Kierkegaard Studies

Edited on behalf of the
Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre
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Yearbook 2001

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together with
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Offprint

Walter de Gruyter · Berlin · New York
2001

Kierkegaard, Anxiety, and the Will

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Abstract

I have previously argued that we can usefully interpret Kierkegaard's distinctions between life-views or existential stages in terms of Harry Frankfurt's influential notion of the "higher-order will". Here I argue that the forms of anxiety described in the second half of the *Concept of Anxiety* can be understood as manifestations of weakness or division in the higher-order will. I describe five forms of weakness in the higher-order will that correspond to Kierkegaard's variants of anxiety about guilt and anxiety about the good. But these forms of anxiety cannot be avoided simply through the apparent unity given by forming *any* highest-order will. As we see in the *Purity of Heart*, only when the agent's ultimate commitment is to the right kind of end – namely the eternal or absolute – can it be wholehearted or undivided, providing the kind of inward stability needed to overcome anxiety.

1. Autonomy or Powerlessness?

The goal of this paper is to show that when the modes of anxiety Kierkegaard distinguishes are properly understood as forms of weakness in the higher-order will, this helps resolve key problems regarding his picture of the human will. These problems are discussed in Alasdair MacIntyre's recent restatement of his famous objection to Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*. An analysis of the second half of the *Concept of Anxiety*, together with relevant points from the upbuilding discourse on "The Purity of Heart," will help clarify the existential, teleological, and reflexive aspects of the will that MacIntyre's new argument misses.

These problems concerning the notions of will and choice stand at the center of disputes among different Anglo-American interpretations of Kierkegaard's first authorship. Although this is an oversimplification for heuristic purposes only, it is useful to distinguish four broad "camps" or perspectives in Anglo-American work on Kierkegaard today:

(1) Broadly "Calvinist" sympathizers with Kierkegaard,[1] who stress themes such as complete human powerlessness before sin, all creaturely self-assertion as willfulness, absolute obedience to divine commands, and total acceptance of providence understood as a complete governance of the world. C. Stephen Evans, Phil Quinn, Bruce Kirmmse and Karen Carr are first-rate writers in this genre, and many more could be mentioned. Authors in this group also sometimes claim Kierkegaard as an ally in support of antifoundationalist theories of knowledge, such as Plantinga's "Reformed epistemology."

(2) Neo-Aristotelian critics of Kierkegaard such as Alasdair MacIntyre and Louis Mackey (to whom MacIntyre's famous criticisms of *Either/Or II* are indebted), who have seen Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works as voluntarist and proto-Sartrean, absolutizing the individual subject à la Fichte. More sympathetic interpreters such as Louis Pojman, Louis Dupré, and some Marxist critics might also fit into this genre broadly construed.

(3) "Synthesizers" sympathetic with Kierkegaard and looking for new alternatives to these first two approaches, understanding the key concepts of Kierkegaard's ontology and psychology as a novel combination of idealist and Christian elements that provides the basis for a viable existential personalism rightly balancing individual, social, and religious dimensions of our lives.[2] In this genre I would place quasi-Aristotelian readings of Kierkegaard going back to George Stack, Ronald Green's Kantian reading, Anthony Rudd's reading in *Kierkegaard and the Limits of the Ethical*, and several other works by Mark Taylor, Edward Mooney, Anthony Rudd, Jamie Ferreira, Gordon Marino, Marilyn Piety, David Gouwens and Timothy Jackson. For example, Jackson argues quite compellingly in a recent essay that Kierkegaard's theological position on grace and free will is roughly that of Jacob Arminius, who sought for a way between Pelagianism and a predestined election independent of all human choice[3] (to the great consternation of Calvinists like Jonathan Edwards).

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[1] I hasten to emphasize that here "Calvinist" is used loosely, and will probably include several scholars who do not identify themselves as members of either main Dutch Reformed denominations in the United States.

[2] My own colleague Merold Westphal probably also belongs in this camp, though also in the Calvinist camp, and this shows how imperfect my taxonomy is since there are plenty of scholars whose work has that singular/individual quality that resists such simple categorizations.

[3] See Timothy P. Jackson "Arminian Edification: Kierkegaard on Grace and Free Will" in *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, ed. by A. Hannay and G. Marino, Cambridge University Press 1998, pp. 235-56.

(4) Broadly "deconstructive" interpreters. Some, like Kevin Newmark and John Caputo, are largely sympathetic to a Kierkegaard they take to promote the singular as a total transcendence of the universal (and there is an interesting convergence here with Reformed views of Kierkegaard as an ethical antiuniversalist, with an antifoundationalist conception of knowledge, who requires the surrender of all human self-assertion as the path to salvation). Other postmodern readings are more skeptical, ironical, or aesthetic in style, focusing on Kierkegaard's language, problems of pseudonymity, and authorial intent (e.g. James Conant and Roger Poole). Finally, some deconstructive critics focus on autobiographical problems in the texts and irreconcilable conceptual aporias in Kierkegaard's ideas.

The best author known to me in this last subgroup is Vanessa Rumble, who in a fascinating recent paper argues (partially in response to Jamie Ferreira) that Kierkegaard's early pseudonymous works "repeatedly rehearse the battle between two competing claims: the inviolability of the individual's freedom and the paralysis of the will associated with sin."[4] My fourfold taxonomy is indebted to her observation that critics like Mackey focus on "Kierkegaard's Romantic leanings...evident in his emphasis on the choice of self and the free appropriation of every influence foreign to the subject," while others focus on the need for total submission to providence and divine will.[5] Rumble is right in my view to focus on Kierkegaard's need to retain something of the "prerogative of Fichte's Absolute I"[6] in the face of a doctrine of absolute predestination whose consequence has to be "the enforced futility of human endeavor."[7] I am less convinced by her argument that the "aspiration to totality" evident in Kierkegaard's early desire for a complete life-view mapping out one's individual destiny remains unresolved in the later pseudonymous authors' split personae and their obsession with undoing the transition in which freedom and reflection emerge from absorption in "the self-forgetful life of immediacy,"[8] or her claim that this desire for a return to passive aestheticism has the same psychological function for

[4] Vanessa Rumble "Eternity Lies Beneath: Autonomy and Finitude in Kierkegaard's Early Writings" in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 35.1 (January 1997), pp. 83-103.
[5] Ibid., pp. 84-85.
[6] Ibid., p. 86.
[7] Ibid., p. 88.
[8] Ibid., pp. 91-96.

