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Lunar Musings? An Investigation of Hegel's and Kierkegaard's Portraits of Despair

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Abstract. Despite his persistent polemics against the Hegelian 'speculative' philosophy, Kierkegaard recognized his own 'enigmatic respect for Hegel', and one of his pseudonyms (Johannes Climacus) even acknowledged that his 'own energies are for the most part consecrated to the service' of speculation. Nowhere are Kierkegaard's energies more productively devoted to this service than in the work of his last pseudonym, Anti-Climacus, *The Sickness Unto Death*. In this essay, I argue that not only are there structural parallels between the anatomy of despair in *The Sickness Unto Death* and the analysis of the 'unhappy consciousness' in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, but that there are striking parallels in terms of the actual content of the respective accounts. I develop these parallels in order, finally, to reconsider the terrain of difference between Kierkegaard's Christian therapeutics of despair and Hegel's phenomenological therapeutics.

In his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), Søren Kierkegaard's pseudonymous author Johannes Climacus writes that:

It is a fundamental confusion in recent philosophy to mistake the abstract consideration of a standpoint with existence, so that when a man has knowledge of this or that standpoint he supposes himself to exist in it; every existing individuality must precisely as existing be more or less one-sided. From the abstract point of view there is no decisive conflict between the standpoints, because abstraction precisely removes that in which the decision inheres: *the existing subject* (CUP 262).[1]

By 'recent philosophy', Johannes is thinking of Hegelianism, which had

[1] All references to works of Kierkegaard and Hegel are cited parenthetically within the text, and abbreviated as follows: **Kierkegaard**: AW, 'My Activity as a Writer': *The Accounting*, appended by Walter Lowrie to his edition of *The Point of View* (see below); CUP, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, tr. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968); E/Or I, II, *Either/Or*, 2 vols., tr. David Swenson and Lillian Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); F&T, *Fear and Trembling*, tr. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974); J, *Søren Kierkegaard: The Last Years, Journals* 1853–1855, ed. and tr. Ronald Gregor Smith (London: Lowe & Brydone, 1965); JP I–VI, *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, 6 vols., ed. and tr. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967ff) [References to this work are to the entry numbers of Hong and Hong, not page numbers.]; PF, *Philosophical Fragments*, tr. David Swenson and Howard Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962); PV, *The Point of View for My Work as An Author: A Report to History*, tr. Walter Lowrie (New York: Harper & Row, 1962); SD, *The Sickness Unto Death*, tr. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974). **Hegel**: A, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, 2 vols., tr. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); EL, *Hegel's Logic* (the *Encyclopædia Logic*), tr. William Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); FK, *Faith and Knowledge*, tr. Walter Cerf and H. S. Harris (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977); FS, *Fragment of a System*, tr. Richard Kroner, in T. M. Knox, ed., *Early Theological Writings* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977); L, *The Science Of Logic*, tr. A. V. Miller (New York: Humanities Press, 1969); PCR, *The Positivity of the Christian Religion*, in T. M. Knox, ed., *Early Theological Writings* [References to this work are to sections (§), not pages.]; PR I–III, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3 vols., tr. E. B. Speirs and J. B. Sanderson (London: Kegan Paul,

elevated abstraction away from the concretely existing subject to an art. So adept, in fact, were Hegel and his followers[2] in their abstractions, that ironically they risked utterly depriving themselves of readers, since their art of abstraction demanded that the reader become 'emancipated from telluric conditions, a privilege reserved for winged creatures, and perhaps also shared by the inhabitants of the moon – and there perhaps the System will first find its true readers' (CUP 113).

Taking this description to heart, upon self-reflection it appears to me that I myself must be a moon creature, for I am a lover of Hegel's texts. Yet perhaps, my love notwithstanding, I am not really one of Hegel's true readers, since I am also, I admit, a lover of Kierkegaard's texts, so that my love for Hegel seems to be a sheer confusion. Then again, it occurs to me that I must not be a true reader of Kierkegaard either, since to be a double lover, as I've confessed I am, implies that I have relinquished my capacity for 'one-sidedness', for decisive choice.

Be all this as it may, as a lover of both, I cannot bring myself to agree with Niels Thulstrup, who proposes as the 'major thesis' of his work on *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel* that 'Hegel and Kierkegaard have in the main nothing in common'.[3] I wonder at Thulstrup's conviction that 'such a shrewd genius as Kierkegaard could [not] possibly have let himself be taken in by Hegel'.[4] My wonder is not the wonder of condescending amusement, I hasten to add, but of disquiet, since I am in the awkward position of being a Hegelian by training and temperament – a somewhat embarrassing admission to make in such a public way, I must say, but for which I seek courage from Kierkegaard, who was moved to proclaim 'as directly and frankly as possible, what is what, what I as an author declare myself to be' (PV 5) in the opening sentence of his *Point of View for My Work as an Author* (which, of course, he then decided not to make public!) – a Hegelian who seems to have let himself be 'taken in' by Kierkegaard. Of course, I am not a shrewd genius, so my being taken in is surely less remarkable than it would be for Kierkegaard to be taken in by Hegel. But still, I am curious about how I can remain a faithful lover of Hegel while having been seduced by Kierkegaard, and whether some ground of reconciliation may be possible.

Trench, Trübner, 1895); PS, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, tr. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); RH, *Reason in History* (Introduction to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*), tr. Robert Hartman (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953); W i–xx, *Werke*, 20 vols., ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970–9).

[2] A number of commentators remark that Kierkegaard was at least as concerned, if not more so, to attack such Danish Hegelians as J. L. Heiberg and H. L. Martensen as he was Hegel himself. See, e.g., James Collins, *The Mind of Kierkegaard* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 104–105; Bruce Kirmmse, 'Psychology and Society: The Social Falsification of the Self in *The Sickness Unto Death*,' in *Kierkegaard's Truth: The Disclosure of the Self*, ed. Joseph H. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981): 172–73, 186–87; Roger Poole, *Kierkegaard: The Indirect Communication* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 2–3; and Niels Thulstrup, *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel*, tr. George Stengren (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 17–32, 43–58.

[3] Thulstrup, 12.

[4] Thulstrup, 214.

But perhaps these are just lunar musings, wishes of a Hegelian moon creature who has bought in too readily to the System's promise of resolving all contradictions into an 'identity-in-difference'. I am, I assure you, sufficiently taken in by Kierkegaard to be entirely aware of the irony of wanting such a reconciliation, of wanting 'both … and' when Kierkegaard himself presents the choice between his own religious existentialism and the speculative system of Hegel as a decisive, un-mediational 'either/or'. Evidently, then, I am *not* sufficiently taken in by Kierkegaard! But I am reminded of Kierkegaard's own lifelong struggle to reconcile competing aspects of himself – the poet and the knight of faith, the cryptic mask of the pseudonymous and the direct communication of the edifying discourses, the artist's multiplicity and the Christian's 'willing one thing'. My own double sympathies represent two sides of myself, not yet reconciled.

Perhaps these competing affinities are simply incapable of reconciliation. Perhaps Richard Kroner is right, that 'Hegel and Kierkegaard are separated from each other by an abyss which no agreement can ever succeed in bridging'.[5] Yet I am reminded also that both Hegel and Kierkegaard define the self as an uneasy and elusive synthesis of opposites (e.g. PS 126; SD 147). Further, both pursue their different tasks of exploring the dynamics of the self in terms of the project of self-education.[6] The dialectic of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is the 'education of consciousness', Hegel writes, where the self 'journeys through the series of its own configurations as though they were the stations appointed for it by its own nature', so that through a thoroughgoing 'experience of itself' it may come to a clearer self-awareness (PS 50, 51). Similarly, Kierkegaard's pseudonym Johannes de Silentio asks in *Fear and Trembling*, 'What is education? I should suppose that education was the curriculum one had to run through in order to catch up with oneself' (F&T 57).

This essay is an attempt to catch up with myself, through an exploration of one particular theme in the works of Hegel and Kierkegaard: the theme of despair, Hegel's 'unhappy consciousness' and Kierkegaard's (or better,

[5] Richard Kroner, 'Kierkegaard's Understanding of Hegel', *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* **21** (2), (1966), 234. See also Kroner's 'Kierkegaard or Hegel?', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* **19** (1952), 79–96. Most commentators on the Hegel–Kierkegaard relationship emphasize points of fundamental contrast. Thulstrup's influential work is only the best example of this. A few scholars, however, have worked hard to develop closer lines of connection between Kierkegaard and Hegel. Some of the most important of these works are Wilhelm Anz, *Kierkegaard und der deutsche Idealismus* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1956); Stephen Crites, *In the Twilight of Christendom: Hegel vs. Kierkegaard on Faith and History* (Chambersburg, PA: American Academy of Religion, 1972); Stephen Dunning, *Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Inwardness: A Structural Analysis of the Theory of Stages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Mark Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood: Hegel and Kierkegaard* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), and 'Aesthetic Therapy: Hegel and Kierkegaard', in *Kierkegaard's Truth*, 343–80; Michael Theunissen, 'Kierkegaard's Negativistic Method', in *Kierkegaard's Truth*, 381–423; and Jean Wahl, *Études Kierkegaardiennes* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1974).

[6] For an excellent discussion of the educational methods of Hegel's and Kierkegaard's works, see Mark Taylor, 'Aesthetic Therapy', 343–80. Taylor sees both Hegel's *Phenomenology* and Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authorship to be '*Bildungsromanen* that chart the circuitous process of self-formation, … encourag[ing] the reader to educate himself – to cultivate himself …' (354–5).

