Irony and faith an exploration of the implicit relationship between the concept of irony as a mastered moment and the concept of the faith relation between the believer and God, in the writings of Kierkegaard.

Frederick Neil. Watson

University of Windsor

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd

Recommended Citation
https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd/2520

This online database contains the full-text of PhD dissertations and Masters' theses of University of Windsor students from 1954 forward. These documents are made available for personal study and research purposes only, in accordance with the Canadian Copyright Act and the Creative Commons license—CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution, Non-Commercial, No Derivative Works). Under this license, works must always be attributed to the copyright holder (original author), cannot be used for any commercial purposes, and may not be altered. Any other use would require the permission of the copyright holder. Students may inquire about withdrawing their dissertation and/or thesis from this database. For additional inquiries, please contact the repository administrator via email (scholarship@uwindsor.ca) or by telephone at 519-253-3000ext. 3208.
NOTICE

The quality of this microfiche is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us a poor photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this film is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30. Please read the authorization forms which accompany this thesis.

THIS DISSERTATION HAS BEEN MICROFILMED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED

AVIS

La qualité de cette microfiche dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de mauvaise qualité.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, examens publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de ce microfilm est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30. Veuillez prendre connaissance des formules d'autorisation qui accompagnent cette thèse.

LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE NOUS L'AVONS RECUE

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4
IRONY AND FAITH

An Exploration of the Implicit Relationship Between the Concept of Irony as a Mastered Moment and the Concept of the Faith Relation Between the Believer and God, in the writings of Kierkegaard

by

Frederick Neil Watson

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies through the Department of
Religious Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at
The University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

1980
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all the "holy fools" who, by the example of their lives, have shown the world that faith is an action of inwardly turning toward God and not an action of outward show. It is dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi, St. Clare, St. Dominic, St. Thomas a Beckett, St. Thomas a Kempis, Julian of Norwich, St. John of the Cross, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Theresa of Avila, John and Charles Wesley, John Cardinal Newman, John Mason Neale, John Keeble, Pope John XXIII, Pope John-Paul I, and, of course, Kierkegaard, himself.

and

In praise and thanksgiving for the life and witness of

Fr. Eugene R. Malley, CSB.

lately Chairman of the Department of Religious Studies, the University of Windsor. A good friend, a trusted confessor, an admired scholar.
ABSTRACT

The theme of this paper is the exploration of the implicit relationship between the concept of irony as a mastered moment and the concept of the faith-relation between the believer and God, in the writings of Kierkegaard. This relationship is never explicitly stated. Instead, it flows as an undercurrent throughout the whole corpus of the writings, and is particularly evident in the pseudonymous literature. The relationship between irony and faith arises in the apparently identical nature of faith and temptation. This similarity is caused by the *Anfechtung*, or spiritual trial, which all believers must undergo to be found true in their faith. This *Anfechtung* takes the form of a deep inward questioning as to whether or not one proceeds in faith or has succumbed to temptation. This *Anfechtung* is caused to come into being when we are faced with the moments which cause faith to spring into being. These moments are ironic in nature and are found in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac, and in the phenomenon of the Incarnation. These moments of irony may be seen as mastered because of their contemplative nature. These moments teach us to contemplate the futility of all our most fondly held human desires when they are juxtaposed with the eternal divine plan as revealed through the action of God.
In writing this paper, we have divided the content into five chapters which build toward the presentation of our conclusions. These chapters will explore the concepts of irony, humour and its correlative concept of pathos, the three stages of life, dread and fear and trembling, and the absolute paradox. In each we will explore the theme of the chapter as a contributory theme to the main theme of the paper as a whole.
Acknowledgements

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the influence and help which a number of people have given me in the preparation of this thesis. These people are, the late Fr. J. G. Gibbons who taught me to appreciate the aesthetic within the faith-relationship and who gave me a copy of Fear and Trembling to read, Rev. Dr. M. Watts who introduced me to the broader spectrum of Kierkegaard’s writings, Rev. Dr. E. Grislis and Fr. J. Setter who encouraged me to continue my studies at the graduate level, Profs. T. Sutter, H. Nielson, and N. King, my readers who took me through the ordeal of writing and defending a thesis, D. James Pavlik who spent many hours with me discussing this paper and the heresies it proposed, and finally to my parents, Frederick and Elizabeth, who, in my childhood, taught me to esteem three things, truth, beauty and wisdom.

F. N. Watson,
Windsor, Ontario.
Table of Contents

DEDICATION ......................................................... iii
ABSTRACT ................................................................ iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .................................................. vi
Introduction .............................................................. 1
The Concept of Irony .................................................. 7
The Concept of Humour .............................................. 35
The Existential Stages of Life ................................. 66
The Concepts of Dread and of Fear and Trembling ... 90
Christ the Absolute Paradox ...................................... 122
A Chapter of Conclusions ......................................... 137
APPENDIX ............................................................... 151
BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................................ 154
VITA AUCTORIS ........................................................ 156
An Introduction

The Theme of Irony in Kierkegaard's Writings

One of the greatest difficulties which faces students of Kierkegaard's work is the apparent lack of a central theme which may be seen to tie together all his highly diverse literature into one unified whole. That such a theme is not readily apparent, however, does not mean that one does not exist. A careful study of the works will reveal that each in its own way treats the theme of the irony implicit in human existence, particularly as it is found in the faith relation between man and God. This theme is never explicitly stated. Instead, it flows as an undercurrent throughout all the literature from The Concept of Irony to The Unchangeableness of God. The theme of this paper will therefore be an exploration of how Kierkegaard defined and developed his concepts of the irony of human existence and the irony of faith, and the explanation of how they may be seen as the common thread of thought which binds together all his works.