Kierkegaard as the desire for an autonomy that transcends finitude and knows its own fate:

> While the desire to return to an unreflective dwelling within finitude seems unrelated to the earlier quest for a disembodied and in principle unlimited knowing, the difference may be deceiving. Either through surrender or through conquest, the subject is determined to coincide with the whole....the opposite poles of passive enjoyment and active creation, of unreflective participation in finitude and providential dominion become indistinguishable.[9]

But even if we dissent from Rumble's view that Kierkegaard failed to balance autonomy and finitude, or to "carve out a middle ground between uncompromising defiance of and complete submission to the divine,"[10] she is surely right that in his phenomenology of anxiety and other "intermediate categories" [*Mellembestemmelser*], at least Kierkegaard's *aim* is to explain why there is a middle ground between "the unqualified self-assertion of the absolute subject and the absolute submission of the powerless sinner."[11] He forthrightly denies that we should regard any exercise of freedom or all volitional self-assertion in general as defiance, or explain sin on this basis. For on that approach, the only way to avoid sin would be to submit to necessity (*CA*, p. 108). Yet he also famously denies that human freedom is an absolute *liberum arbitrium* that chooses indifferently between good and evil (*CA*, p. 112). The need for a third way arises from theological problems for Kierkegaard, but we are just as clearly forced to it by our own experience of moral responsibility as part of the temporal structure of our life-narratives.

[9] Ibid., pp. 96-97. Here I will let myself poke a little fun at Rumble. She may be right that Kierkegaard's critique of Romanticism is driven in part by his own attraction to "the lure of absolute subjectivity" and the "quest for totality" (p. 100); she may even be right that the pseudonymous works inadvertently betray Kierkegaard's own (Freudian) longing for immersion in a natural life untroubled by reflection, or a return to lost innocence. But this psychoanalysis makes Kierkegaard sound like Citizen Kane in his "broken engagement" with childhood. And in searching for the psychological key to explain "what is going on in the pseudonymous works?" (p. 99), Rumble's analysis seems a bit like the journalist trying to decipher what "Rosebud" meant for Kane. She is trying to narrate a coherent life-view to make sense of the mysteries of the pseudonymous works at an objective biographical level, and such a metanarrative is something like the kind of providential view Kierkegaard found lacking in Andersen's novel (p. 89). Is it Kierkegaard or Rumble, then, who says the longest farewell to Romantic totality?
[10] Ibid., p. 101.
[11] Ibid., p. 102.

2. *Temporalized Freedom in the Higher-Order Will: the Answer to MacIntyre*

I have dwelled on Rumble's forceful presentation of this dichotomy between "raw assertion or sheer determinism"[12] because my own work on Kierkegaard has been motivated by aspects of this central problem. As one of the "sympathetic synthesizers" (indebted to the others I listed in that genre), I have argued in past work that the 'choice' of ethical selfhood in *Either/Or,* Part 2 can be understood by comparing Kierkegaard's distinctions between life-views or existential stages with Harry Frankfurt's influential thesis that human persons are distinguished from other animals by their capacity for what he called "higher-order will." Through higher-order volitions, as Frankfurt described them, a person forms self-defining cares (or what Bernard Williams would call commitments) and in the process actively works on her own psychosomatic motivational states by identifying herself with some, while alienating and trying to overcome others.[13] This notion of higher-order will sheds light, I think, on the sense in which "spirit" is a relation of self to itself, in Kierkegaard's Hegelian formulation.

In *Either/Or,* very roughly, the aesthete corresponds to a "wanton" in Frankfurt's sense, who lacks higher-order volitions and is guided merely by her strongest desires, while the agent in the ethical stage forms higher-order volitions, endeavoring to shape her own motivational economy in accordance with projects and roles that can give narrative significance to her life.[14] Note, however, that the positive commitments formed at the level of the higher-order will need not be complete or absolute. As Frankfurt puts it, the agent may not be

[12] Ibid., p. 103.

[13] This is a brief way of summarizing ideas from several of Frankfurt's essays, included in his two collections *The Importance of What We Care About*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1988, and *Necessity, Volition, and Love*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999. The development of Frankfurt's notion of volitional identification is actually quite a complex topic in its own right. He began with the notion that the agent's identifying with some desire D is explainable simply in terms of her having another desire *about D,* namely a desire to act on D. But in later essays, he sees that while identification must be a reflexive or intrapersonal process in which the agent actively relates herself in a new way to the "raw ingredients" of her psychic repertoire, the agent-authority it conveys cannot be explained simply in terms of second-order desires.

[14] See my essay, "The Meaning of Kierkegaard's Choice Between the Aesthetic and the Ethical" in *Southwest Philosophy Review*, Vol. 11.2 (August, 1995), pp. 73-108, reprinted in *Kierkegaard After MacIntyre*, ed. by J. Davenport and A. Rudd, Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co. (forthcoming 2001).

"wholeheartedly" committed to his project, or decisively identified with the motives and psychic states such a project requires. As St. Augustine also found, there can be volitional "ambiguity" in the higher-order will of an agent who is not wanton.[15] Thus we have at least three "levels" of agent-authority in our motivational psyche:

1. First-order desires, passions, emotions, and inclinations involved in different relationships and social contexts of action, aimed at a wide variety of external objects and goals;
2. Cares or commitments of the higher-order will, through which we identify with or alienate various first-order states and the social roles in which they are involved;
3. The decisive or wholehearted position of (what I call) the *highest-order will*, which forms the heart of human agency. We may think of this as the core of the inner self that is actively formed by "spirit" in Kierkegaard's sense as freedom of the highest-order will.

I have developed this analysis in a new essay on Kierkegaard as a kind of virtue ethicist. In this essay, I argue that in the first half of the *Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard resolves Rumble's dichotomy with a novel picture of freedom in the higher-order will that is both libertarian and yet dispositionally directed, affected by its past yet open to future options. Through what is in effect a "temporal schematism" of the Kantian noumenal will, Kierkegaard gives historical form to a free self that remains both self-forming and yet factically situated and thus never indifferent between options in significant life-choices.[16]

[15] See Frankfurt "Identification and Wholeheartedness" in *The Importance of What We Care About*, pp. 156-76. Note however that Frankfurt has not continued, as I think he should, to consistently distinguish identification *per se* from decisive or wholehearted identification. For this error, see "The Faintest Passion" in *Necessity, Volition, and Love*, pp. 95-107.

[16] In his presentation at the August 2000 Research Seminar, Arne Grøn similarly argued that spirit as reflexive or self-concerned freedom is a kind of self-relating temporal process, in which the human being also relates itself to time. In my terms, what Grøn refers to as the spiritual activity of self-relation is the free choice of the highest-order will, while what Grøn refers to as the "self" won or lost in the activity of self-relation is the concrete volitional self formed by our highest-order orientation and within this, the concrete commitments of the higher-order will. As Grøn says (translating between our terminologies) movement of one's highest-order will in a sense transcends time by determining the narrative meaning that one's life-process will have for one in terms of ongoing commitments. And yet these decisions are part of the same temporal order of the self. In short, spirit or the highest-order will has its own "temporality" of repetition (a sequence of free decisions, not a determined order of cause/effect).