Anti-Climacus') 'sickness unto death'. The aficionado of either Hegel or Kierkegaard (or preferably of both!) will recognize that my choice of theme is not accidental, since in both Hegel's and Kierkegaard's definitions, it so perfectly captures my own state of inner turmoil: despair is the inability to reconcile opposites internal to the self. As Anti-Climacus puts it, despair is the 'agonizing contradiction' internal to the self in which the basic elements of selfhood stand in fundamental 'disrelationship' (SD 148–51). In Hegel's words, despair is the 'grief and longing' of the self which yearns for unity ('aims to be absolute') but experiences only inner division at every turn (PS 455–7).

My plan will be to begin by setting the stage with some remarks on how the theme of despair is introduced in the respective discussions of Hegel's *Phenomenology* and Anti-Climacus' *Sickness Unto Death*; then to uncover a series of striking parallels in the respective typologies of despair; and finally, to assess the significance of these parallels given the radically different pictures Hegel and Kierkegaard draw of the therapeutic resolution of despair. My purpose should be distinguished from that of Stephen Dunning's intriguing attempt to give a Hegelian reading of *The Sickness Unto Death* (and indeed of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authorship as a whole) in his valuable work on *Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Inwardness*, where he analyses Anti-Climacus' text in terms of its Hegelian dialectic structure. I believe Dunning is generally quite convincing in showing this structure, but I am more interested in revealing an affinity of actual content, which Dunning is sceptical of: 'the dialectical structures … in most of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works', he argues, 'are "Hegelian" *only* in a formal or structural sense, not in terms of content'.[7]

The fact that Dunning can achieve his analysis of the Hegelian structure of *The Sickness Unto Death* without ever referring to Hegel's own analysis of the unhappy consciousness shows the difference between his goal and mine: my own interest in structural similarities will be very general and superficial, while my main emphasis will be on the substantial correlations which emerge in terms of the accounts of despair. That there are such remarkable correlations is important – especially for someone such as myself who is seeking ways to come to terms with the internal conflict of my attachment to both Hegel and Kierkegaard – although, it goes without saying, we must be very cautious in our conclusions about just how far these similarities can be relied on, since Kierkegaard so consistently appropriates Hegelian themes in an ironic way, precisely in order to call them into question.[8] On the other hand, the very persistence of this ironic distancing suggests an ambiguous dependence upon Hegel: over and over again, Kierkegaard's own positions and

[7] Dunning, 259 n19. Vincent McCarthy also claims that Kierkegaard's 'dialectic of moods … has nothing less than a Hegelian structure, as does Kierkegaard's thought generally'. But like Dunning, McCarthy is speaking of structure, not content. '"Psychological Fragments": Kierkegaard's Religious Psychology', in *Kierkegaard's Truth*, 240.

[8] See Taylor, 'Aesthetic Therapy', 377.

dispositions emerge through ironic appropriation of his constantly present other; his polemics become the ever-present preparation for his own voice to appear, like the necessary clearing of his throat before he can speak, or the playing of scales before he can compose.[9]

I. SETTING THE SCENE: *THE PHENOMENOLOGY* AND *THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH*

Hegel's conception of despair, or the 'unhappy consciousness' (*unglückliches Bewußtsein*), plays a central role – according to many commentators, *the* central role[10] – in his first major work, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). In an advertisement placed by the publishers of *The Phenomenology*, Hegel portrays his work as a description of 'the wealth of appearances in which spirit presents itself'.[11] ' ... In which spirit *presents itself*', Hegel says, and this is important: the *Phenomenology* tells the story of the 'progressive unfolding' (PS 2) of spirit through a succession of appearances or shapes of consciousness, and at the heart of Hegel's phenomenological method is his commitment not to impose the curriculum of this developmental process on his readers as some ideal logical schema – some 'abstract formalism' 'externally applied' (PS 8, 9) – but to show that it may be discovered through attending to how human consciousness works through its own experience, the 'labour of its own transformation' (PS 6). This is the necessary restraint of the phenomenologist, the 'refusal to intrude into the immanent rhythm' of the labour of consciousness (PS 36), not unlike the restraint Kierkegaard exercises in declining to intrude into his pseudonymous works – 'in the pseudonymous works there is not a single word which is mine, I have no opinion about these works except as third person' – so as to allow the different personae of his authors (Victor Eremita, Constantine Constantius, Johannes de Silentio, Johannes Climacus, Anti-Climacus, and all the others) to work through their own points of

[9] See Vincent McCarthy: while 'Kierkegaard taunts Hegel's System, ... Hegel survives to haunt Kierkegaard's [works]; one might even ask oneself how Kierkegaard might have described the self if Hegel were not always there to be criticized and contradicted posthumously' ('Psychological Fragments', 262); also Paul Ricoeur: 'a constitutive structure of Kierkegaard's thought is that it is not thinkable apart from Hegel' ('Two Encounters with Kierkegaard: Kierkegaard and Evil; Doing Philosophy after Kierkegaard', in *Kierkegaard's Truth*, 336); and Mark Taylor: 'Kierkegaard, unlike so many of his detractors and supporters, realizes that his own work would have been neither possible nor necessary apart from Hegel's philosophical system' (*Journeys*, 12).

[10] Jean Wahl, in *Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951), first published in 1911, was the first of many to argue for the centrality of the unhappy consciousness in Hegel's philosophy. Jean Hyppolite, the great Marxist Hegelian, also claims that the 'unhappy consciousness is the fundamental theme of the *Phenomenology*' (*Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, tr. Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974], 190). See also Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, tr. James Nichols (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980); Philippe Muller, 'Connaissance concrète de l'homme chez Hegel', *Studia philosophica* **30–1** (1970–71); 207–24; and Jon Steward, 'Die Rolle des unglücklichen Bewusstseins in Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes*,' *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* **39** (1991), 12–21.

[11] The announcement appeared in the Jena cultural journal *Intelligenzblatt der Jenaischen Allgemeinen Litteraturzeitung* on 28 October, 1807. See W II, 593.

view (see the 'First and Last Declaration' appended without page numbers to the *Postscript*).

The *Phenomenology* details the journey of self-discovery of consciousness as it moves through the gallery of the shapes of spiritual life, from its most naive and complacent awareness of itself and its world to the standpoint of genuine self-knowledge. The various shapes consciousness takes on this voyage are each attempts to respond to the fundamental desire of all consciousness, the desire for self-unification, the overcoming of disparity between our actual situation in the world and our possibilities, between what is the case and what ought to be, and between our own self-construction and our definition by others.[12] Yet unity is a perpetually vanishing achievement: again and again the tantalizing possibility of security and certainty is lost. The self is never able to achieve a lasting satisfaction, a stable resting place – it is always incomplete, always in process of becoming, ever restless in its desire, and 'it is just this unrest that *is* the self' (PS 12). This is the 'tremendous power of the negative' which underlies the very ontology of human selfhood, the fundamental experience of discord which is the dynamic element of all life, such that 'the life of spirit is not the life that ... keeps itself untouched by devastation [*Verwüstung*] ... [and] dismemberment [*Zerrissenheit*], ... but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it' (PS 19). This is why Hegel's *Phenomenology*, the story of the 'wealth of appearances in which spirit presents itself', must give the experience of despair such a central place in its narrative: the journey of consciousness is a road of 'loss of its own self', a 'pathway of doubt [*der Weg des Zweifels*], or more precisely ... the way of despair [*der Weg der Verzweiflung*]' (PS 49; W III: 72). The unhappy consciousness is 'the knowledge of this *total* loss', the 'grief and longing [which] ... permeates all [the shapes of consciousness], ... their centre and the common birth-pang ... of spirit as it becomes self-conscious' (PS 455–7).

Kierkegaard was preoccupied with the idea of despair as early as his first major work, *Either/Or* (1843), where, in fact, he includes a remarkable section on 'The Unhappiest Man' which makes direct reference to Hegel's 'unhappy consciousness' (E/Or I, 217–28). But he reserves a systematic exposition of despair for his last pseudonym, Anti-Climacus, in his 1849 work *The Sickness Unto Death*, which takes its title from Jesus' remark about Lazarus, whom he would raise from the dead, that 'This sickness is not unto death' (John 11: 4). This work inaugurates what many have called Kierkegaard's 'second literature',[13] the Christian works of his last few years

[12] On the centrality of the desire for unity, see Daniel Berthold-Bond, 'The Two Faces of Desire: Evolution and Nostalgia in Hegel's Phenomenology of Desire', *Clio* **19** (1990), 367–88.

[13] John Elrod, *Kierkegaard and Christendom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), ix. Elrod credits Robert L. Perkins with inventing this term. See also Dunning, 214; Poole, 19; and Sylvia Walsh, *Living Poetically: Kierkegaard's Existential Aesthetics* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 223. Many have argued that, as Emanuel Hirsch put it over forty years ago, Anti-Climacus' works (*Sickness Unto Death* and *Training in Christianity*) are 'not genuinely pseudonymous' works at all. Hirsch, *Die Krankheit zum Tode* (Dusseldorf, 1954), x.

of life, and certainly Kierkegaard himself saw Anti-Climacus as a qualitatively new sort of pseudonym: 'the new pseudonym represents a higher pseudonymity, … pointing out a higher ideal', he writes in his *Point of View* (PV 142n). In a journal entry, Kierkegaard remarks on the difference between Johannes Climacus, the author of the *Postscript*, and Anti-Climacus, the author of *The Sickness Unto Death* and, a year later (1850), *Training in Christianity*: 'the difference is that whereas Johannes Climacus places himself so low that he even says himself he is not a Christian, one seems to be able to detect in Anti-Climacus … a Christian on an extraordinarily high level. … I would place myself higher than Climacus, lower than Anti-Climacus' (JP vi, 6433, and see vi, 6439).