A Note on Difficulties Encountered

There are three major difficulties which one encounters when doing a paper on the theme of irony in Kierkegaard. The first of these is the fact that many commentators have virtually ignored this theme in their discussions on Kierkegaard's literature. The second is the diverse range of subjects which he touched upon in his writings. The third is his use of pseudonyms.
Any scholar who wishes to explore the theme of irony in Kierkegaard's works faces an immediate difficulty, the general lack of acceptance, among the scholarly community, that this theme exists and is important to our task. In large measure this factor grows out of the fact that few scholars are willing to accept the book *The Concept of Irony* as an important work. Instead most dismiss it as immature and of little consequence. The result of this is that the theme of irony implicit in Kierkegaard's writings is virtually ignored. Irony is reduced to a simple literary device like satire, ridicule, and sarcasm. This lack of appreciation of Kierkegaard's treatment of irony is particularly evident in the English-speaking world where few commentators bother to mention the concept, and where the book itself was the last piece of the literature to be translated.

How can we answer the statement that the book *The Concept of Irony* is an immature work which should not be taken seriously, and counter the consequent lack of appreciation for the concept as it exists in the works? The answer, of course, is that we cannot. In a way the detractors of the book are right. It is immature, but not immature in the sense of childish. The work is immature in that Kierkegaard had not as yet begun to develop his terminology nor his great psychological insights. Therefore the book cannot deal with them as it perhaps should. The book itself, however, must be seen as a moment of genius which set the stage for his future writings and therefore of signal importance for a thorough understanding of Kierkegaard's contribution to thought.
Kierkegaard's writings may be divided into four distinct sections based on the content of the books. The first of these sections is that commonly called the Pseudonymous Literature, where all the books are attributed to fictitious authors, or groups of authors. These books deal with the exploration of the stages of life and the theme of faith in a manner which is not specifically Christian in its treatment. The second section is comprised of his Christian literature which treats the theme in a specifically Christian manner. Concurrent to these two sections of writing are the 'Edifying Discourses'. These are short meditations, published under Kierkegaard's own name, which were designed to accompany and explain the thoughts in the main works. These discourses may be divided into two sub-sections, the 'ethical' discourses which accompanied the pseudonymous literature, and the 'Christian' discourses which accompanied the Christian literature. The final section of the writings is the incidental literature, works such as From The Papers of One Still Living, The Concept of Irony, and The Journals and Papers, which do not fit into any of the other sections. Situated between the pseudonymous and Christian sections of Kierkegaard's writings (which also marks a time break between the pseudonymous and Christian periods of writing) is the book The Concluding Unscientific Postscript. This book is not actually Christian in its content nor does it deal strictly with the stages of life as the pseudonymous literature does. It is therefore attributed to a pseudonymous author but edited by Kierkegaard. The book was originally written to be the last of his books, hence the 'concluding,' but
became instead the point of departure for his Christian writings. It is within this book that he first acknowledged that it was he who had penned the pseudonymous literature. -1

Why Kierkegaard choose to write pseudonymously will probably always remain a bit of a mystery. In his book *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*, he wrote:

"Although *Either/Or* attracted all the attention, and nobody noticed the *Two Edifying Discourses*, this book betokened, nevertheless, that the edifying was precisely what must come to the fore, that the author was a religious author who for this reason has never written anything aesthetic, but has employed pseudonyms for all the aesthetic works."-2 Thus, the reason for employing the pseudonyms may be found in the *raison d'être* for Kierkegaard's whole authorship. Kierkegaard saw himself primarily as a religious author. He published his more aesthetic works under the pseudonyms so that he could not be accused of being an aesthetic author who became religious. Rather, the religious must always accompany the aesthetic to explain it and give it meaning.

Because of this pseudonymous character of the early literature, many scholars have traditionally taught that comparing the writings of one pseudonymous author with those of another was to be avoided. There are other ways to view this. Unless we are to treat Kierkegaard as a multi-personality schizophrenic whose personalities never connect we cannot help but acknowledge a relationship between the various writings. This relationship is deeper than simply that of
sharing a common author. His works also have a relationship of thought, of a continuous development which leads the reader through a quest from the aesthetic stage of life to the religious stage of life, and introduces him to the terrible ironies implicit in human existence, and in the relationship of faith with God.
Footnotes


The Concept of Irony

Inasmuch as this paper is an attempt, however struggling, to discover the relationship between irony and faith as Kierkegaard defined them, it would seem necessary to pause and take some time to present Kierkegaard's concept of the phenomenon of irony. In order to accomplish this task we will use The Concept of Irony, written under his own name and presented as his dissertation for his Master of Arts degree.

We may, with Kierkegaard, define irony by its chief characteristic: that what is said is the opposite of what is meant. Kierkegaard presents us here with the determinant which is common to all forms of irony, namely that the phenomenon and the essence of the figure of speech are not identical but rather are opposite. In speech the thought or meaning behind the words is the essence while the words themselves are the phenomenon. Now insofar as speech, to be understood, requires that the essence and phenomenon be identical so that the listener may understand what the speaker means, it would seem that irony destroys speech, for it sets the essence and the phenomenon in opposition to each other. This, however, does not occur. As Kierkegaard wrote; "The ironic figure of speech cancels itself, however, for the speaker presupposes his listeners understand him, hence through a negation of the immediate phenomenon the essence remains identical with the phenomenon." -1 So the opposition of essence and phenomenon within irony is cancelled by the fact that the speaker presupposes that the listener has been initiated into the mysteries
of irony and that the listener, therefore, will in his action of hearing negate the immediate phenomenon (the actual spoken word), and will arrive at the real, although hidden, phenomenon which is identical with the essence.