Since this remains true even at the initial stage of innocence, before Adam and Eve "know" good and evil, the Fall is also neither an act of arbitrary freedom nor one that posits the objective authority of ethics for Adam and Eve by sheer fiat. Rather, the act of the Fall involves a subjective appropriation of objective standards of good and evil which is (speaking loosely) mediated by the anxieties of aestheticism. Thus for Kierkegaard, the transition from innocence to sin in the Fall is *generalized* as the transition from the aesthetic to the ethical.[17] Thus the Fall is actually the paradigm instance of a form of volitional development that counts as spiritual progress.[18] As Haufniensis says, "By sin, man's sensuousness is posited as sinfulness and is therefore lower than that of beasts, and yet this is because it is here that the higher begins, for at this point spirit begins" (*CA*, p. 89). Inwardly, the Fall is a *felix culpa*.

Though I have barely summarized these arguments here, their relevance can be clarified by reconsidering MacIntyre's challenge in its newly revised (and I think even more imposing) form. In his response to myself, Rudd, Mooney and others in our new collection, MacIntyre now argues that

> although Kierkegaard does indeed understand human lives as having a *telos*, and although Kierkegaard does indeed believe that subsequently individuals may come to recognize that there were good reasons for them to move towards that *telos* out of the aesthetic and into the ethical, at the time that they did so move theirs was not a progress directed or even guided by reason, but rather [only] a set of psychological developments.[19]

[17] For this comparison of the Fall in the *Concept of Anxiety* to the transition between the aesthetic and ethical life-spheres in *Either/Or*, Part 2, see my essay "Entangled Freedom: Ethical Authority, Original Sin, and Choice in Kierkegaard's Concept of Anxiety" in *Kierkegaardiana 21*, Copenhagen 2001, pp. 131-151.

[18] As discussion of Karl Verstrynge's paper during the Research Seminar in August 2000 brought out, Kierkegaard is trying to walk a fine line theologically. It is clear that he portrays the Fall as a *felix culpa* for spirit. But it must remain possible in principle for Adam to move from innocence to the complete openness of spirit described by Anti-Climacus. Otherwise sin would be *necessary* for spiritual development, which Haufniensis denies. The problem is that in *The Concept of Anxiety*, he offers no mechanism for the development of spirit otherwise than through the first awakening of anxiety, and suggests that first sin posits the very anxiety it presupposed, implying that initial anxiety itself is already sinfulness. We thus need some intermediate phenomenon of the will other than anxiety that could mediate the transition from innocence to full spiritual openness without sin.

[19] Alasdair MacIntyre "Once more on Kierkegaard" new in *Kierkegaard After MacIntyre* (forthcoming spring 2001). Notice the allusion to Mackey in MacIntyre's essay title here.

In other words, MacIntyre still holds that the movement from the aesthetic to the ethical is for Kierkegaard motivated at first only by passions rather than by rational justifications, since the latter can gain their motivational force for the agent only retrospectively, after the former do their work. On this reading, the Judge advances good arguments for the ethical, but these cannot "carry weight" with the aesthete, or he is no longer an aesthete, but already in the ethical sphere.[20] MacIntyre concedes that there is a sense in which the Judge's points are "intelligible" to the 'A'[21] but 'A' cannot "appreciate" those reasons in the motivational sense.[22] For 'A' to be "convinced" by the Judge's arguments in a way that matters subjectively for his actions, he would already have to have a serious concern for the questions about happiness and meaning in life that the Judge poses, and this would *eo ipso* be "to have already left the aesthetic stage behind."[23] In sum, "for th[e] aesthete *to be moved* by genuinely ethical considerations, he would have already to have discarded his aesthetic attitudes and have become another sort of person."[24]

In this new form, MacIntyre's arbitrariness critique is much clearer, but as a result it also more clearly rests on a dichotomy that Kierkegaard rejects. MacIntyre seems to assume that either rational evaluation determines the will's choice (as in classical *prohairesis*) or practical reason is motivationally inert for the agent.[25] Kierkegaard's view instead implies a third possible role for practical reason in between these two: as I argued in 1995, the objective significance of moral considerations, which is rationally intelligible to the awakened (or anxious) aesthete, itself *grounds* the ultimate choice to take such considerations seriously, but without *determining* this choice. To insist that if an election between alternative modes of life isn't determined by practical reasoning then it cannot be rationally grounded at all is just to beg the question, taking for granted in effect that libertarian

[20] Ibid., mss p. 3.

[21] Ibid., mss. p. 2.

[22] Ibid., mss p. 8.

[23] Ibid., mss p. 11.

[24] Ibid., mss p. 3, my italics. At least this is the picture Kierkegaard presents when at least he is emphasizing the "radical discontinuity between the aesthetic and the ethical." While this is the "dominant strand" in *Either/Or*, Part 2, MacIntyre argues, I think quite insightfully, that in some passages continuities between the stages are suggested (mss. p. 14).

[25] MacIntyre applies this same dichotomy to a critique of Duns Scotus in *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, University of Notre Dame Press 1991, chapter 5.

freedom and practical reason cannot operate as part of a single process in the formation of self-defining commitments.

This also explains why the discontinuity or leap between the aesthetic and the ethical is compatible with the movement between these stages being rationally grounded and non-arbitrary. MacIntyre is right at least that when an aesthetic agent who *recognizes* ethical reasons as authoritative external reasons for him to act, but is not antecedently *moved* by this recognition, chooses now to make them his own or to be moved by them, this choice is not determined or *fully explained* by the authority of the ethical. In terms of the moral psychology in the *Concept of Anxiety*, there is instead a kind of cumulative build-up of understanding in the recalcitrant aesthete that enables the choice needed to make the transition; but as MacIntyre says, the moment of despair over aestheticism remains a leap,[26] a qualitative transition that the quantitative buildup never simply causes. For example, the build-up of anxiety is a necessary precondition but not a sufficient condition for the act of will in any person's "first sin": "It approaches sin as closely as possible, as anxiously as possible, but without explaining sin" (*CA*, p. 92). In *this* sense, there is indeed a kind of "radical discontinuity" between the aesthetic and the ethical forms of spirit, which cannot be mediated by practical reasoning alone.[27] But this sort of discontinuity or leap is not problematic.