This last comment is particularly interesting, given that the original title page of *The Sickness Unto Death* carried Kierkegaard's own name as author, and Kierkegaard only changed his mind at the last minute, allowing 'S. Kierkegaard' to appear merely as editor of the work (JP vi, 6517, 6518, 6446). As the time to take the manuscript to the publisher arrived, he became increasingly anxious about leading his readers to confuse himself with the 'demands of ideality' which were 'presented at their maximum' in the book (JP vi, 6446). Yet more interestingly, Kierkegaard remarks in a journal entry written at the time he was debating authorship of the work that he himself actually appears (in disguise) in the text of *Sickness Unto Death* (JP vi, 6437), as the 'unhappy poet', existing at 'the most dialectical borderline' of despair and faith, who 'may have a very deep religious need, … and yet he loves the torment' of his suffering and despair, and 'will not let it go' (SD 208–9).

Anti-Climacus is himself a type of poet, not like the prior pseudonymous poets who look at faith from the outside, and not like the 'unhappy poet' Kierkegaard identifies with in the text, but an entirely new category of poet in Kierkegaard's authorship, a fully religious poet, a 'Christian poet and thinker' (JP vi, 6511, 6521, 6391). In a journal entry of 1850, the year after the publication of *The Sickness Unto Death*, Kierkegaard speaks of the need for a 'world-shift' to bring a passionless generation into existential engagement with 'the ideal' (the authentically Christian life), and writes that 'now there will be need for the presentation of the religious in poetic form. … This will be the break' (JP ii, 1792). And this 'break' is precisely Anti-Climacus, who Kierkegaard often refers to as representing a radical 'break', or 'halt', or 'signal of arrest' (AW 142n; JP vi, 6450).[14]

The subtitle of *The Sickness Unto Death* is 'A Christian Psychological Exposition, For Edification and Awakening'. Anti-Climacus thus integrates the poetical and psychological styles of previous pseudonyms with the religious pathos of the edifying discourses written under Kierkegaard's own name. What emerges is a diagnosis of human existence as despair viewed as

[14] See Sylvia Walsh's insightful discussion of the 'poet of the religious', and how this category stands in tension with the notion of the poet in the earlier pseudonymous works. Walsh, 224–42.

incompleteness *before God*, or ultimately, as sin (see especially Part Two, 'Despair is Sin'). Like Hegel, Kierkegaard defines the self as an elusive synthesis of opposites, and existence as a perpetual search for strategies to cope with the pain of this internal division. And just as for Hegel this experience of inward division implies the centrality of unhappiness in human existence – 'history [is] the slaughterbench [of] … happiness', and 'periods of happiness are blank pages in [history]', to cite but two of Hegel's more famous claims (RH 27, 33) – Anti-Climacus remarks that 'happiness is not a characteristic of spirit; in the remote depths, in the most inward parts, in the hidden recesses of happiness, there dwells also the anxious dread which is despair' (SD 158). This is the 'tremendous power of the negative' Hegel refers to as underlying the very ontology of the self, an idea which Johannes Climacus alludes to as well in the *Postscript*:

> The negativity that pervades existence, or rather, the negativity of the existing subject, has its ground in the subject's synthesis: that he is an existing infinite spirit (CUP 75).

An *existing* – and therefore finite, grounded in space and time – *infinite* spirit! This paradox becomes the starting point for Anti-Climacus' discussion of despair. In the famous opening lines of the first main section of *The Sickness Unto Death*, Anti-Climacus writes:

> Man is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? … [The self] is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short it is a synthesis.

And, the passage continues, 'So regarded, man is not yet a self' (SD 146)! 'So regarded': that is, regarded as an achieved unity of its dualities, as a healed identity of the terms of its synthesis – so regarded, the self eludes us. The self is rather a 'disrelationship' of its terms, a perpetual lack of self-coinciding. The self, that is, is despair.

Two things should be noted before we turn to look in some detail at the two accounts of despair. First, whatever differences will emerge in the respective accounts, the starting point is largely the same: both Hegel and Kierkegaard define despair as self-division, or ontological incompleteness, and both define the opposing terms of the disrelational synthesis of the self in much the same way. Anti-Climacus speaks of 'the finite and the infinite', 'necessity and possibility', 'the earthly and the eternal' polarities of the self – terms which indicate the conflicting aspects of our situation as mortal beings with immortal souls; as delivered over to laws which govern our actions as embodied, social beings and yet as capable of free acts of self-creation; and as beings who absorb themselves in a search for security in the fleeting things of the world and who are nevertheless able to transcend this absorption and aspire toward that way of living Socrates referred to (in rebuking his fellow Athenians for their obsession with earthly pursuits) as

giving 'attention to … the perfection of your soul'.[15] As we will see, Anti-Climacus' terms substantially mirror Hegel's descriptions of what he calls the 'mutable' and the 'immutable', or the 'changeable' and the 'unchangeable' (*das Wandelbare*, *das Unwandelbare*) aspects of consciousness. Thus the two typologies of despair, which are both developed from an analysis of the dialectical relations between the two terms of the (disrelational) synthesis of the self, will have much in common.

Second, we have seen that Anti-Climacus, as a Christian author, defines despair not merely as incompleteness of the self, but as incompleteness *before God*, as sin, and this raises the question of whether any similarities we discover between Anti-Climacus' text and the 'speculative' phenomenological text of Hegel will not be inherently deceptive, resting upon a fundamental confusion of categories. If despair, as Anti-Climacus says, is a 'Christian discovery', and 'only the Christian knows what is meant by the sickness unto death' (SD 145), then any resemblance to purely speculative, philosophical accounts, where the author 'has nothing more to do with [despair] than to write a paragraph on the subject' within the System (E/O 1, 220) before it is *aufgehoben* in the merry parade of the logical progression of concepts, will presumably be comically superficial.

I take this question very seriously, and will return to consider it again in my conclusion, but for now just want to point out that in an important sense, Hegel also sees the 'unhappy consciousness', or 'soul of despair', as the disunity of the self *before God*. While the unhappy consciousness is the 'birth-pang' of all the shapes of spirit, Hegel's analysis of despair in the *Phenomenology* is clearly couched in religious terms. Not only does the unhappy consciousness appear as the central figure in the penultimate chapter of the *Phenomenology* on 'The Revealed Religion' (Christianity) (PS 453–78), but the earlier and most thorough discussion of the unhappy consciousness (PS 126–38) cannot be understood apart from seeing how the yearning of the self for salvation from suffering is directed towards a 'Beyond' which is worshipped in religious devotion.[16] Just as Anti-Climacus defines the 'third term' which is necessary to ground the divided nature of the self as God, or 'the Power which constituted' the self (SD 147), Hegel understands the quest of the despairing self to be a search for unity and wholeness through reconciliation with God, the 'immutable', the 'essential', the 'absolute': 'The unhappy consciousness … is the consciousness of the loss of all essential being, … the grief which expresses itself in the hard saying that "God is dead"' (PS 455).

Thus Hegel no less than Anti-Climacus develops a typology of despair

[15] The Apology, 29d. Hugh Tredennick's translation, in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds., *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961).

[16] As Robert Solomon remarks, 'the observation that the "unhappy consciousness" is *religious*' is one which virtually all commentators begin with 'as obvious'. Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 466.

which is an account of strategies of the self to unite with God, and thereby to unite and heal the self. Of course, great caution is needed here. That Hegel, like Anti-Climacus, frames his discussion of despair in religious terms may be interesting, but this still begs the question of whether the respective conceptions of religion (and God, and faith) are at all comparable. Kierkegaard clearly thinks they are not: he views Hegel's philosophic appropriation of religion as a scandal. This is a key issue which will need to be addressed later, along with a second point which complicates our comparison, namely that Hegel's account of the *resolution* of despair, his therapeutics, involves a crucial move to 'reason', or 'speculative thought', or 'philosophical thinking', which Kierkegaard repeatedly opposes in the strongest terms. Kierkegaard's own therapeutics, on the contrary, embraces the 'paradox' and 'offence' of faith, the 'sacrifice of reason'. So we will need to consider the thorny issue of the relation between reason and faith, and their (apparent!) incompatibility in Kierkegaard's thinking, when we come to drawing final conclusions. For now, I wish only to insist that we go seriously astray if we allow even fundamental differences between Kierkegaard and Hegel on the nature of religion and faith to negate extensive points of commonality. Johannes Climacus is surely right that 'there is a tremendous difference between knowing what Christianity is and being a Christian' (CUP 339) – and that Hegel's philosophy is much more interested in the former than the latter – but Hegel no less than Climacus or Anti-Climacus is interested in the pathos of subjectivity with which the unhappy consciousness confronts its yearning for wholeness and what Hegel calls its 'agonizing over [its] existence' (PS 127).

II. *UNHAPPY CONSCIOUSNESS* AND *SICKNESS UNTO DEATH*: *THE PARALLEL WORLDS OF HEGEL AND ANTI-CLIMACUS*

In his Preface to *The Sickness Unto Death*, Anti-Climacus distinguishes his 'edifying' approach to the topic of despair, which is 'anxiously concerned' with the 'reality of personal existence', from the 'scientific aloofness from life' characteristic of philosophic treatises which 'humbug' the reader with 'the pure idea of humanity' (SD 142). This typical Kierkegaardian strategy of beginning his pseudonymous works with an avowal of stark opposition to Hegelian methodology – the code words referring to the unnamed Hegel are unmistakable for the reader of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms – is somewhat offset, however, by Anti-Climacus' expressed reservations about his own style. The first line of the text acknowledges that 'to many the form of this "exposition" will perhaps seem strange; it will seem to them too strict to be edifying, and too edifying to be strictly scientific'. He then says that he can express no opinion about whether the book is too edifying, but that if indeed the 'form is too strict, … that would be a fault' (SD 142).