In the above paragraph we can see the beginning of one of the principle traits of all forms of irony: subjectivity.

This subjectivity arises out of the necessity of identity between thought and word, essence and phenomenon, in the act of speech. As S.K. wrote:

Now truth demands identity, for if I have the thought without the word I do not have the thought; and if I have the words without the thought, I do not have the word. . . . When next I consider the speaking subject, I again have a determination present in all forms of irony, namely, the subject is negatively free. If I am conscious when I speak that what I say is my meaning, and that what is said is an adequate expression of my meaning, and I assume that the person with whom I am speaking comprehends perfectly the meaning in what is said, then I am bound by what is said, that is, I am here positively free. . . Furthermore, I am bound in relation to myself and cannot detach myself whenever I choose. If, on the other hand, what is said is not my meaning, or the opposite of my meaning, then I am free both in relation to others and in relation to myself. —2

Thus, if we consider the necessity of identity or agreement between thought and word, and we find that they are so identified, and that the listener also comprehends what the speaker has said, then the speaker is bound by what he has said, and is, therefore, positively free. By saying that the speaker is positively free, it would appear that Kierkegaard means that the speaker is free because his words are heard, and positively free because his words by agreeing with the thought behind them are bound into the actuality of the thought behind them. Furthermore, the speaker is bound to the actuality
of these words in himself. In irony, however, the essence and phenomenon of speech are in opposition, the speaker is therefore free in his relationship to both himself and others; free in relation to others in that his words are heard and understood; free in relation to himself in that the words do not bind him to the actuality of his thought because the words are not identified with the thought, but rather are in opposition to it. This is the negative freedom of the subject. This negative freedom has freed the speaker from the actuality of his thought, and there is, therefore, nothing which binds the speaker to a given actuality. As such the speaker, the ironic subject, hovers above his actuality and in his hovering a certain enthusiasm is born, an intoxication with the possibilities presented to him in his release from the constraints of the actuality which binds him. This hovering, this intoxication with possibility, in its turn inspires and nourishes the ironic subject's enthusiasm for the destruction of the actuality which had first prompted him to speak ironically.  

Thus, the ironic individual is prompted to his task by the actuality into which he is bound. What, however, does Kierkegaard mean by 'actuality' in the discussion of irony? By the tone of the discussion Kierkegaard appears to assign the term actuality to all the varied factors which go to make up the world in which we live, and which therefore defines our life and being, physical, mental, cultural, etc. That the given actuality of one age, or peoples, has validity only for that certain age and for those individuals constituting
that people, must be taken as a given. To use the example that Kierkegaard uses in *The Concept of Irony* we may say that for the people contemporaneous with the Reformation Catholicism was the actuality of their age. This actuality, however, no longer held valid for a large segment of the people. Their actuality was the Reformed Church. Here we are presented with the given actuality of one age and people, that which defines their being and life, coming in conflict with the actuality which was to define the life and being of those coming after. The result was collision and conflict and, be it noted, this collision of actualities constitutes the deepest tragedy of world history. This conflict of actualities, however, is not a revolution but rather an evolution. The past shows it is justified in its stance by demanding a sacrifice, the new shows it is justified by providing that sacrifice. And, again be it noted, this sacrifice is a necessity because the new actuality is not just a moment in history, nor a conclusion to the past, nor even a corrective to the past, but rather it is a new beginning. Now, insofar as this collision of actualities demands a sacrifice an individual must be marked for the role. The individual so marked is the one who is world historically justified (that is, in the total panorama of world history, he will be proved to be justified, in delivering his challenge to the given actuality) and at the same time is without authority. What, then, is ironist's role in this collision of actualities? Is he prophetic, calling the existing actuality to task and foretelling its end, or is he perhaps the sacrifice? For Kierkegaard the ironist is in a sense prophetic, but he can

-10-
never be considered a prophet. Thus the ironist is the one called to render judgement because he knows the present does not correspond to the ideal. In this he is prophetic because he points to the future but he is not a prophet because a prophet speaks to his age and the actuality of which he is a part. The ironist, on the other hand, is lost totally to his age. Furthermore, the ironist fulfills the role of the sacrifice which we saw, above, was demanded by the collision of the actualities, not because he must fall as a sacrifice, but because his zeal consumes him. We might add here this sacrificial aspect is confirmed because the ironist is world historically justified and, at the same time, without the authority to challenge the validity of his age.

Before continuing our discussion on irony, it would behoove us to pause and briefly discuss the relationship which Kierkegaard sees between actuality and subjectivity. According to Kierkegaard subjectivity, when it is confronted by a given actuality begins to feel within itself the quickening power of its validity and significance. The feeling of power becomes the means by which subjectivity saves itself from being trapped in the relativity in which the given actuality seeks to hold it. In relation to irony this freeing of subjectivity from the constraints of actuality takes place in the service of the Idea, if the irony is world historically justified.