What divides Kierkegaard and MacIntyre here is their respective conceptions of the will. For Kierkegaard, a choice to posit new ends for the self can be performed *on the basis of* or *on the grounds of* recognized practical reasons, without these having antecedently operated as motives or as the objects of appetitive states in the agent. On Kierkegaard's conception of the will, a choice can be "unmotivated" in MacIntyre's sense, but nevertheless grounded in considerations whose objective rational significance the agent antecedently recognized. Only the leap gives full subjective force to these considerations as ones the agent resolves to act upon.[28] In other words, it is through such leaps that the agent changes practical reasons "external" to her "motivational set" into reasons that are "internal" to this set.[29] Williams, like MacIntyre, would insist that an agent can internalize external reasons only if this act itself is motivated by reasons and desires already internal to her motivational set. On this view, the scope of rational motivation is absolutely limited by its original endowments: all rational motivation is derivative from basic motives (given by nature or nurture) to which *the agent* cannot rationally add. The agent can expand her set of rational motives only through connection to other rational considerations that already motivate her. Kierkegaard's novel conception of the will liberates the agent from this straightjacket conception, which makes innovation in our ultimate rational motives impossible in principle. It allows for what I call projective motivation, i.e. motivational innovation that is grounded but not determined by new rational considerations as well as the agent's existing dispositions.

The same point can be explained in slightly different terms. Of course a Kierkegaardian leap of the will counts as "criterionless" if this only means that it is not *determined* by prior states internal to the agent's motivational set (e.g. via practical syllogism). When MacIntyre insists that being "criterionless" in this sense is problematic, then, he is assuming in general that the connection between practical reasoning and election among alternatives must always be irrational if it is not *prohairesis* or selection moved by rational appetite. In particular, he is assuming that *free will* as the connection between existential reflection and fundamental changes in our highest-order commitments and character must be arbitrary if it generates any radically new motivation, rather than simply conveying or channeling a general appetite for the good onto concrete options, as Aquinas' model suggests. But this is exactly the classical assumption which the picture of freedom sketched in the *Concept of Anxiety* and later works implicitly denies. What Kierkegaard's picture suggests, but admittedly does not fully work out, is a notion of the will as a faculty with a creative power lacking in Aristotle's and Aquinas' conceptions. On this new picture, significant life-choices which change our inner character do so by generating and cultivating new motives for action. Yet though radical in this sense, such choices are neither *ex nihilo* nor cut off from reason: they are both moved by tendencies arising from past choices *and* informed (although not appetitively drawn) by other kinds of reasons and considerations available to us, which may or

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[26] Ibid., mss p. 4: "For to despair is already to have chosen."

[27] Ibid., mss. p. 3, p. 5, p. 14, and p. 23.

[28] It is worth noting that, despite Kierkegaard's protest against Kantian autonomy (and his own misinterpretation of Kant on this topic) his psychology of choice and action remains related to Kant's idea that to act on a maxim is always to add something to the motive force of some previously felt impulse or rational consideration. On this topic, see Henry Allison's work on Kant.

[29] See Bernard Williams "Internal and External Reasons" in *Moral Luck*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1981, pp. 101-13.

may not conflict with the tendencies of our acquired character. Neither the existing dispositions nor available rational grounds for possible new motivations *determine* the leap, which allows for novelty even in our highest-order will.

MacIntyre has not posed any clear objection to this existential account of the will itself. He cannot argue that Kierkegaard's conception leads to a problem of arbitrariness on its own terms, which would give us reason to prefer a Thomistic account of the will as practical reason. For it is only on the assumptions of the latter that the existential conception appears to involve arbitrariness.

The debate has thus reached a dialectical standoff. But this does not mean that the positions are simply incommensurable and there is no way to make progress. We can try to resolve the debate by looking at which account of the will is more phenomenologically adequate in other respects. I believe the existential account, with its potential for motivational innovation, will prove truer to human life and experience in the end. MacIntyre's challenge, then, proves to be a part of Rumble's, and both can be answered, if at all, only by further developing the picture of temporalized freedom in the higher-order will outlined in the first half of the *Concept of Anxiety*.

3. Sin and Weakness of the Higher-Order Will

Some clues for developing Kierkegaard's idea and exhibiting its phenomenological adequacy are found in the discussions of the continuance of sin in the second half of the *Concept of Anxiety*. It may be useful to understand the forms of anxiety involved in the continuance of sin as special forms of "weakness of will."

In contemporary discussions, volitional weakness is usually conceived as a decision to form an intention contrary to one's best practical judgment. But analytic philosophers in recent decades have been divided on whether weak-willed decisions in this sense are autonomous, or count as less than fully self-determined.[30] Kierkegaard's account of anxiety suggests not only that weakness infects decisions for which the agent is fully responsible, but also that in its most dangerous forms, weakness also appears in the higher-order will through which

[30] See, for example: Robert Dunn *The Possibility of Weakness of Will*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co. 1987; Alfred Mele *Autonomous Agents*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995.

persons form commitments and take responsibility for their psychosomatic motives and characteristics. The "weakness" that is essential to sinfulness in all its forms for Kierkegaard is not a simple failure to act in accordance with one's principles, commitments, and the practical judgment they inform in the present circumstances, due to the counterpull of inclination, habit, sudden passion, or spontaneous perversity. It is rather the failure in the effort or strength of will needed to maintain one's volitional commitments themselves over time.

This connection is implicit in Kierkegaard's understanding of anxiety. To simplify, anxiety as freedom's sense of open future possibility might be summarized as the subjective experience of being aware that some more or less imprecisely specified range of actions, intentions, or commitments with negative value is not just logically possible, but *volitionally salient* for me (*CA*, p. 91).[31] In other words, we can think of anxiety as the feeling of volitional weakness, of proneness to becoming guilty. If we call it a fear of "nothing," this is best understood not as an empty fear of some completely unspecified but looming *external* threat, but rather as a fear of something we cannot fully grasp *in ourselves*. Sartre was right about this much: what distinguishes angst or anguish from fear is that the latter has an external orientation, whereas the former names a *reflexive* attitude, a fear of our own will. Before first sin, the possibilities of guilt appear as an unsaturated field, but within sinfulness (in ordinary experience) the possibilities may become more concrete.[32] Let me be clear about the connection I am proposing here. The idea is not that an agent's anxiety is *her fear of her weakness*, as if anxiety were a reflective attitude distinct from the weakness. If that were the case, then we might sometimes know that we are disposed to *akrasia* without any anxiety over it, and likewise we might be anxious about other persons' *akrasia* just as we are about our own (e.g. "anxiety" that our friend who promised to meet us at the café will not turn up, since she has a bad habit of not keeping such promises). This is not I think what Kierke-

[31] Compare this to Darío González's discussion of "real possibility" in his paper, "The Triptych of Sciences in the Introduction to the *Concept of Anxiety*," presented at the August 2000 Research Seminar. Like González, I think of "Psychology" as Kierkegaard understood it, as a phenomenology of real possibility, or (more precisely) a phenomenology of factical, historically conditioned volitional possibility.