Table 1. *Typologies of despair in Hegel and Anti-Climacus*

Hegel *Unhappy Consciousness*	Anti-Climacus *Sickness Unto Death*
A. The basic terms of the unhappy consciousness a. The changeable, mutable, finite aspect of consciousness b. The unchangeable, eternal aspect of consciousness c. The ideal of a 'oneness of this dual consciousness'	A. Despair defined by the factors of the synthesis a. Finitude/Infinitude i. Despair of infinitude ii. Despair of finitude b. Possibility/Necessity i. Despair of possibility ii. Despair of necessity
B. The particular forms of despair a. The musical soul; pure consciousness; devotion b. Desiring, labouring consciousness c. Asceticism; self-mortification	B. Despair defined by consciousness a. Unconscious despair b. Conscious despair 1. Despair of weakness i. Despair over the earthly; pure immediacy ii. Despair about the eternal 2. Despair of defiance; demonic despair

Indeed, Kierkegaard was quite concerned with this possible fault. In a journal entry titled 'Report on "'The Sickness unto Death"' of 13 May, 1848, just after he had completed the work, he wrote:

> There is one difficulty with this book: it is too dialectical and stringent for the proper use of the rhetorical, the soul-stirring, the gripping. … Perhaps it cannot be used at all. … The point is that before I really can begin using the rhetorical I always must have the dialectical thoroughly fluent, must have gone through it many times (JP v: 6136).

Then, in the margin, he notes that 'the task is much too great for a rhetorical arrangement … . The dialectical algebra works better' (JP v,: 6137). Early in the second part of *The Sickness Unto Death* ('Despair is Sin'), Anti-Climacus directly refers to his definition of despair as sin as being 'algebraic', in that it 'embraces every conceivable and actual form of sin' rather than describing the particularity of sin (SD 213).

What is remarkable about this description of Anti-Climacus' style is its closeness to the Hegelian style. The 'algebraic' form of *The Sickness Unto Death* is the 'strictness' or 'rigor' necessary to show the abstract dialectical relations between the general terms of despair – finitude and infinitude, necessity and possibility, the earthly and the eternal – which is the necessary propaedeutic before a more 'lyrical', 'rhetorical', 'edifying' discourse can commence. Thus Anti-Climacus succinctly states his method of approach to the topic of despair in a way which directly recapitulates Hegel's method in his analysis of the 'unhappy consciousness': 'The forms of despair must be discoverable

abstractly by reflecting upon the factors which compose the self as a synthesis' (SD 162). Kierkegaard even originally penned into Anti-Climacus' work the observation that the two basic abstract formulations of despair (the relations of finitude/infinitude and necessity/possibility) 'are both forms of an unhappy consciousness'.[17]

To see how this method works itself out, consider Table 1 which summarizes the typologies of despair in Hegel and Anti-Climacus. The first point to note is that both actually present a double typology (A and B). Anti-Climacus describes his first classification (A) as a consideration of despair where 'one does not reflect whether [the self] is conscious [of its despair] or not'. That is, his initial typology is concerned only with the 'factors of the synthesis' of the self: finitude/infinitude, possibility/necessity, and the 'dialectical element' of their interplay (SD 162). Similarly, Hegel's first approach to the unhappy consciousness (A) looks at the terms of the 'inwardly disrupted' self as abstract 'modes of its being' (PS 130).[18] The second typologies (B) examine the more concrete embodiment of these abstract modes. This is despair 'under the aspect of consciousness', as Anti-Climacus says (SD 175), where we now become interested in the different strategies the self employs to cope with its *awareness* of its despair. Or as Hegel says, 'we have now to see how these … modes of its being are [actually] present and determined' in the '*experience* through which the divided self-consciousness passes in its wretchedness' (PS 130, 128).

The second point to note about our chart is that while Hegel's side of the ledger nicely conforms to the triadic form he is so well known for, Anti-Climacus' side is dyadic. This leads Paul Ricoeur to find in *The Sickness Unto Death* only 'a sort of grimacing simulacrum of Hegelian discourse', an 'unresolved two-term dialectic', a 'dialectic without mediation'.[19] But this is highly deceptive. In the first place, the third 'mode' of Hegel's more abstract (A)-typology of the unhappy consciousness (A.c.) represents the *ideal* of a unification of the finite and eternal aspects of the self, an ideal which is shown to be completely elusive within the state of despair. In this sense, Hegel's (A)-typology actually can be read as binary, like Anti-Climacus': both are concerned with the same thing, the elucidation of the duality of consciousness, or the split being of the self (our finitude and our infinitude). In the second place, and more importantly, there is actually a disguised triadic form to Anti-Climacus' second typology (B), as Steven Dunning shows convincingly. We can see this in two ways (to avoid dizziness, look

[17] Hong and Hong cite this earlier draft in the supplementary journal entries they append to their edition of *The Sickness Unto Death*, 150. The draft appears in *Søren Kierkegaard's Papirer*, ed. P. A. Heiberg, V. Huhr, and E. Torsting (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1909–48), VIII² B 150: 8.

[18] This is a tremendous simplification, I'm well aware! The first 'three-fold movement' of Hegel's discussion is legendary for the complexity of its allusions to Judaism, the crusades, the medieval Catholic church, the doctrine of the Trinity, and etc. See, e.g., John Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 100–1; Hyppolite, *Genesis*, 199–202; Robert Solomon, *In the Spirit*, 470, 616–22; and Jean Wahl, *Le malheur de la conscience*, 21–50.

[19] Ricoeur, 320.

back to the chart!): not only do we find a triad of forms in terms of Unconscious Despair, The Despair of Weakness, and The Despair of Defiance, but also within the most fundamental category of despair for Anti-Climacus – Conscious Despair – there is the triad of Despair Over the Earthly, Despair About the Eternal, and the Despair of Defiance.[20]

My goal in the next few pages is to concentrate on the second, more 'concrete' typologies (B), and show that not only does Anti-Climacus' account structurally parallel the triadic form of Hegel's account, but that his actual portraits of the forms of despair substantially mirror Hegel's descriptions. More specifically, there is a notable symmetry between Hegel's account of the three particular forms of despair – 'the musical soul', 'desiring, labouring consciousness', and 'asceticism' – and the three forms of Anti-Climacus' 'conscious despair' – 'despair over the earthly', 'despair about the eternal', and the 'despair of defiance'.[21]

(*a*) *The Musical Soul and the Despair of Immediacy*

The first of the three central forms of Hegel's unhappy consciousness is what he calls the 'pure consciousness' or the 'musical soul' (PS 131–2). We must remember that in all forms of the unhappy consciousness the individual is engaged in an attempt actually to experience and come to know its own 'essential nature', what is regarded as the stable, immutable, fundamental ground of its synthesis. Yet this essence is also felt to be 'foreign' or 'other' to the self: the self experiences its own finitude, its own mutability, its constant deliverance to the whims of contingency, so that its sense of identity as whole and self-unified perpetually escapes it. In this first figure of the unhappy consciousness, consciousness is the 'movement of an infinite yearning' for wholeness, and 'merely gives itself up' in devotion (*Andacht*) to its dream of self-unification. There is a mystical character to this dream-life of despair, a passive immersing of the self in the 'pure thought' of essence. It attempts by this means to attain a *feeling* of completion, and indeed its devotion is strictly 'only a movement *towards* thinking; … its thinking as such is no more than the chaotic jingling of bells, or a mist of warm incense, a musical thinking' (PS 131).

[20] Dunning, 216–22.

[21] What this leaves out of account is the first division of Anti-Climacus' (B)-typology, 'unconscious despair', which has no obvious counterpart in Hegel's schema, but even here there are hidden similarities. Like Anti-Climacus, Hegel is also interested in states of consciousness which exhibit the disrelational, contradictory poles of selfhood without being fully aware of them: this is precisely the case with his famous analysis of the master and the slave, stoicism, and scepticism which immediately precedes his account of the unhappy consciousness. Anti-Climacus, for his part, begins with an account of the despairing self which, comically enough, is not even aware that it is in despair, and insists that this is itself a form of despair, indeed the most common of all (SD 175–80). Still, this is the utterly 'spiritless' self (SD 178), and Anti-Climacus recognizes that 'real life is far too multifarious to be portrayed by merely exhibiting such abstract contrasts as that between a despair which is completely unconscious, and one which is completely conscious of being such' (SD 181), and that the crucial issue is *how much* consciousness there is: 'with every increase in the degree of consciousness, and in proportion to that increase, the intensity of despair increases: the more consciousness, the more intense the despair' (SD 175).

The first form of despair which is conscious of itself in Anti-Climacus' typology is a form of the 'despair of not willing to be oneself', or the despair of weakness, and is categorized as the 'despair over the earthly', or sometimes simply the despair of 'pure immediacy' (SD 184). Like the Hegelian 'musical soul', this form of despair is passive, a longing for deliverance from without, from 'the other' which it desires to be. 'This self coheres immediately with its "other", wishing, desiring, enjoying, but passively'. Everything essential is thrown onto 'fate', or 'outer circumstances', to such an extent that the self becomes 'a sort of blind door in the background of [the] soul behind which there is nothing' (SD 189). Or as Hegel says, this self is 'conscious that its essence is only its opposite, is conscious only of its own nothingness' (PS 127).