Now, we should note here, that simply because the subject regards the actuality he lives within ironically it does not stand that he proceeds ironically in asserting such an actuality. The more, however, that he does proceed ironically the more
certain becomes the destruction of the actuality which he speaks against, and so much the greater in his freedom. The ironic subject allows the existent to continue to exist in spite of its having no validity to his life, and by this leads the actuality to its destruction. But how does this destruction of the actuality take place? How does the ironist destroy the old actuality if he does not possess the new actuality within himself? Kierkegaard would respond that the ironist destroys the given actuality by the actuality itself. Thus, to use as an example John the Baptist, he destroyed the given actuality of his time and people, the Judaism of Law and righteousness, by the very actuality, by demanding the advent of law and righteousness, an advent which could not occur in the corrupt Judaism of that age. But we must note here that even though the ironist does not possess the new he bears it within himself as possibility. -5

We have now defined irony as that which is directed against a given authority, and we have further defined actuality as being those elements, physical, psychological, and cultural, which define for a certain time and people their life and being. But we must not assume that irony directs itself against a particular existence, rather:

Irony in the imminent sense directs itself
not against this or that particular existence
but against the whole given actuality of a
certain time and situation. It has, therefore,
an apriority in itself, and it is not by
successively destroying one segment of actuality
after the other that it arrives at its total view,
but by virtue of this that it destroys in the
particular. It is not this or that phenomenon
but the totality of existence which it considers
sub specie ironicae. To this extent one sees the
propriety of the Hegelian characterization of irony as infinite absolute negativity.

Thus, irony does not direct itself at this or that particular view, and from that, by a cumulative process, arrive at a world view, rather it begins with the world view, and through it (the world view) directs itself at this or that particular actuality. And it is by this that Hegel rightly defines irony as infinite, absolute, negativity. But what do we mean when we define irony as infinite, absolute, negativity? Kierkegaard would answer; "Thus we have irony as infinite, absolute negativity. It is negativity because it only negates; it is infinite because it negates not this or that phenomenon; and it is absolute because it negates by virtue of a higher which it is not." Thus infinite, absolute negativity means that irony negates the totality of actuality by means of a higher authority than either itself or the ironist. We must add here that if we accept the above definition of irony as infinite, absolute negativity then we must accept that all of existence has become alien to the ironic subject. In fact, actuality has lost all validity for the ironic subject and he has become estranged from existence. The result is that, to a certain extent, the ironic subject is now no longer actual.

We began this part of our discussion by stating that subjectivity is a basic tenet of all forms of irony and then went on to show how this subjectivity appears when the given actuality loses its validity for the ironic subject, the ironist. But subjectivity is not just a basic tenet of irony, the converse is also true, indeed Kierkegaard has written; "Irony

-13-
is itself the first and most abstract determination of subjectivity." Now if irony is 'the first and most abstract determination of subjectivity' it should stand, or it is reasonable to suppose that it should stand, that irony appeared for the first time in history when subjectivity first appeared and so we, like Kierkegaard, arrive at Socrates.

The major portion of The Concept of Irony consists of a careful analysis of the thoughts of Socrates as they are presented by his three major disciples Xenophon, Plato, and Aristophanes, from the standpoint of irony. (Perhaps it would be more correct to say that Kierkegaard discusses the works of Xenophon, Plato, and Aristophanes firstly as presentations by contemporaries of the concepts initially proposed by Socrates and secondly as an example of irony in action). In this regard Kierkegaard seeks to show how, for Socrates, the whole substantial life of Hellenism, the basis of his actuality, had come to lose its validity for him. This is the first aspect of his irony, the factor which causes it to spring into being. The second aspect of his irony is that he always employed it in the destruction of Hellenism. He allowed Hellas to continue to exist in spite of its lack of validity for him, and constantly challenged it to fulfill its function of dispensing wisdom by pretending to be ignorant. And at the last he becomes consumed by his zeal and stands as the sacrifice demanded by the old of the new. As Kierkegaard wrote:

Let us summarize what has been emphasized in the first part of this essay as characteristic of the standpoint of Socrates: the whole substantial life of Hellenism had lost its validity for him, that is
to say, the established actuality had become unreal to him, not in some particular aspect but in its totality as such. In relation to this invalid actuality he allowed the established to feign existence and thereby brought on its destruction. Through all this he became lighter and lighter, always more negatively free. Hence we see from the present discussion that the standpoint of Socrates was irony as infinite, absolute negativity. However, it was not actuality altogether that he negated, but the given actuality of a certain age, of substantiality as embodied in Hellas; and what his irony demanded was the actuality of subjectivity of ideality. In this matter history has judged that Socrates was world historically warranted. He therefore becomes a sacrifice.

Thus through the ironic stance with which he faced Hellas, Socrates becomes more and more negatively free. His irony was indeed infinite, absolute negativity in that it negated the actuality that existed by virtue of a higher reality, the actuality of subjectivity as embodied in the Ideal. That Socrates was world historically justified in his undertaking history has now confirmed and so Socrates's death must, historically, be seen as a sacrifice.

In The Concept of Irony, Kierkegaard divides the phenomenon of irony into two distinct sections which he calls executive irony and contemplative irony. If we were to roughly define these two types of irony through their chief characteristics we would say that executive irony is audible irony, that is, it is apparent from the first that this form of speech is ironic. Contemplative irony is more interior. Its impact depends upon our contemplation of the situation of the irony as upon the actual words.

There are five forms of irony which fall under the classification of executive irony. The first, and most common form
of this irony is when someone says something seriously which is not intended seriously. The second form, which is closely related to the first, occurs when someone says something facetiously which he intends to be serious in its nature.-12 The third form of executive irony is that of a relation of opposition. By this Kierkegaard means the juxtaposition of two diametrically opposed views or situations. Thus when we are faced with an abundance of wisdom we claim ignorance. In relation to an inane enthusiasm we appear to be too dense to grasp the sublime: when we are faced with ignorance we appear to be wise. There are two forms which this type of irony may take, either that which is obvious, such as pretending to be ignorant to mock the wise or the more gentle type of the irony of opposition where the ironic subject seeks out the company of the foolish in order to mock, not the foolish, but those who claim wisdom.