[32] Thus Haufniensis writes that once sin is posited, anxiety returns, "Yet this time the object of anxiety is a determinate something...because the distinction between good and evil is posited *in concreto*" (*CA*, pp. 111-12). Thus what we are anxious about is an act or disposition we understand as evil, as an "unwarranted actuality" (*CA*, p. 113).

gaard has in mind. Rather, existential anxiety is for him the prereflective or immediate feeling of volitional weakness itself. This is why metaphors of "falling" are attractive in describing it. To feel ourselves succumbing to some temptation or giving into some pattern we have developed in our own will is to feel ourselves sliding into a repetition we know is not for the best; in such experiences we feel *what it is like* to be weak-willed. If this is right, then anxiety will be overcome only when weakness of will in all its forms is overcome.

(A) Volitional self-negation. Its initial form is found in the reflective aesthete who has awakened to the need (innate in our nature) for our life to have some kind of eternal meaning. As Alastair Hannay argues, in *Either/Or,* Part 2 the reflective aesthete is portrayed as intentionally resisting this demand: "exponents of what William calls the 'last' aesthetic life-view…want *not* to be some higher self than the one they currently conceive themselves as being,"[33] i.e. someone who controls his passions only with a view to maximizing "enjoyment and the avoidance of pain."[34] In Frankfurtian terms, such an aesthete cannot avoid having some single highest-order will, but he makes it entirely negative: he wills not to have any positive or substantial commitments, since these would interfere with maximizing pleasure; instead he simply lets his desires and emotions follow external circumstances.[35] This will to volitional emptiness is one kind of weakness of the highest-order will: as Hannay says, it involves despair (in Anti-Climacus' sense) because this aesthetic life-view is constituted by "reluctance to meet the demands of a higher standard of selfhood."[36] The agent cannot bring himself to take any substantive position in life.

This corresponds to what Haufniensis calls "the anxiety of spiritlessness," a form of aestheticism not possible in pre-Christian paganism (*CA*, p. 93). This "Christian paganism" (as Haufniensis sometimes dubs

[33] Alastair Hannay "Kierkegaard and the Variety of Despair" in *Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard,* pp. 329-48, p. 338.

[34] Ibid., p. 336.

[35] In "The Meaning of Kierkegaard's Choice Between the Aesthetic and the Ethical," I described this as a highest-order will not to form any second-order volitions. This is equivalent to willing emptiness at the level of positive or substantial commitments. As Hannay puts it, this aesthete is "content to be nothing" (Hannay, p. 343).

[36] Hannay, "Kierkegaard and the Variety of Despair," p. 338. Though as Hannay insightfully notes, next to this notion of despair as a "retardant" of existential progress in *Either/Or,* Part 2 and the *Sickness Unto Death* there is also the positive notion of despair as a recognition of inadequacy in one's current life-view, which functions as an existential propellant to self-development (pp. 334–35).

it: *CA*, p. 94) is not the "innocence" of naive aestheticism, in which the spirit is dreaming or unawakened, but rather an active lukewarmness, an attempt in the highest-order will to negate all value-distinctions that could justify or call for taking substantial positions, "punctuating" one's life with moments of resolve. That it is active in this way, not just passively aesthetic, is what Haufniensis means by saying "spiritlessness has a relation to spirit" (*CA*, p. 94). Spiritlessness succeeds in being "neither guilty nor not guilty" (*CA*, p. 94), because as evaluations of the person, these qualifications apply only to the character constituted by dispositions of the higher-order will, which is actively kept empty in spiritlessness. Thus in its "stagnation" and complacency, spiritlessness also seems to succeed in avoiding anxiety (*CA*, p. 95). But while paganism or naive aestheticism is non-anxious because its spirit is simply absent or dreaming, in spiritlessness anxiety is actively excluded. It wills not to recognize the anxiety that is nevertheless still present in its weakness of the highest-order will. We may think of this as an attempt by the highest-order will to erase its nature as spirit, or to destroy its own power to invest the agent in projects and relationships. As Haufniensis puts it metaphorically: "If the salt becomes dumb, with what shall it be salted?" (*CA*, p. 95).

(B) Halfheartedness. (B.i) The weakness involved in other forms of what I call "heroic aestheticism" is not quite the same (although Hannay does not make this distinction).[37] For these aesthetes at least seem to themselves (and usually to others) to be actively devoted to some recognizable goal in the capacity of some social role, e.g. in the worlds of science, politics, business, creative arts, or intimate relationships. Their passion is directed outward, but at least it seems to involve commitment to various projects and to particular others in the social world. Their weakness is instead the one Hannay locates as central in the *Sickness Unto Death*: "a weakness that one might describe as addiction to the world."[38] The problem for such a would-be heroic aesthete is that there is a dynamic connection between the 'how' of higher-order willing and 'what' is willed, or the objects of our care. Wholehearted or decisive identification can only be sus-

[37] See my paper "The Ethical and Religious Significance of Taciturnus' Letter in Kierkegaard's *Stages on Life's Way*" in the *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Stages on Life's Way,* ed. by Robert Perkins, Macon, GA: Mercer University Press (forthcoming fall 2000).

[38] Hannay "Kierkegaard and the Variety of Despair," p. 339.

tained with respect to objects or goals whose value is infinite, or eternally meaningful. Thus in the *Purity of Heart*, as Rudd summarizes, "Kierkegaard argues that only the 'eternal' can be willed absolutely. For nothing temporal is, in fact, a unity..."[39] Because its devotion is unconditional, the highest-order will cannot sustain commitment to something inherently mutable and liable to conflict with itself: "If a person is in truth to will one thing, the one thing he wills must indeed be of such a nature that it can remain unchanged amid all changes.... If it is continually changed, he himself becomes changeable, double-minded, and unstable" (*PH*, p. 30).[40] Thus the aesthetic hero who wills something great irrespective of its goodness is likewise eventually forced into division within her higher-order will, or into what Frankfurt calls volitional ambiguity.

The problem here can also be explained in reflexive terms: the would-be heroic aesthete lacks the right kind of concern for herself. Her ground project in Williams' sense – that on which she staked everything – dissolves in time, and thus it becomes no longer coherent or intelligible for her to see the value of her whole life in terms of it, or to be willing to die for it. As Kierkegaard puts it, aesthetic heros "all have intentions, plans, and resolutions for life" but "the resolution does not stand firm and does not resist; it vacillates and is changed with the circumstances" (*PH*, p. 31).

Hannay understands the weakness of will in this case in terms of pragmatic contradiction. He argues that making a wholehearted commitment or basing one's life explicitly or implicitly on "an ideal or principle" implies that living according to such an ideal expresses "the inherent value of that life." Wholehearted identification with principles and life-goals implicitly affirms their existential value, their capacity to give wholistic meaning to one's life.