In his earlier discussion of the 'despair of infinitude' (A.a.i.), Anti-Climacus remarks that the self which so gives itself over to the 'abstract endeavour after infinity' – which in one sense characterizes the despair over the earthly, inasmuch as this self is a pure longing for salvation through 'fate' – 'may so carry a man away that it becomes an inebriation' (SD 165). For both Hegel and Anti-Climacus this 'inebriation', the 'chaotic jingling of bells' and 'mist of warm incense' which the 'pure' or 'immediate' despairing consciousness immerses itself in, involves a fundamental loss of self. The musical soul's 'giving itself up' in devotion to its sheer longing for wholeness reflects, as Anti-Climacus says, 'a lack of sense as to what spirit is, and moreover it is a failure to appreciate that man *is* spirit' (SD 192). The self which is wholly passive is in effect equally inessential (*unwesenliche*), to use Hegel's phrase: the mystical immersion in and 'giving the self up to' the mere dream of self-identity is in fact the sacrifice of selfhood. As such, the 'musical soul' does not experience what it desires and intends to feel in its 'infinite, pure inward feeling': it does in fact feel *itself*, 'but as agonizingly self-divided', for its desired object, its own self-completion, is felt 'as something alien', utterly other, an 'unattainable *beyond* which, in being laid hold of, flees, or rather has already flown' (PS 131). The self 'can only find as a present reality the *grave* of its life' (PS 132). In Anti-Climacus' words, this self 'has only an illusory appearance of possessing in it something eternal', and in its despair 'regards [the] self as dead, as a shadow of [it]self' (SD 184, 185).

(*b*) *Desire and labour, or Despair about the Eternal*

With this experience of the death, or nothingness, of the self's dream of wholeness through passive yearning, both Hegel and Anti-Climacus see the dialectical emergence of a new form of despair, what Hegel calls the despair of 'desire and work' (PS 132–5) and Anti-Climacus refers to as 'despair about the eternal or over oneself' (SD 194–200). As Anti-Climacus says, through the very experience of loss, 'there is also an essential advance made in the consciousness of the self; … "to be in despair over the earthly" is a

dialectic first expression for the next form of despair' (SD 194). This next form involves a movement of the self out of its former passivity, into activity: 'despair in this case is not merely passive suffering but action' (SD 196).

The first appearance of 'work' or 'labour' (*die Arbeit*) in the *Phenomenology* occurs in the discussion of the master-slave dialectic, where Hegel seeks to show that, on the one hand, the master's domination of the slave disguises an impotent and hollow self, since the master does not labour but lives parasitically off the work of another, while on the other hand, the labour of the slave is in principle a liberating activity, since in the work of 'shaping and fashioning' external nature, the slave creatively gives his or her own expression to the material world, and glimpses his or her own essential being through the product of labour (PS 115–19). Still, Hegel knows that this labour is alienated labour, since the product of labour is owned and enjoyed by the master. This is just what leads the slave to stoicism, the retreat from the cruel and heartless condition of reality into the self-absorbed and impotent realm of freedom in thought alone (PS 120–2). Here, in the second figure of the unhappy consciousness, labour returns as the effort of the self to fulfil its desire for a 'confirmation of that inner certainty of itself, ... by overcoming and enjoying the existence alien to it' (PS 132). After the loss of faith in discovering its own essential being in passive devotion to an external, projected image of the wholeness it so desires, the despairing self has turned inward to itself to seek its self-identity through its own action, transforming and 'overcoming' the external world through labour.

Yet in its labour, the unhappy consciousness experiences only its own incompleteness, its being 'broken in two' (PS 133). However much the self seeks to master itself by internalizing the power to fashion its own identity, it discovers everywhere its inability to remake the world in its image. Indeed, the world is seen as a 'sanctified world', a 'gift from an alien source', precisely the 'Unchangeable power' which constitutes the self, and which the self cannot transform through its own labour without expressing hubris and ingratitude (PS 133–4). Hegel here is getting at much the same sense of 'humiliation' Anti-Climacus describes as the outcome of the inevitable failure of creating one's own world:

> When the sufferer recognizes the seriousness of this thing of needing help, and especially from a higher or from the highest sources, [he or she experiences the profound] humiliation of having to accept help unconditionally, ... the humiliation of becoming nothing in the hand of the Helper (SD 205).

The obviously religious setting Hegel constructs for this shape of despair reflects the deep sense in which he was grappling with one of the central paradoxes of faith, that the self can neither heal itself through a passive yearning for deliverance, nor constitute itself on its own terms. For 'its own terms' are internally in opposition: the self is a dis-relation of its being and becoming, its actuality and possibility, its necessity and freedom, its infini-

tude and contingency. But Hegel's point about the despair of 'desire and work' goes beyond the religious connotations he couches it in here, and speaks to his fundamental conviction that as desire ('self-consciousness *is* desire', PS 105), the self cannot satisfy its longing for identity alone. What is essential to its being is always partly outside itself, in the other: 'self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness', and 'only in this way does the unity of itself *in its otherness* become explicit for it' (PS 110). The stance of solitude and self-isolation Kierkegaard so often extols as a condition for authentic existence is inherently self-defeating for Hegel – literally *self*-defeating, since the self is always already constituted by what is other.

Anti-Climacus' discussion of the 'despair about the eternal or over oneself' is one of many places Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authors address precisely this dilemma of solitude. This despair negates the passive reliance of the earlier 'despair over the earthly' on external deliverance and is marked by a fundamental '*introversion*' of the self (SD 196). This self 'often feels a need of solitude, which for him is a vital necessity – sometimes like breathing, at other times like sleeping. The fact that he feels this vital necessity more than other men is also a sign that he has a deeper nature' (SD 198).

But Anti-Climacus knows that this is still a form of despair of weakness, 'despair at not willing to be oneself'. Like the despair of defiance which we will turn to next – and it is important to note that the current form of despair, 'despair about the eternal', exists on the dialectical borderline of defiance, as its 'first expression' (SD 199) – the self which despairs about the eternal 'despairingly wills … to create itself', to 'enjoy the entire satisfaction of making itself into itself' (SD 201, 203).[22] Yet just as Hegel's despair of 'desire and work' confronts the impossibility of constructing its own self, Anti-Climacus sees that the despair over the eternal inevitably leads to the sense of radical incompleteness: its action only reconfirms its need for grounding in an other which constitutes it, and underscores the desperation of its own solitude. 'If this introversion is absolutely maintained, *omnibus numeris absoluta* [perfect in every respect], then suicide will be the danger nearest to him' (SD 200).

(*c*) *Asceticism, or demonic despair*

The next form of despair, Hegel's 'ascetic' unhappy consciousness and Anti-Climacus' 'demonic despair', is the last and most intense development of despair in both dialectics. It is out of this deepest descent into the anguish of self-division that both Anti-Climacus and Hegel envision the possibility of a resolution to despair.

In Hegel's dialectic, the self has discovered in the failure of its attempt to actively fashion itself and its world into an image of the wholeness it so longs

[22] Bruce Kirmmse points out that 'the Danish is *at skabe sig* and is a pun that means both "to create oneself" and "to put on an act"' (Kirmmse, 'Psychology and Society', 185 n.14).

for that it is precisely its desire itself which is the source of despair.[23] Desire is a hunger for what the self, by its very constitution, cannot achieve: perfect unity, the perfect satisfaction and peace of wholeness. Desire is an inherently self-consuming state (PS 107–8) – a 'greedy emptiness', to use Alexandre Kojève's fitting phrase, an 'emptiness greedy for content'[24] – in which the longing for an eternal, stable unity impatiently destroys every merely limited and momentary satisfaction. The despairing soul thus comes to see its desire as the 'enemy' lurking within it, the source of its wretchedness, which it seeks to destroy through rituals of mortification and sacrifice. The 'functions of animal life', the self as flesh, as trapped in its finitude, are now seen as perverse, as 'defiling' the ideal of serene inner peace the self so desperately yearns for. The unhappy ascetic consciousness is the will to its own nothingness, 'a personality brooding over itself, as wretched as it is impoverished' (PS 135–6). The constant disappointment of the desire for deliverance from the restlessness and inner division of spirit in this way leads despair to an enactment of the Freudian death instinct as the self seeks to overcome the very embodiment of its life force.[25]

Anti-Climacus' anatomy of 'demonic despair' parallels the Hegelian dialectic remarkably closely. This is the 'most potentiated' form of despair, since, unlike the previous forms where the self willed *not* to be itself, here the self despairingly wills to *be* the self (SD 200–1). Hegel's suggestion that the ultimate ideal of despair, for the self to become as God – 'to be absolute' (PS 455) – is directly posited by Anti-Climacus as the motivating force of the demonic self: this self 'despairingly wills to … create itself, to make itself the self it wills to be', to 'construct' and 'produce' itself, to 'acknowledge no power over it' – in short, to 'become an experimental god' (SD 201–2). Yet just as the ascetic unhappy consciousness enacts this ideal of self-creation through an act of self-destruction, turning against its own desire as the enemy, the demonic self knows that it does not have the power to heal itself, and instead directs its creative effort towards willing its own anguish: 'with hatred for existence it wills to be itself, to be itself in terms of its misery' (SD 207).