The fourth form of executive irony springs out of the irony of opposition. This form of irony arises out of the satisfaction which is felt at the successful contemplation of the deception of irony. As Kierkegaard wrote:

Now the more the ironist succeeds in deceiving and the better his falsification progresses, so much the greater is his satisfaction. But he experiences this satisfaction in solitude, and his concern is precisely that no one notices his deception. - This is a form of irony which occurs more seldom, though it is equally profound and easier to effect than the irony appearing in the form of an opposition. In particular, one sometimes sees it employed against a man who is on his way towards suffering from some fixed idea, against a man who deludes himself into thinking he is handsome or has especially handsome side-whiskers, or imagines he is witty or that he has said something so funny that it cannot be repeated
often enough, or against a man whose life is contained in a single event, as it were, which he constantly reverts to and which anyone can induce him to relate at any moment if one but knows the right spring to press, etc. -14

Thus the irony of deception is seen when the ironic subject directs his irony against someone who suffers from the delusion of a fixed idea (as in the example) and arises when we are able, by subtle deception, to press the springs which will produce the desired result. But note please that this deception must be subtle; the ironist will take great pains to ensure that no one will notice his deception.

The final form of executive irony is that of nature. This form of irony is not evident to one who is too natural or too naive but is only evident to one who is already ironically developed. The more, therefore, that a person has developed his innate irony the more will nature appear to him as irony. An example of this form of irony is found in the deceptions propounded upon us by our senses. This form, however, is usually only apparent to an individual who has been oriented in humour because it is essentially through a careful consideration of the phenomenon of sin in the world that the irony of nature becomes apparent.-15

As we have said over and over again irony depends, in all its forms, upon a relation of opposition, of not saying what one truly means. In this regard it would seem that irony is but another name for dissemblance. For Kierkegaard, however, there is a very definite difference between them.

The first of these is that while dissemblance is the
objective expression of not saying what we mean irony involves also the subjective satisfaction of being released from the constraints of the actuality of our life. Beyond this, however, there is another difference between dissemblance and irony. Dissemblance has a purpose beyond itself, that is the dissembling subject has a purpose foreign to dissemblance itself, the individual who dissembles does not do so just for the sake of dissemblance, but also to confuse the listener. On the other hand, irony holds within itself its purpose. That purpose is to enable the ironist to feel free of the actuality of his time and being. -16

The second type of irony which Kierkegaard identifies is that which he calls contemplative or theoretic irony. With the discussion on contemplative irony we enter into a discussion of the phenomenon of the moment and also of irony as a poetic device in literature. Let us again quote from The Concept of Irony:

But irony has a theoretical or contemplative aspect. Were we to consider irony an inferior moment, we might allow it to be a sharp eye for what is crooked, wry, distorted, for what is erroneous, the vain in existence. In conceiving this it might seem that irony were identical with ridicule, satire, persiflage, etc. Naturally, it has a affinity with this insofar as it, too, perceives what is vain, but it differs in setting forth its observation. It does not destroy vanity, it is not what punitive justice is in relation to vice, nor does it have the power of reconciliation within itself as does the comic. On the contrary, it reinforces vanity in its vanity and renders madness more mad. This is what might be called irony's attempt to mediate the discrete moments, not in a higher unity but in a higher madness -17

We see, here, Kierkegaard beginning his discussion by positing irony as a moment. This is not, at this point, a verbalized,
but rather an understood conception. He then goes on to point out that if we are to consider irony an inferior moment, then it would be the equivalent of ridicule, satire, etc. While he acknowledges that irony has an affinity to these literary devices Kierkegaard stresses that it differs from these in the way in which it sets forth its observations of actuality. Irony sets forth its observations by rendering vanity more vain and madness more mad. It is through this action that irony destroys vanity and madness but note, this action of irony is not punitive nor does it reconcile, rather, it is an operation which attempts to mediate the many moments, not in a higher unity, but rather into a higher madness. So irony, while posited as a literary moment, must not be considered an inferior moment. We are now ready to discuss irony as a poetic device.

Kierkegaard's understanding of irony as a literary-poetic device is based on his interpretation of the work of Franz Solger, the German poet-philosopher of the romantic period. Of his work Kierkegaard has written; "Solger seeks to bring about the absolute identity of the finite and the infinite, seeks to destroy the boundary which in many ways would hold them apart. He works towards the absolute, presuppositionless beginning and his activity is thus speculative."-18 Thus Solger's discussion of, and use of, irony belongs in the sphere of speculation. This is not without its pitfalls. As Kierkegaard wrote, Solger's speculation involved him in the use of terms such as "to negate", "to destroy", and "to abrogate". Thus he (Solger) also assigned to the negative
the double function of rendering the finite infinite and
the infinite finite. According to Kierkegaard the problem
begins when the reader tries to understand how these terms
apply to the destruction of the boundary between the finite
and the infinite. In order to do so one must understand the
'laws of motion,' which govern the movements of rendering the
finite infinite and the infinite finite. The difficulty
arises when one is now in one movement, now in the next, now
rendering the finite infinite, now rendering the infinite
finite, and therefore confusion arises. Agreement must also
be reached on the significance of what is to be negated or
the negation may be directed at the wrong object. Therefore,
in order to negate actuality requires a knowledge of what is
involved in the definition of actuality, and an understanding
that the actuality itself arises in the act of negation. But
according to Kierkegaard none of this made clear to the reader.