> But if basing one's life on an aesthetic principle proves to be no more than the attempt to make finite goals "eternally" satisfying when reflection shows that they can have no bearing on the eternal question of the value-in-itself of one's life as a whole, [then]...persistant dedication to an aesthetic principle should be recognizable for what it is – a failure to face the challenge of realizing the inherent value of one's life.[41]

[39] Anthony Rudd *Kierkegaard and the Limits of the Ethical*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993, p. 139.

[40] Søren Kierkegaard "On the Occasion of a Confession: Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing" in *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, tr. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton University Press 1993, pp. 7-154. All further references to this text will be given parenthetically with the abbreviation *PH*.

[41] Hannay "Kierkegaard and the Variety of Despair," p. 337.

This is what Haufniensis means when he says that an aesthetic genius like Tallyrand, who only follows his talents for outward achievements, "does not become significant to himself" and thus his creativity is not the expression of a "planetarean core" in his agency (*CA*, p. 101). The shell of the man is impressive, but inwardly he is hollow.

Thus anxiety as the experience of weakness in the higher-order will cannot be avoided simply through the apparent unity given by forming *just any* highest-order will. Only when the agent's ultimate commitment is to the right kind of end – namely the eternal or absolute – can it provide the kind of stability needed to overcome anxiety in one's worldly choices. In Frankfurt's terms, the spirited aesthete's anxiety is thus a symptom of a higher-order will trying to substitute other measures and standards in place of the only adequate grounds for determining "what to care about." This is why Haufniensis writes that such anxiety is educative "because it consumes all finite ends and discovers their deceptiveness" (*CA*, p. 155). As the experience of the volitional halfheartedness that results from pursuing finite ends as if they were infinitely valuable, or existentially sufficient by themselves, anxiety will not let us rest in our self-deception. Our "nature" rebels against this deviation from the only path along which we can fully realize our selfhood.

In this sense, the aesthete's self-betrayal can also be explained as a failure to be true to one's ownmost desire. Thus Anthony Rudd argues, "According to Kierkegaard, the factor that drives us from one stage of life to the next is an – at first unconscious and inchoate – desire for wholeness, for an ultimate integration and coherence in our lives."[42] This is a will to what we might call ultimate meaning, a significance that can serve as a final or decisive statement of who we are. If this is a necessary component of our highest-order will, then the tacit hope to find sufficient meaning only in aesthetic projects again leads to volitional ambiguity or "double-mindedness" in the higher-order will: the agent clings to positive commitments and projects while recognizing that keeping these as her highest priorities does not accord with her own highest-order will to an ultimate meaning. Alternatively, the aesthetic hero's case could instead be described as a failure to will existential coherence itself as a highest aim. In this analysis, the *akrasia* or conflict is relocated from within the will to the relation between will and reason: it consists in highest-order will fail-

[42] Anthony Rudd *Kierkegaard and the Limits of the Ethical*, p. 134.

ing to follow the agent's own recognized judgment that existential coherence is essential for a meaningful life. Weakness in this case is being satisfied with something less than our nature requires.

(B.ii) The kind of conflict between higher-order volitions or ambiguity in commitments that is the inevitable result aesthetic heroism according to Kierkegaard is also the form of volitional weakness found in many agents who are on the verge of ethical consciousness but who do not want to judge their actions and character in ethical terms. This is the case, for example, with persons who are "dialectical" in the continuance of sin according to Kierkegaard: they are not wholly committed to a course of action or project they know is wrong, but neither do they define it as "wrong," which for most agents would mean wholly repudiating it.[43] Repentance, by contrast, requires decisive alienation of the sinful will and wholehearted resolve to remove corrupt motives and avoid the actions they motivate. This is why there can be no anxiety in true repentance. As Haufniensis says, "The past about which I am supposed to be anxious must stand in a relationship of possibility to me," meaning that if I am anxious about them, then my past actions or pattern of acts remain volitionally possible for me, or open for repetition (*CA*, p. 91):

> If I am anxious because of a past offense, it is because I have not placed it in an essential relation to myself as past and have in some deceitful way or another prevented it from being past. If indeed it is actually past, then I cannot be anxious about it but only repentant. If I do not repent, I have allowed myself to make my relation to the offense dialectical, and by this the offense itself has become a possibility and not something past. (*CA*, p. 91–92).

So in this condition, anxiety is a symptom of division of the higher-order will that does not fully accept its past guilt. For to accept one's guilt as guilt is to repent it: "as soon as guilt is posited, anxiety is gone and repentance is there" (*CA*, p. 103). Thus when "anxiety about guilt" begins in Judaism, and with it the individual becomes conscious of himself as responsible individual (*CA*, pp. 104-5), a concern for one's inner self emerges that does not sit well with unresolved guilt, because this entails volitional ambiguity. Thus the religious genius, in considering talents and opportunities, will first "turn towards himself," discovering guilt as a disunity within himself that must be overcome before other outward endeavors can be pursued wholeheartedly (*CA*, p. 107).[44] We might rephrase the point as follows: all sustainable care for other persons and goals involves a reflexive component of care-of-self: *in being* concerned for anything or anyone else in the world, the religious genius is also "primitively concerned with himself" (*CA*, p. 107). It is important to avoid confusion here: this does not mean, for example, that he works at a relationship with someone only to prove to himself how committed he is in loving. Commitment to something beyond ourselves involves regarding it as valuable for its own sake, and not just as *a means* to building our self-image. But genuine commitment to alterior ends also requires and involves an ongoing effort to manage, train, and consolidate the relevant elements of our own motivational psyche in an attempt to sustain our commitment over time. This is why Haufniensis later (in one of the many passages that so dramatically influenced Heidegger) argues that we must first be earnest about ourselves before we can be earnest about anything else (*CA*, p. 150). Earnestness here corresponds to volitional wholeheartedness in Frankfurt's sense. Haufniensis also speaks of it as the authentic form of "inwardness" (the reflexive volitional attitude we take towards our own first-order motives), and also equates it with "certitude" (*CA*, p. 151), which is the practical effect on us of a truth when wholeheartedly appropriated (*CA*, p. 139).

So far, we have considered only the forms of anxiety which Haufniensis describes in Chapter III of the book as manifestations of the absence of adequate guilt-consciousness: anxiety in spiritlessness, reliance on fate, and a dialectical relation to guilt. These proved to be experiences of three forms of weakness or division in the higher-order will, (A), (B.i) and (B.ii) (with the last two having the same basic structure). In Chapter IV, we are introduced to the anxieties of agents with ethical or ethico-religious life-views: these include three stages of anxiety about evil and various versions of anxiety about the good. They also prove to be forms of volitional weakness or disunity.