> Precisely upon this torment the man directs his whole passion, which at last becomes a demoniac rage. Even if at this point God in heaven and all his angels were to offer to help him out of it – no, now he doesn't want it, now it is too late, he once would have given everything to be rid of this torment … , now that's all past, now he would rather rage against everything (SD 205).

Both Hegel and Anti-Climacus perceive in this last form of despair a fundamental contradiction. As early as his work on *The Positivity of the*

[23] On this point, see Eugen Fink's discussion of asceticism in his *Hegel* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977).

[24] Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction*, 40.

[25] For a comparison of Hegel's account of desire with that of Freud, see Daniel Berthold-Bond, 'Hegel, Nietzsche and Freud on Madness and the Unconscious', *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* **5** (1991), 193–213.

Christian Religion (written between 1795 and 1800), Hegel describes asceticism as a 'self-deception' which pursues a 'false tranquillity', but 'sinks into helplessness, anxiety, and self-distrust, a psychical state which often develops into madness' (PCR §29). In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel explains this self-deception much in the same way that Nietzsche would later write of the ascetic that 'precisely this power of [the ascetic's] desire [for self-abnegation] is the chain that holds him captive'.[26] The self's extreme exertion to defeat the 'enemy' of desire it finds within itself, Hegel remarks, only manages to give it more importance: 'This enemy, however, renews himself in his defeat, and consciousness, in fixing its attention on him, far from freeing itself from him, really remains for ever in contact with him, and forever sees itself as defiled' (PS 136). Anti-Climacus, for his part, says that the demonic self desires to be 'its own lord and master, ... absolutely its own lord, and precisely this is despair, ... [for] this ruler is a king without a country, he rules really over nothing' (SD 203). The self cannot, in principle, achieve its goal of self-mastery through the will to its own misery 'precisely because he cannot consume himself, cannot get rid of himself, cannot become nothing' (SD 151).

III. RESOLUTION AND DIFFERENCE

It is just at this point, where the self has turned its despair into a rage against itself, that both Hegel and Anti-Climacus posit the possibility of resolution. It is precisely through the torment of experiencing the self as an utterly torn and divided nature that, as Martin Heidegger puts it in another context, 'through the rift [of division], torn consciousness is open to admit the Absolute'.[27] In both dialectics there is what might be called a *narrative rift* through which a therapeutic resolution of despair is admitted.

Anti-Climacus' dialectic of despair simply comes to an abrupt halt – recall that Kierkegaard refers to the pseudonym Anti-Climacus as himself representing a 'halt' or 'signal of arrest' – with the completion of the description of demonic despair. 'Part Second' of *The Sickness Unto Death* begins on the next page, and is described as an entirely new text, an abandonment of the phenomenological psychology of 'Part First':

> In this Second Part ... there is no place or occasion for psychological description. ... The whole situation must now be turned about and viewed in a new way. The point is this. The gradations in the consciousness of the self with which we have hitherto been employed are within the definition of the human self, or the self whose measure is man. But this self acquires a new quality or qualification in the fact that it is the self directly in the sight of God (SD 208, 210).

With the consciousness that one's despair is *sin* – either weakness or defiance

[26] Nietzsche, *The Genælogy of Morals*, tr. Walter Kaufmann, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: Random House, 1968), 556.

[27] Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* tr. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 90.

before God – despair takes on a 'decisively' new meaning and requires a 'transform[ation] of the [very] definition of all [its] concepts' (SD 214). In Hegel, too, there is such a narrative rift, a break in the steady progression of the text of despair. For Hegel leaves the ascetic 'confined to its own self, … brooding over itself', in order to propose a logical 'syllogistic' solution to despair (PS 136). The logic of despair points beyond itself, 'but *for itself*', Hegel is very clear, the despairing soul 'remains [in] pain, and the overcoming of [this] in a positive sense remains a *beyond*' (PS 138).

Anti-Climacus finds the 'cure' of despair in religious faith: faith is 'the formula' for 'the condition of the self when despair is completely eradicated: by relating itself to its own self and by willing to be itself the self is grounded transparently in the Power which posited it' (SD 147, 262). Hegel, on the other hand, finds the cure of the despairing soul in the transition to reason (PS 138), or ultimately, to philosophic thought (PS 479ff.). Both therapeutics involve a certain 'leap'. For Anti-Climacus, this is the leap of faith by which we abandon our project of creating our own salvation, surrender our obsession with seeking rationally to comprehend our predicament, acknowledge our sin before God, and give ourselves over to the Helper. For Hegel there is a leap as well, since while he is convinced that the 'logic' of despair points beyond itself to a resolution in reason (the failure of the self-enclosed soul of despair logically points to the movement out of self-enclosure to community, from particularity to universality, from feeling to reason), Hegel knows full well that this logic takes place only 'on paper', as Kierkegaard was fond of joking about the Hegelian System (e.g. CUP 375–6) – that it is a 'beyond' which we cannot just think ourselves into but can only actually achieve through decisive choice.

Both therapeutic leaps entail an act of sacrifice or renunciation or surrender (*Aufopferung*, *Verzicht*, *Aufgabe*, W 3: 175–8, 265). This involves what Hegel calls a 'surrender of one's own will' (PS 138) as a purely self-enclosed ego: 'only through this actual sacrifice … of its "I"' (PS 137) can the self move from the standpoint of the 'I' to that of 'We', from privacy to community, where genuinely spiritual life 'first finds its turning point' (PS 110). Anti-Climacus also speaks of the sacrifice of the self-enclosed self: 'The self must be broken in order to become a self' (SD 199), a conviction which echoes Johannes Climacus' idea that 'self-annihilation is the essential form for the God-relationship' (CUP 412). And in one of his last journal entries (23 September 1855), just nine days before he fell unconscious on a Copenhagen street and was taken to Frederik's Hospital, Kierkegaard wrote:

> Only a man of will can become a Christian, because only a man of will has a will which can be broken. But a man of will whose will is broken by the unconditioned, or God, is a Christian. … A Christian is a man of will who no longer wills his own will, but with the passion of his broken will – radically changed – wills the will of another (J 358).

For Kierkegaard and Anti-Climacus, however, the result of this sacrifice is hardly a redemption into reason, but on the contrary, a renunciation of reason: to have faith 'is precisely to lose one's understanding in order to win God' (SD 171). Here we have our either/or: faith or reason.

But wait!

This is where we need to pause, to look more deeply at the hidden complexity beneath the apparent simplicity of this either/or of faith or reason. There are certainly hundreds of passages throughout Kierkegaard's works which speak of the utter incompatibility of faith and reason – the 'obedience of faith', for example, is 'believing against reason' (JP 2: 1154) and 'faith requires a man to give up his reason' (CUP 337) – and many, many commentators through the years have taken it as obvious that Kierkegaard was an 'irrationalist' who was out to preserve the purity of faith from any contamination by reason, by defining faith as paradox, as absurdity, as utter offence against reason.

But this picture needs to be complicated. Indeed, a number of commentators have argued that this view of Kierkegaard is tremendously misleading: from David Swenson in the 1940s and James Collins in the 1950s; to Cornelio Fabro, Alastair MacKinnon, and N. H. Søe in the 1960s; to, more recently, John Elrod, Stephen Evans, and others. There have been a number of impressive attempts to rescue Kierkegaard from the label of irrationalist by arguing that, as Evans puts it in speaking of the Johannes Climacus pseudonym, 'It is true that Climacus presents us with what might be termed a critique of reason, … but that critique is one that is ultimately in the service of reason'.[28] In the midst of Kierkegaard's scorching polemics against 'reason', 'understanding', and 'speculative thought', one can find a fascinating counterpoint, the suggestion that the encounter of reason and faith can be a 'happy' one: 'if the Paradox [of faith] and Reason come together in a mutual understanding of their unlikeness', Johannes Climacus remarks in his *Philosophical Fragments*, 'their encounter will be happy, like love's understanding' (PF 61).

How can this be so? The crucial clue lies in the fact that at its heart reason itself – like faith – is a passion for Kierkegaard, indeed a 'paradoxical passion' which 'precisely desires its own downfall', its own overcoming and completion in faith. Johannes Climacus presents us with an analogy of the reason - faith relation to that of self-love and love:

[28] Stephen Evans, *Passionate Reason: Making Sense of Kierkegaard's Philosophical Fragments* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 97. See also James Collins, *The Mind of Kierkegaard*; John Elrod, *Being and Existence in Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Works* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); Cornelio Fabro, 'Faith and Reason in Kierkegaard's Dialectic', trans. J. B. Mondin, in Howard A. Johnson and Niels Thulstrup, *A Kierkegaard Critique* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1962): 156–206; Alastair MacKinnon, 'Kierkegaard: "Paradox" and Irrationalism', in Jerry Gill, ed., *Essays on Kierkegaard* (Minneapolis: Burgess Pub., 1969); N. H. Søe, 'Kierkegaard's Doctrine of the Paradox', in Johnson and Thulstrup, 207–27; and David Swenson, *Something About Kierkegaard* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub., 1945).