19 This lack of a clear definition of what actuality consists
of, causes Solger's definition of irony to be substantially,
even fundamentally, different from the definitions of other
ironists such as Socrates. As Kierkegaard wrote: "He (Solger)
does not collide with actuality in the same sense as the other
ironists, for his irony did not in any way fashion itself in
opposition to actuality. The irony of Solger is contemplative
irony, as he sees the nothingness of all things. Thus, irony
is an organon (instrument of thought), a sense for the nega-
tive." 20 Thus, Solger does not fashion irony as an opposition
to actuality but as a way of seeing and revealing the nothing-
ness of all things. His irony is therefore contemplative, not being directed at the destruction of any one thing but being a contemplation of the negation, or nothingness, of all things. This contemplative attitude of the irony of Solger becomes a religious devotion which demands even the negation of the observing subject.

Now if the contemplative irony of Solger is directed toward the negation of all things and the destruction of the boundary between the finite and the infinite, how does this affect the understanding of actuality? Kierkegaard would answer.

His contemplative irony sees the finite as the *Nichtige* as that which must be abrogated. But the infinite, too, must be negated, must not consist in an otherworldly an sich. With this the true actuality is effected . . . Here we have the Idea at the point of absolute beginning, as infinite absolute negativity. If something is to come of this, however, the negative must again assert itself and render the Idea finite, make it concrete. The negative is the unrest of thought, but this unrest must appear, must become visible: its desire must exhibit itself as the desire which drives the work, its pain must exhibit itself as the pain which begets. Should this fail to come about, we have merely the unauthentic actuality of contemplation, religious devotion, and pantheism. And whether one maintains devotion as a moment or allows the whole of life to become devotion, the true actuality nevertheless fails to appear. If it is only a moment, there is nothing to do but instantly evoke it again; while if it is to fill the whole of life, then in truth actuality never comes into existence. -21

The finite then is viewed as the *Nichtige*. This German word, impossible to translate into Danish and almost equally difficult to render into English, is best assigned the English meaning of the worthless, the base, the vile. The finite is
the Nichtige, the worthless, the base, the vile. The infinite, however, must also be negated; it must not be allowed to be an otherworldly an sich. This German phrase best translates into English as 'himself,' but this is the third person reflective pronoun of the Dative and Accusative cases. Thus the infinite cannot be allowed to become an an sich, a reflective third person unattached to the reality of the subject. Thus two movements of negation take place: the finite is negated as the Nichtige, the vile, and therefore untrue actuality while at the same time the infinite is negated as the an sich because it is not firmly rooted in actuality. With this double movement of negation the true actuality is brought into being, the Idea is at the point of absolute beginning; it exists as absolute, infinite negativity. But we cannot stop here, we must immediately allow the negative to again assert itself and thus render the Idea finite to make it concrete. The negative is then the unrest of thought, but it must become visible or it will exist merely as an un-authentic actuality of contemplation and the true actuality then fails to appear. Furthermore, this double movement of negation is characterized by Solger as the divine pastime.

God is constantly involved in positing his own negation, first by positing his existence in finitude, which negates the otherworldly nature of his being, and then by positing the negation of the finitude as the Nichtige, the base by taking himself back into the an sich. This double movement of negation must be repeated again and again. -22
Kierkegaard has summarized Solger thusly; "irony was of a speculative nature. With Solger infinite absolute negativity is a speculative moment. He has the negation of the negation." -23 We see here how Solger's irony is characterized by its speculative nature. The point of infinite absolute negativity is for Solger a speculative moment. It is the moment when the speculation of irony occurs. Because irony is involved in negation this means that Solger's irony possesses the negation of everything including the negation itself because in its momentary existence it speculates on the existence of all things, even itself.

Now we have Kierkegaard's definition of Solger's concept of irony as the speculative moment which negates the untrue actuality, whether this untrue actuality is finite (in which case it requires negation because it is Nichtig) or infinite (in which case it requires negation because it is the an sich), in order to allow the true actuality to become visible. But now we must ask ourselves if any actuality could ever survive this process of negation and thus be proclaimed as a true actuality. As Kierkegaard questioned:

Once again we meet the same fundamental view that finitude is a nothingness, that it must be destroyed as an untrue actuality in order for the true to become visible . . . Accordingly, one does not see which actuality is to be destroyed: whether it is an untrue actuality . . . that is to say, whether it is the egotism of the discrete moments which is to be negated in order that the true actuality may become visible, the actuality of the mind, not as a beyond but as a present; or whether this divine pastime is, in fact, able to allow any actuality to endure.-24
Here, then, is the problem of finding any actuality which can stand as a true actuality. If we negate only the egotism of the discrete moments then the actuality of the mind, as present, is the true actuality, but if we accept the process of negation as a divine pastime we arrive at the point where no higher, or true, actuality can exist. Now we have two choices; either the actuality of the mind, however momentary, is the true actuality, or the divine pastime of negation destroys all actuality as untrue. It is at this point that Solger enters into his discussion of the sphere of aesthetics as the visible expression for the true actuality.