At first, the individual is conscious of sin in herself, but sophistically regards this as a mere possibility rather than an actuality for her (*CA*, pp. 113, 115). Haufniensis is too brief about this form of anxiety, but the idea seems to be that the individual lacks the will to face the reality of her sin squarely and "own" it or (in Haufniensis' language)

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[43] There is one form of the demonic that for Kierkegaard explicitly embraces the morally wrong or corrupt *just because it is* wrong or vicious. But the weakness or doublemindedness of will is different in this sort of case, as we'll see.

[44] Compare this to a claim Martin Buber makes in *The Way of Man According to the Teaching of Hasidism*: the unification of his soul "must be accomplished before a man undertakes some unusual work," Citadel Press, p. 23.

pervade it with freedom. It is a disposition in her will, but she will not take any attitude towards it that recognizes it as a reality. This is not wholehearted alienation of the corrupt motive, but a will not to make any commitment regarding it (form A). She is disposed to some form of vicious or corrupt volition, but by intentionally letting it alone, she is neither embracing it with open approval nor embracing it in active disapproval in order to work against it. Thus her anxiety is like that we experience when we try to put out of mind a problem we know will eventually have to be solved. But in this case the relation is internal: the problem is in our own will.

The second type of anxiety about evil is another version of volitional halfheartedness (form B.iii): the individual is anxious about the possibility of repetition of the sin because he does not wholeheartedly repent it. "Anxiety wants to have the actuality of the sin removed, not entirely but to a certain degree" (*CA*, p. 114). Haufniensis relates this to having only a finite sense of our sin, according to which we are guilty of certain transgressions, but are not wholly sinful or in need of grace: "it has a little point that must be saved and that is without sin, and in the next moment another point" (*CA*, p. 114). Such a person has not let himself be fully educated by anxiety: while admitting a strictly delimited guilt, he still defines himself in terms of his finite relations only, with which he can "always bargain" and escape from threats (*CA*, p. 157).[45] We might think here of Oskar Schindler, at least as he was portrayed in Steven Spielberg's film. From an aesthetic existence, Schindler is coaxed by events to begin understanding his situation in terms of moral duties, but he is not at first a fully willing participant in this development. In the circumstances, witnessing unspeakable atrocities, he can no longer will aesthetic emptiness of moral purpose (form A); in Heidegger's terms, he lets himself have a conscience. But when he lets the ethical into the house of the self, at first he wants to restrict it to the small room in the attic. He begrudges the intrusion of ethical responsibility into his life and hopes for a compromise with it. He will allow it to be one component in his life, as long as it keeps in its place and does not get out of line, leaving him to do what he likes the rest of the time. In

[45] This is also why Haufniensis says later that a person must lose everything finite to anxiety to be fully educated. "Whoever learns to know his guilt only from the finite is lost in the finite" (*CA*, p. 161). He is anxious only "about men and about finitudes" (*CA*, p. 157) but not about himself *per se*, because he does not see his very self as guilt.

Kierkegaard's terms, he exhibits the "the double-mindedness of weakness as seen in actual everyday life," for "the person who wills the good only to a certain degree is double-minded" (*PH*, p. 64). But Schindler is anxious about this bargain, precisely because deep within he knows that willing the good absolutely requires an admission of absolute guilt or complete inadequacy in fulfilling the ideal.[46]

(C) Perversity 1. A new form of weakness is found in the comments on "crazed repentance" as a third variety of anxiety about evil. Given Haufniensis' examples of persons who try to repent of various addictions or vicious passions (*CA*, p. 116) one might at first think these cases are like Frankfurt's unwilling addict, whose higher-order volition clearly opposes the compulsive desire that nevertheless moves him to take heroin. But I think the problem Kierkegaard has in mind here is more complex. Unlike Frankfurt's unwilling addict, the crazed repentant wallows in his disorder, rather than sincerely and patiently working to correct it. Kierkegaard argues in his discourse on the "Purity of Heart" that the sincere regret "must be an action with a collected mind," rather than crazed, and thus the "grief of repentance" is distinct from the impatience of "sudden repentance" that wants instantly in a rage to cancel its guilt in one moment of total remorse, to "collect all the bitterness of sorrow in one draft" (*PH*, p.16-17). In other words, the crazed repentant does not will to take her disorder as a spiritual trial and work steadily for improvement. This, Haufniensis says, requires faith: the crazed repentant lacks the "courage to renounce anxiety without anxiety, which only faith can do" (*CA*, p. 117). We can understand this in Frankfurt's terms as follows: because the crazed repentant cannot immediately or without help bring her first-order motivational states into accord with her higher-order will, she selfishly modifies her higher-order will instead: she does not wholeheartedly will to overcome her vicious habits and passions, but rather instead secretly wills at the highest level to maintain the inner conflict. In other words, like the fox who declares the grapes sour because he cannot reach them, she perversely *wills* to be an unwilling addict because this is easier than willing to be a reformed one. She wallows in the conflict, and identifying herself with it.

[46] I develop these thoughts further in an article, "My *Schindler's List*: A Personal Kierkegaardian Reflection," (forthcoming in *Religious Humanism* 2001).

(D) Perversity 2. This raises an interesting question. Although Kierkegaard does not explicitly distinguish and categorize it, a fourth form of weakness in the higher-order will seems to be possible. Not only can persons be double-minded or halfhearted, as I put it; they can also posit the highest-order *will to be* halfhearted, or to maintain ambiguity in their commitments. This weakness is perverse, like that in the crazed repentant, but different because it wills a conflict among commitments or among higher-order volitions, rather than *between* the reflexive attitudes in our commitments and the first-order motives on which we act. Such a person is not just inadvertently caught between incompatible commitments, but rather *wallows* in such a conflict. Perhaps Captain de Vere in Melville's novel *Billy Budd* would be an example here. This perverse cultivation of conflicts within the structure of the self in form (C) and form (D) is important, because it seems to call into question Rudd's thesis that our deepest or most inalienable desire is for wholeness.