Self-love lies as the ground of love; but the paradoxical passion of self-love when at its highest pitch wills precisely its own downfall. This is also what love desires, so that these two are linked in mutual understanding in the passion of the moment, and this passion is love. … Such is then the passion of love; self-love is indeed submerged but not annihilated … . (PF 59)

Just as self-love lies as the ground of love, so too *reason lies as the ground of faith* – not, of course, as its meaning or justification, but as its necessary antecedent, its invitation and preparation. As Fabro says, 'the work of reason is not excluded from the object of faith as such, although it operates certainly not in order to explain it but in order to prepare and invite man in some way to accept it'.[29] I am reminded here of Paul Tillich's description of faith as *reason in ecstasy*:

Reason is the precondition of faith; faith is the act in which reason reaches ecstatically beyond itself. … Man's reason is finite; … but reason is not bound to its own finitude. It is aware of it and, in so doing, rises above it. … Reason can be fulfilled only if it is driven beyond the limits of its finitude, and experiences the presence of the ultimate, the holy. Without such an experience reason exhausts itself and its finite contents. … Reason is the presupposition of faith, and faith is the fulfilment of reason. Faith as the state of ultimate concern is reason in ecstasy. There is no conflict between the nature of faith and the nature of reason; they are within each other.[30]

Stephen Evans echoes Tillich in remarking that for Kierkegaard 'there is no conflict between faith and reason if reason can accept the limitations of reason'.[31] While Kierkegaard often emphasizes that reason has the tendency to arrogate the entire world of meaning and truth to itself, it seems to be his view that it is an essential feature of *healthy* reason that it does recognize and accept its limits. For reason, as 'paradoxical passion', 'comes repeatedly into collision with [the] Unknown', with its own limits, with what it cannot encompass on its own terms, with what is Other to it, 'the different, the absolutely different' (PF 55).[32] It comes, of its own, to the domain of faith. For 'where the understanding despairs, faith is already present' (CUP 209).

Thus when Climacus writes in the *Postscript* that 'faith requires a man to give up his reason' (CUP 337), the careful reader should remember that in the *Fragments* Climacus had spoken of how it is really reason itself which 'sets itself aside' (PF 73). The destiny of reason is to beckon faith, not terrorize it. In fact, 'reason cannot negate itself absolutely; … it cannot absolutely transcend itself' (PF 55). This implies that Kierkegaard's goal should not be seen as the destruction of the temple of reason so that the temple of faith may be erected above its ruins, but as an attempt to unify the two, just as Climacus, in speaking of 'thought' and 'feeling', insists that 'the task is not

[29] Fabro, 177.
[30] Paul Tillich, *The Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 76–77.
[31] Evans, 108.
[32] See Louis Mackey, *Points of View: Readings of Kierkegaard* (Tallahassee, FL: Florida State University Press, 1986), 118: 'The passion of reason, like erotic passion [Mackey is referring to the analogy to love cited above from the *Fragments*], wants to find its other in order to be overwhelmed and fulfilled by it'.

to exalt the one at the expense of the other, but to give them an equal status, to unify them in simultaneity' (CUP 311).

We must turn to Hegel now, for although there seems to be good reason to reconsider Kierkegaard's therapeutics of despair, his cure by faith, so that it preserves a preparatory, ecstatic role for reason, questions remain as to whether Hegel's therapeutics, his cure by reason, preserves a significant role for faith. After all, the 'happy encounter' of reason with faith for Kierkegaard implies a recognition on the part of reason of its limits and a pointing beyond itself to faith, while Hegel appears to reverse this by introducing his notorious 'sublation' or *Aufhebung* of faith into reason, where the essentially 'symbolic' language of faith finds its true expression in its translation into speculative knowledge (PS 412, 476–9). Is Hegel's framing of despair within a religious context really just a frame-up? Is faith just the pretext, as it were, of reason – a merely preliminary discourse and experience of the human spirit which is destined, in the logic of development, to be translated into the true text of rationalistic philosophy?

In some of Hegel's early writings, during the last years of the eighteenth century while he was serving as a tutor in Frankfurt, his position on the relation of faith to reason was remarkably similar to Kierkegaard's view of the ecstatic character of reason. Such a conception can be found, for example, in the fragment on *Love* of 1797 and in *The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate*, written between 1798 and 1799. A particularly forceful statement of this position from his 1800 *Fragment of a System* deserves quoting: 'Philosophy … has to stop short of religion', Hegel declares,

> because it is a process of thinking and, as such a process, implies an opposition … between the thinking mind and the object of thought. … [Philosophy] has to recognize the illusions generated by its own infinite [the 'infinity of reflection', which is 'driven on and on without rest'] and thus to place the true infinite outside its confines (FS 313, 312).

This claim sounds suspiciously like Climacus' view of reason, which 'comes repeatedly into collision with [the] Unknown' where it beckons its Other, faith.

Hegel, of course, went on in his later writings to liberate reason from these limitations. However, it is important to note that in the process of emancipation, Hegel was concerned to articulate conceptions of both faith and reason which would disrupt prior conceptions where, he was convinced, the two terms were defined so as to be inherently incompatible. Hegel's goal, then, like Kierkegaard's, is to reconceive reason and faith in such a way that they may find a 'happy encounter'. Hegel began this process of reconceptualization as early as 1800, in his *Faith and Knowledge*. In the opening passage of the text, he speaks of the 'ancient antithesis of reason and faith, of philosophy and … religion', and points to the historical 'victory' of reason over faith during the eighteenth century Enlightenment period. Anticipating his sus-

tained critique of Enlightenment reason in the *Phenomenology* (PS 328–55), Hegel goes on to warn that this victory was based on a fundamental misunderstanding of both reason and faith:

> Enlightened reason won a glorious victory over what it believed, in its limited conception of religion, to be faith as opposed to reason. Yet seen in a clear light the victory comes to no more than this: the [faith] … with which reason busied itself to do battle, is no longer religion, and victorious reason is no longer reason.

Rather, the Enlightenment 'hovers triumphantly over the corpse of reason and faith', and has 'as little of reason in it as it has of authentic faith' (FK 55).

Hegel's point is that Enlightenment reason was defined as 'mere intellect' and the faith it sought to overcome was defined as mere feeling. Such definitions reduce reason to a faculty of 'transcendent concepts lacking all reality', to mere 'empty thought' – note the similarity to Kierkegaard's own critique of *Hegelian* reason! – and faith to the sheer intensity of belief, both of which lack genuine content (FK 56, 67, 58). The glorious victory of reason thus only regenerates the ancient conflict of reason and faith, establishing the object of faith ('the Absolute') as 'the mere emptiness of Reason', that which lies always on the other side of reason, as an 'absolute Beyond', a 'vacuum for cognition' (FK 61, 81). Enlightened reason is fearful reason, reason in dread of the subjectivity it associates with faith, and by seeking to purify itself of this subjectivity, reason ironically reinstates the object of faith as its own Beyond, the object of the human yearning for the Absolute. The goal for Hegel is a unification of faith and reason which may overcome the 'torment of an absolute barrier' between the two (FK 64), which he describes as *philosophical faith*, or 'faith introduced into philosophy' (FK 142). This is not the 'corruption' or 'pollution' of faith, but its fulfilment, in which 'consciousness … reflect[s] on its faith' (FK 142, 143, 149).

Now certainly this view, from Kierkegaard's perspective, has got everything backwards: the Hegelian 'introduction' of faith into philosophy, by which 'faith completely loses its pure naiveté, for now it is Reason' (FK 142), is the annihilation of faith. Kierkegaard's own 'happy encounter' of faith and reason is an 'introduction', if you will, of reason to faith in which reason willingly surrenders itself and gives itself up. Kierkegaard will give no more to reason than this, while Hegel – already in 1800, and increasingly in his later works – is convinced that reason is entitled to more, that reason reconciled with faith implies that God is *not* 'unknowable' or 'incomprehensible', that there is no 'absolute Beyond' of faith which is in principle inaccessible to reason. But even here, it is essential to note that the 'reason' Hegel is speaking of emphatically is not the strutting, arrogant reason of the Enlightenment – however much Kierkegaard's polemics against the Hegelian 'rational system' may seek to imply that it is. Hegel's reason is 'speculative reason', reason which goes beyond what is present to the em-

pirical understanding, reason which seeks the unification of opposed, conflicting elements of the world and the self. This is a reason which is self-critical; a reason which refuses all 'one-sided' declarations of its lofty detachment from faith; a reason which acknowledges and embraces subjectivity and feeling and the yearning for the Absolute which are so essential to faith.

In many ways, Hegel is as opposed to 'reason' as Kierkegaard is – to the *sort* of reason which sees itself in struggle against faith. In this sense, Kierkegaard is highly misleading when he plays on Hegel's 'advocacy' of reason as though Hegel did not himself initiate a searching critique of reason. Still, the stakes involved in protecting faith from the importunities of reason are as high as they can get for Kierkegaard, living in a world in which, as he felt, genuine faith had been so watered down by the demands for 'comprehensibility' and 'reasonableness', that he may perhaps be forgiven for using Hegel, the most prominent philosopher of the times, as the symbol for what must be struggled against. We must not forget that for Kierkegaard, *any* 'subsuming' of faith by reason is as tragic as it is comic: by 'going beyond' the crisis of faith, it is the existential crisis of all human subjectivity which is left in the lurch. We can only *live* this crisis, not contemplate it away. 'When faith requires a man to give up his reason', Johannes Climacus writes, it becomes manifest 'how improper it is to transform Christianity into a doctrine to be *understood*. … Christianity is not a doctrine but an existential communication expressing an existential contradiction. Christianity has to do with existence, with the act of existing; but existence and existing constitute precisely the opposite of speculation' (CUP 337, 339). Anti-Climacus puts this in his own inimitable way:

> A thinker erects an immense building, a system, a system which embraces the whole of existence and world-history etc. – and if we contemplate his personal life, we discover to our astonishment this terrible and ludicrous fact, that he himself personally does not live in this immense high-vaulted palace, but in a barn alongside of it, or in a dog kennel, or at the most in the porter's lodge. If one were to take the liberty of calling his attention to this by a single word, he would be offended. For he has no fear of being under a delusion, if only he can get the system completed … by means of the delusion (SD 176–7).