Now, in order to understand irony as a poetic-literary device we must deal with Solger's concept of the sphere of aesthetics as the dwelling place of the true actuality. Solger sets forth two factors as necessary conditions for the successful completion of an artistic production and the revealing of the true actuality. These two factors, these necessary conditions which the artist must possess, are irony and enthusiasm; irony in order to reveal and destroy the untrue actuality, enthusiasm in order to intimate the existence of a higher actuality. For Solger this concept is most fully revealed in the poetry of the romantic school. This concept, however, is not without certain inherent difficulties which arise because of this two-fold necessity of irony and enthusiasm. According to Kierkegaard the romantic poetry which Solger viewed as the highest, or truest, presentation of actuality cannot sustain itself when faced with this
double assault of irony and enthusiasm. It cannot survive irony because the essential striving of romantic poetry is to bring to consciousness the imperfection of the given actuality (the written medium), nor can it survive the onslaught of enthusiasm which acts always as a presentiment of the perfect, but never brings it to actuality and thus proclaims itself as an untrue actuality which must be destroyed. The higher actuality which should appear is the poetry, but this poetry never reaches the point of having become. Rather it is always in the process of becoming, whereas the true actuality will become what it is. If we have, above, described irony as a speculative moment which negates and destroys, we here have Solger defining poetic irony as the moment which negates and destroys poetically.-26 Under Solger's concept of irony as a poetic device the poet, the ironic subject, is rendered free from the actuality of his thought but the poem, the actual artistic production, is not rendered free. The irony in a poem exists as the moment that negates the untrue actuality but it is bound to this function. That is the actuality of its existence. The ironic poem is thus rendered positively free, rather than negatively free.

We are ready to discuss how Kierkegaard fashions his own definition of irony as a literary-poetic device. We must keep firmly in our minds the definitions of Solger, outlined above, as, in many ways, Kierkegaard's definitions are an opposition to those of Solger. Let us begin this part of discussion with the following quotation;
It was mentioned in the foregoing that Solger in his lectures on aesthetics makes irony a condition for every artistic production. But in the present context when we say that the poet must relate himself ironically to his poem, this means something other than it meant in the foregoing... when Shakespeare relates himself ironically to his work, this is simply in order to let the objective prevail. Irony is now pervasive, ratifying each particular feature so that there is neither too much nor too little, so that everything receives it due, so that the true equilibrium may be effected in the micro-cosmic situation of the poem whereby it gravitates towards itself. The greater the opposition in this movement, so much the more irony is required to control and master those spirits which obstinately seek to storm forth; while the more irony is present, so much the more freely and poetically does the poet hover above his composition. Irony is not present at some particular point in the poem but omnipresent in it, so that the visible irony in the poem is in turn ironically mastered. Thus, irony renders both the poem and the poet free.-27

In this quotation we begin to see the way Kierkegaard has fashioned his concept of poetic irony in contrast to that of Solger. Here the irony of a poet, such as Shakespeare, exists in order to let the objective truth of his work prevail. The result is that each feature of the particular work is ratified, that is each feature receives its due amount of attention and a right balance is achieved within the total poetic work. This form of irony is particularly necessary in poetic productions which oscillate between extremes of opposition. The irony becomes the agent which controls and defines the various aspects of the poem so that no one feature will prevail and dominate. The result of this all pervasive irony (for the irony is all pervasive, not held at any one particular point in the poem but rising above it all) is that the visible irony (the myriad of times that
executive irony, in any form, is used) is mastered and controlled. This frees not only the poet from the actuality of his thought and words but frees also the poem from the actuality of its words.

It is important, when considering the freedom of the poet, to remember that the poet must master irony. He must control it so that it will work for him. Furthermore, simply because a poet has mastered irony in the particular moment of a given aesthetic work does not mean that he has mastered irony in relation to the actuality which comprises his being. Indeed, a great disparity can, and often does, exist between the poet's mastery of irony in his poetic production and his mastery of irony in the actuality of his life. This disparity attains an even greater significance when one considers the poet as a subject in the immediate standpoint of genius. If he departs from this point, if his poetry is truly a continuous mastered poetic production and not simply a flashpoint of insight stemming from genius, then the poet will require of himself a total world-view, a philosophy upon which to draw and this demands that he gain, in some measure, a mastery over irony. When this occurs the poem will not be an immediate moment which has only an external relation to the poet as his production, but will be seen by the poet as a moment—in its own right, within his development of becoming what he is.

An example of such a poet, one who has mastered irony, is the German poet Goethe. According to Kierkegaard Goethe's
greatness lay in his ability to make his existence as a poet congrue with his existence in actuality, and this required mastered irony. While the romanticist relates to his production only externally, that is his production is either his dearest treasure whose existence he cannot explain, or he is totally disgusted with it, the truth is that it is a moment. For Goethe, however, irony was a mastered moment, it became a poetic spirit ministering to the needs of the poet in two ways; firstly through the use of irony the particular poem culminates in itself, it is a totality; and secondly the particular poetic production shows itself as a moment within the existence of the poet and so his whole existence as a poet culminates in itself through irony. When irony is thus mastered and reduced to a moment the essence and the phenomenon again coalesce and the one is identical with the other. The result in life is that while possibility no longer presumes to be actuality, actuality becomes possibility. To relate this to our discussion on the aesthetic as a true actuality we may say that when irony is mastered the poetic production no longer claims to be the true actuality (when, in fact, it but presents us with a possibility) rather the actuality of the poetic piece now presents itself as a possible candidate for the true actuality.