Nevertheless, Kierkegaard's view (as I have argued in previous work) is that willy-nilly there is always some governing or unitary highest-order will in each of us, because spirit is individual and cannot be eliminated, even though it may not will one thing. We can never be purely wanton in Frankfurt's sense, because we are unavoidably wholehearted in *some* highest-order determination; but this may be only in our determination to avoid all lasting involvements, or not to consider the question, or to care about various things without fully committing ourselves to any of them or wholeheartedly resolving on a consistent set of projects, and many other deficient forms of decisive identification. So even the perverse agents in (C) and (D) do in the formal sense have a single highest-order will. Our spirit is always formally one thing in its highest-order *willing*, but the object or goal that we will may be a disunity, implicitly or even explicitly. Thus Frankfurt was wrong in his Presidential Address to the American Philosophical Association when he claimed that no matter what more specific persons and goals we care about, "we wholeheartedly desire to be wholehearted" in our higher-order will.[47] On the contrary, persons can and do will to be double-minded in Kierkegaard's various senses. But Frankfurt was onto something, because there is still a kind of volitional contradiction in wholeheartedly willing not to be wholehearted about anything: in so willing, one nevertheless cannot escape being wholehearted about something, just as one cannot escape being free. On this basis, it remains true that because the highest-order will is by its nature one: its form reflects its teleological orientation towards a unified object of willing. We might expect, then, that the perverse will to be entirely halfhearted will betray itself: because it is not and cannot be in every way only conditionally committed (much less neutral), it will find the desire for wholeheartedness erupting within it and needing to be repressed again and again. In other words, the perverse will to halfheartedness will be anxious and unsatisfying. Thus if our highest-order will is not to be at odds with its own form, it must find an object worthy of absolute or unreserved devotion.

(E) The Demonic. This problem with perverse *akrasia* in the highest-order will is closely related to the basic problem of the demonic will as Kierkegaard understands it. Although I cannot discuss Haufniensis' treatment of anxiety about the good in the detail it deserves here, it is clear at least that the problem is not simply volitional ambiguity. *Despite* himself, the demonic man retains a higher-order volition opposed to evil, a "will to recover,"[48] which would open up inclosing reserve and confess his secret, and this is why external confrontation can sometimes cause him suddenly to divulge. He has "two wills, one subordinate and impotent that wills revelation, and one stronger that wills inclosing reserve, but the fact that this will is the stronger indicates that he is essentially demonic" (*CA*, p. 129). But the reason for his volitional double-mindedness in this case is not simply indecisiveness in his commitments (as in form B), nor that he perversely wills to be halfhearted (as in form D). Rather, at least in its extreme form, the demonic attitude identifies unreservedly or wholeheartedly with the evil it has discovered in itself: thus it wants "to close itself off" entirely from the good (*CA*, p. 123). In other words, it wills to become reprobate, to be "entirely in the power of evil" like Faust after his pact with the devil (*CA*, p. 122). But while perhaps this is possible for the devil, before death the ineliminable freedom of our highest-order will prevents it. No matter how far we have sunk, we can sink deeper (*CA*, p. 113); but likewise, it also always remains possible for us to will the good and change our innermost commitments. Thus the will to reprobation is self-defeating: the will to become unfree or unable

[47] See Frankfurt "The Faintest Passion" in *Necessity, Volition, and Love*, p. 106. Notice how similar Rudd's formulation of our inchoate desire is to Frankfurt's thesis here.

[48] As Judy Gammelgaard put it in her fascinating paper on Camus and Kierkegaard, "The Qualitative Leap and the Call of Conscience," presented at the August 2000 Research Seminar.

to do the good is itself freely posited, so freedom still "underlies unfreedom or is its ground," and this is why the demoniac cannot escape anxiety about the good (*CA*, p. 123). Even when MacBeth says that he is beyond hope and must surrender to his fate, we sense a hint of the secret hope to be rescued. More recently, in George Lucas' film *Return of the Jedi*, Darth Vader insists to his son Luke that "it is too late for me!" and in his vehemence we sense a plea to Luke not to tempt him to recover from his evil. But this is as much a pleading with the weaker but better part of himself that Luke represents, a plea not to become stronger by listening to that Siren call of the Good. Thus "even when unfreedom uses the strongest possible expressions to affirm that it does not will itself, it is untrue" (*CA*, p. 135, note). We might say that Vader's master, the Emperor, anticipated everything but this. Like the wholehearted will not in any respect to be wholehearted, the demoniac's will is contrary to the very form of spirit and so *necessarily* weak or plagued by internal rebellion. He cannot fully rid himself of a lingering disposition to will the good, because this itself is a symptom of his deeper self-contradiction: as Haufniensis says, "the will to freedom" is always present "however weak, in the self-contradiction" (*CA*, p. 143, note).

In conclusion, then, whereas weakness of the higher-order will in forms (A), (B) and (C) is accidental, in forms (D) and (E) weakness or incompleteness is essential, given the conflict between form and content. Likewise, the anxiety is experienced accidentally in (A), (B), and (C), and essentially in (D) and (E). The asymmetry between good and evil is apparent from this. For wholeheartedly willing the good in truth, or *purity of heart*, is not similarly self-defeating or necessarily anxious, at least when sustained in faith. We can, with help, wholeheartedly will perfection of our wills (as the opposite of reprobation), and this moreover is the only way to avoid weakness of the higher-order will and its attendant anxieties. The good can be willed wholeheartedly, or in truth, while evil cannot.

There is a danger of confusion here, so one final distinction must be drawn. (1) As Michelle Kosch has argued, Kierkegaard's understanding of freedom clearly *denies* that evil is merely a disorder, a privation or negation of the good (as Plato, Augustine, and Aquinas held).[49] (2) Yet he still holds with the tradition that good and evil are

[49] See Michelle Kosch "Freedom and Immanence" in *Kierkegaard and Freedom*, ed. by James Giles, New York: Routledge Press 2000, pp. 121-41.

asymmetrical in the sense that some remnant of native good will remains in every person, no matter how deeply sunk in sin, at any point prior to death.[50] There is no inconsistency here. Some Christian philosophers have thought that the "remnant of good" thesis (2) depends on the privation thesis (1), or on a broadly Aristotelian picture of the will as teleologically determined to will everything under some aspect of "goodness," making evil options into negations or lesser goods.[51] But there is no necessary connection between (1) and (2). Volitional evil can be recognized as essentially disordered and unable to complete itself on grounds of its internal phenomenology, *without* inferring this from a prior teleological model which denies that evil can be chosen for its own sake (rather than just as a means to some temporal good). This is one of many lessons to be learned from Kierkegaard's psychological writings, including the *Concept of Anxiety*, the *Sickness Unto Death*, and the *Purity of Heart*.

[50] One finds this view displayed not only in Augustine but in modern writers like C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien.

[51] See Eleonore Stump "Persons: Identification and Freedom" in *Philosophical Topics* 24.2 (Fall 1996) *Free Will*, ed. by Christopher Hill, pp. 183-214. Discussing her example of "Wicked Walter," Stump explains: "So for Aquinas, unlike Frankfurt, it is not possible for a person to be integrated or wholehearted in evil" (p. 206). This is also true for Kierkegaard, but not because "the will is an inclination for what is good" (p. 194). For Kierkegaard, like Frankfurt and unlike Stump, volitional identification is not determined simply by the intellect's judgment of the good. Thus the remainder thesis is open to the existential virtue ethicist as well as to the eudaimonist.