I am always reminded, when I read this passage, of the melancholy words Hegel penned at the close of his Preface to the second edition of his *Logic*, dated 7 November 1831, just a week before his death from cholera:

> The author, in face of the magnitude of the task [of revision], has had to content himself with what it was possible to achieve in circumstances of external necessity, of the inevitable distractions caused by the magnitude and many-sidedness of contemporary affairs, even under the doubt whether the noisy clamor of current affairs and the deafening chatter of a conceit which prides itself on confining itself to such matters leave any room for participation in the passionless calm of a knowledge which is in the element of pure thought alone (L 42).

It is almost as though Hegel were bemoaning the indignity of not being allowed to reside in his own high-vaulted palace, being so rudely distracted by the yelps from the kennel. But this is silly. 'Pure thought' for Hegel emphatically is not something separate from concrete existence, Kierkegaard's polemics notwithstanding. Hegel was a persistent critic of all 'abstract formalism' in philosophy (e.g. PS 9, 30). In his *Encyclopædia Logic*, he is merciless in his exposure of philosophical thinking which becomes 'self-complacent, … so much at home with itself that it feels an innate indifference to descend to particulars' (EL § 12), and in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* he remarks, poignantly if somewhat quaintly, that 'it is the cowardice of abstract thought to shun sensuous presence in monkish fashion' (PR III, 101). Hegel's melancholy in the Preface to his *Logic* is not that he cannot miraculously become an abstract thought, but that, as the aesthetic pseudonym 'A' of *Either/Or* puts it in his tale of 'The Unhappiest Man', he 'has his ideal … in some manner outside of himself' (E/O I, 220). He seeks the completion of his life in the completion of his own system of thought, and his melancholy reflects the inevitable division between his immersion in the finitude of life and his yearning for the absolute, the passionless calm of unity and wholeness.

Kierkegaard himself was certainly no less troubled by his sense of alienation from the world. In his *Point of View*, he describes himself as a man 'alone, in anguish unto death, alone in the face of the meaninglessness of existence', and speaks of how he found some peace of mind through his *deception* of 'the public': 'melancholy, incurably melancholy as I was, suffering prodigious griefs in my inmost soul, having broken in desperation from the world and all that is of the world … I found (I do not deny it) a certain sort of satisfaction in this life' of deceiving the public. 'What reconciled me with my fate and with my sufferings was that I, the so unhappy, so much tortured prisoner, had obtained this unlimited freedom of being able to deceive, so that I was allowed to be absolutely alone with my pain' (PV 71, 52, 78–9). Kierkegaard's life was the life of the poet described in *Either/Or*, the 'unhappy person who conceals profound anguish in his heart but whose lips are so formed that as sighs and cries pass over them they sound like beautiful music' (E/O I, 19).

Mark Taylor writes provocatively that 'Hegel becomes Kierkegaard's unhappiest man, Kierkegaard remains Hegel's unhappy consciousness'.[33] Hegel's philosophical system can show the logic of deliverance implicit in human despair, but Hegel knows full well that no amount of logic can actually save the unhappy consciousness, that such salvation rests with a decisive choice, a leap, which 'in a positive sense remains a *beyond*' for all logic. Kierkegaard's own phenomenology of despair in *The Sickness Unto*

[33] Taylor, 265. See also Ricoeur, 338: 'the Kierkegaardian thinker … has to accept his being included in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* under the title of the "unhappy consciousness."'.

Death also leads the self to the point where a leap is required. And his last-minute decision to remove his own name from the text, lest he confuse himself with the 'ideality' of faith he was portraying, reflects his identification with the 'unhappy poet' who, as we have seen, appears in the text on 'the most dialectical borderline' of despair and faith, who 'may have a very deep religious need, … and yet he loves the torment, he will not let it go'.

My own predicament, being a lover of both Hegel and Kierkegaard, is thus a predicament which I discover in a doubly reflected way: not only do I identify with Hegel in reading Hegel, and with Kierkegaard in reading Kierkegaard, but I see my Hegelian self *in* Kierkegaard's texts, as the unhappiest man, and my Kierkegaardian self *in* Hegel's texts, as the unhappy consciousness. The substantial parallels we have examined between the two dialectics of despair show ways in which the two sides of myself can find a provisional, guarded common ground. Even given the final points of divergence – Hegel's emphasis on reason, Kierkegaard's emphasis on faith – it is clear that both Hegel and Kierkegaard complicate what Hegel called 'the ancient antithesis of reason and faith' by exploring possibilities of a 'happy encounter'.

Further, both are agreed in describing the borderline between faith and reason as the terrain of despair. In a journal entry titled 'The Difficulty of Christianity', written in 1850 shortly after publication of *The Sickness Unto Death*, Kierkegaard states the centrality of the experience of despair in no uncertain terms: 'The difficulty is not, when feeling absolutely one's wretchedness, to grasp the consolation of Christianity; … no, the difficulty is to become wretched in this way, to want to risk discovering one's wretchedness. To be made well with the aid of Christianity is not the difficulty; the difficulty is in becoming sick to some purpose' (JP II, 1137). So too, Hegel regards the experience of despair, the 'unhappy consciousness', to be the central and recurring shape of consciousness. Thus just as for Kierkegaard the cure of faith is no given, final cure – for while 'the religious individual has thus got over his illness, though tomorrow perhaps it may return as the result of a little carelessness' (PS 437), and any faith which does not require perpetual striving is 'dead faith' (JP II, 1139, 1140) – for Hegel as well, reason may 'heal … the wounds of spirit' (PS 407) but not in such a way that they will never bleed again, for the self-division of spirit is an essential part of its life: 'the life of spirit is not the life that shrinks from … the tremendous power of the negative … and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it' (PS 19). Hegel and Kierkegaard meet on the ground of despair, the dialectical border-ground of reason and faith, and if theirs is not an entirely 'happy encounter', it is at least an encounter where the basic issues in question are remarkably similar.

For all of Kierkegaard's life-long project of debunking the 'fantastic' abstraction – the lunar extravagance – of the Hegelian 'System', he occa-

sionally allows one of his pseudonyms to pull himself up short and admit that 'to deny the value of speculation … would be, in my opinion, to prostitute oneself; it would be particularly stupid in one whose own energies are for the most part, and in proportion to aptitude and opportunity, consecrated to its service' (CUP 54). That Kierkegaard had the aptitude for the speculative is demonstrated decisively in the 'rigorous', 'algebraic' exposition of *The Sickness Unto Death*, but finally he was committed to finding quite different sorts of opportunities, in order to contest the self-complacently speculative tendencies of his age which had lapsed too far into an empty and spiritless formalism. Still, as a journal entry makes clear, Kierkegaard knew how important Hegel's philosophy was to him:

> I feel what for me at times is an enigmatic respect for Hegel; I have learned much from him, and I know very well that I can still learn much more from him … . His philosophical knowledge, his amazing learning, the insight of his genius, … I am willing to acknowledge as any disciple. Yet, no, not *acknowledge* – that is too distinguished an expression – willing to admire, learn from him (JP IV, 1608).[34]

I am convinced that Hegel would have had an enigmatic respect for Kierkegaard as well. At the very least, he would have appreciated Kierkegaard the poet of existence. Not only can we see Hegel's speculative philosophy as an experimental genre in search of a poetic dimension[35] – 'the highest act of reason … is an aesthetic act; … the philosopher must possess just as much aesthetic power as the poet',[36] and 'the deficiencies of the categories of the understanding [*verständigen Vorstellens*] and ordinary thinking [*gewöhnlichen Anschauens*] are extinguished by *speculative* thinking which therefore is from one point of view akin to the poetic imagination' (A 2: 976) – but he would have appreciated Kierkegaard the *religious* poet. Without the 'poetry of Protestant grief', Hegel remarks, our existence would fall into 'the prose of satisfaction with the finite and of good conscience about it' (FK 61), precisely the prosaic complacency Kierkegaard devoted his life to combating.

[34] See also CUP 99–100n: Johannes Climacus is an 'opponent' of Hegel's philosophy, but one who 'will always know how to hold him in honour, as one who has willed something great, though without having achieved it'.

[35] No doubt this statement is controversial, on two scores. On the first score, I am calling Hegel's philosophy an 'experimental genre' at the very least in the sense that it involves the advocacy of a fundamentally new approach to grammar (Hegel's replacement of the subject-predicate propositional form with the new 'speculative' or 'philosophical proposition', PS 36–40) and the attempt 'to try to teach philosophy to speak German' (1805 letter to Heinrich Voss, *Hegel: The Letters*, tr. Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984, 107). On the second score, that Hegel was in search of a poetic dimension to his philosophy, this of course seems to contradict his well-known claim that philosophy 'transcends' poetry (e.g., A 1: 89). My point here is that just as Kierkegaard attempted to establish a new form of poetics, beyond the purely aesthetic category, in his notion of the 'religious poet', Hegel can be seen – in Quentin Lauer's words – to 'dissolve the dichotomy of "systematic" (scientific) philosophy and "poetic" (artistic) philosophy', and thus to 'unite the poetical and the philosophical, imagination and speculation'. See Lauer, 'Hegel as Poet', Presidential Address to the Hegel Society of America, October 1982, in *History and System: Hegel's Philosophy of History*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984), 1–14.

[36] 'The Earliest System – Programme of German Idealism', cited in Henry Harris, *Hegel's Development: Toward the Sunlight*, 1770–1801 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 511.