-12.

51. Ronald M. Green, "Kierkegaard and Fear and Trembling: In No Ethical Journal of Religious Ethics 21, no. 3 (1991): 393-409. In addition to Kierkegaard's discussion of sin within the limits of Reason alone, I think Kierkegaard frequently fails in this Kantian account of the highest good in his critique of Practical Reason, where Kant implies that ethical perfections are something that we have to develop in our lives. This attitude ultimately remains within the scope of "ethical ideals," and leads to Heidegger's vision of a philosophical realization of the Absolute. Part of Kierkegaard's aim is to return the transcendental and the moral plane together with the purely revelational element in the absolute, which is beyond our power or duty to perceive, although it is obvious and requires the striving required by natural law and by the revealed law concerning the divine ideals and the Absolute.


57. ibid., p. 195.

58. I was glad to discover McLean's agreement with this point (ibid., 196).


60. ibid., p. 175.

61. ibid., p. 143.

62. Kierkegaard probably should have started with a slightly more cautious addressing: this one is not meant to be falsely misunderstood by any readers, but Kierkegaard and Hegel's difficulties with the Ahadah proved too tempting for his sake. It is evident that Alkabash's case should provide the leverage to show that the systems could not really accomplish what it seems. In addition, Kierkegaard may have thought that God also played all the roles in his face, since he's only the (imperfection) of the source of the oppressive case or relatively that served as the object of an infinite evil. However, the existence of this case of obedience has occasioned much confusion.

63. ibid., p. 142.

64. ibid., p. 143.

65. ibid., p. 144.

66. ibid., p. 145.

67. ibid., p. 145.

68. ibid., p. 146.

69. ibid., p. 146.

70. ibid., p. 147.

71. ibid., p. 148.

72. ibid., p. 149.

73. ibid., p. 150.

74. ibid., p. 151.

75. ibid., p. 152.

76. ibid., p. 153.

77. ibid., p. 154.

78. ibid., p. 155.

79. ibid., p. 156.

80. ibid., p. 157.
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These explorations of ethics, love, and faith in Kierkegaard first saw the light of day in Copenhagen, mid-August 2004. They were the centerpiece of a celebration held for Alastair Hannay, a philosopher who has devoted his life to bringing Kierkegaard into the open. Author of Kierkegaard in the Routledge Arguments of the Philosophers series (1992), and of the landmark achievement Kierkegaard: A Biography (2001), Hannay is also translator of a number of texts for Penguin, including Fear and Trembling, Either/Or, Papers and Journals, Sickness unto Death, and A Literary Review. Niels Jørgen Cappelen graciously offered the facilities of the Kierkegaard Research Center for the late-summer event, attended by the writers represented here and by many others, who read and discussed versions of these chapters.

Kierkegaard research has been a community venture among students and scholars from a number of sub-disciplines (philosophy, theology, literary studies, history, psychology) and countries. Because Kierkegaard wrote in a minor European language, many arrive in Copenhagen not only to delve into the archives but to learn Danish, or to improve their facility. Thus it is entirely fitting that the papers included here were delivered first, not in Chicago, New York, London, Paris, Oslo, or Sydney, but in Copenhagen.

The collection is presented in parts by theme, each part followed by an appreciative and critical response by Hannay. Thus the volume delivers an active conversation among a dozen plus distinguished scholars, broadcast for an international audience from that marvelous site where one hundred and fifty years ago a prodigious writer set out those works without which today’s intellectual cultures of Paris, Sydney, New York, London, and Kyoto would be unimaginable.