We might digress here, momentarily, and discuss the agreement between essence and phenomenon in mastered irony. We earlier stressed that, theoretically at least, in speech
the phenomenon (the words) had to agree with the essence (the thought) behind the phenomenon. We also showed how in the use of irony essence and phenomenon do not agree but are in opposition to each other. Now in mastered irony the essence and phenomenon again agree, not because they are identical but because of a two fold lesson which irony gives us. Firstly, mastered irony teaches us that something is not necessarily concealed behind the phenomenon, and secondly, it prevents idolatry from being directed towards the phenomenon by teaching us to esteem contemplation, to carefully consider the phenomenon and essence of speech before believing what has been said. -29

If we now, with Kierkegaard, accept or define irony as a mastered moment we might question how irony as a mastered moment differs from irony in an un mastered state. Kierkegaard responds; "When irony has first been mastered it undertakes a movement directly opposed to that wherein it proclaims itself as un mastered. Irony now limits, renders finite, defines, and therewith yields truth, actuality, and content; it chastens and punishes and thereby imparts stability, character, and consistency." -30 If we now remember our earlier definition when we saw irony defined through its action of rendering thought and subject negatively free and of thus destroying the untrue actuality, we here see Kierkegaard presenting us with a contract to this earlier definition. Irony as a mastered moment, serves to limit and define, and through that action brings forth truth and actuality. This
brings forth the disciplinary action of irony, the action which chastens and punishes in order to bring out stability and consistency in our being. Furthermore, the presence of mastered irony is necessary in our personal life if we are to consider our lives as having a point of absolute beginning. The presence of mastered irony in our life is the authentication of our human existence. This becomes the justification of the existence of mastered irony, it exists in order to lend an authenticity to our human life.

Now if we accept Kierkegaard's statement that it is mastered irony which lends an authentication to our human life we may pause to consider how this mastered irony relates to actuality; to, specifically, the actuality of our being. In our earlier discussion on the relationship between un-mastered irony and actuality we saw irony as the device whereby an untrue actuality is revealed in its truth and is therefore brought to its destruction. For Kierkegaard mastered irony exhibits its truth by the fact that it teaches us to actualize our actuality, to place due emphasis on the actuality of our being. This emphasis leads to two misconceptions; the first is that mastered irony idolizes actuality, the second is that mastered irony denies the longing for a higher and more perfect being which inhabits the soul of man. The occurrence of mastered irony teaches instead that the actuality which is now existent in our being is but one part or moment of the higher, truer actuality for which we all striving. Actuality is thus not idolized but rather is reduced to a moment of life which places its due emphasis upon it. Thus,
through this action of mastered irony actuality acquires its validity through action, but a true action not a blind perseverance or an empty infinity of movement.-31

To summarize what we have discovered about irony in the preceding pages we may say that irony begins as a figure of speech which functions by saying the opposite of what the speaker wishes to be the thought behind the words. This contradiction between the essence (thought) and the phenomenon (words) in ironic speech sets the ironic subject free, but negatively free. By negatively free, we mean that the subject is free both in relation to himself and to others. The device of irony serves the ironic subject, the speaker, as a tool whereby the ironic subject may go about the destruction of the actuality into which he is bound. But irony is not directed at a particular actuality but against actuality generally. Furthermore, the ironic subject becomes a sacrifice demanded by the old actuality (which proves the justification of its existence) and given by the new actuality (which proves the justification of its advent). The true ironic subject is moreover the one proved to be world-historically justified in his stance of opposition to the existing actuality. We then discovered that Kierkegaard sees two types or forms of irony, executive irony and contemplative irony. Executive irony is the name assigned to the visible examples of irony while contemplative irony is theoretical and is found, particularly, in the use of irony as a literary-poetic device. Irony as a literary-poetic device, according to Kierkegaard, must be a mastered moment. When irony is
mastered moment it acts, not to destroy actuality, but to define and make finite the elements of the aesthetic production in its actuality and thus teaches us to accept the given production as a moment of actuality which is but a part of the higher actuality. Furthermore, this mastered irony is the necessary point of beginning in the development of any truly authentic human life.

Before we can continue our main theme of showing the relationship between irony and Christianity, we must pause and define irony's parallel concept of humour. Once this has been accomplished, which will be the object of the next chapter, we may place irony and humour into their proper context as the points of transition in the three stages of life, which Kierkegaard identifies in the human process of becoming. Once we have accomplished this task of placing irony and humour into their proper context we may begin to discuss the relationship between irony and Christianity.
Footnotes

2. ibid p. 264
3. ibid p. 279
4. ibid p. 277
5. ibid p. 279
6. ibid p. 270
7. ibid p. 278
8. ibid p. 276
9. ibid p. 281
10. ibid p. 281
11. ibid p. 271
12. ibid p. 265
13. ibid p. 267
14. ibid p. 266
15. ibid p. 271
16. ibid p. 272
17. ibid p. 273
18. ibid p. 325
19. ibid p. 324
20. ibid p. 323
21. ibid p. 325
22. ibid p. 331
23. ibid p. 335
24. ibid p. 331
25. ibid p. 332
26. ibid p. 331
27. ibid p. 336
28. ibid p. 337
29. ibid p. 341
30. ibid p. 338
31. ibid p. 338 - 340 a summary of ideas
The Concept of Humour

There exists in Kierkegaard's writings a concept which runs parallel in function (if not also in essence) to the concept of irony, the concept of humour. This concept of humour is important in gaining a solid grounding in Kierkegaard, but it is not humour as you or I would necessarily define it, rather it is humour as Kierkegaard choose to define and use it.

Kierkegaard never sets down a definition of humour. This does not mean that he leaves it undefined, rather he deals with other, almost peripheral concepts such as the comical, the contradiction, the guilt-consciousness, and pathos, and only then, after he has concluded a definition of each of these concepts does he reach, by a cumulative effect, a definition of humour. Thus, to define humour as Kierkegaard saw it and defined it, we, like him, must begin by discussing these peripheral concepts and then develop a composite which will be the definition of humour. In order to accomplish this task we will use The Concluding Unscientific Postscript and select passages from The Journals and Papers.

In The Journals Kierkegaard explains how, during his study of the romantic school of poetry, he came to understand what Hegel meant by the term 'the dialectic.' In the development of this dialectic the positions of opposition are stoicism-fatalism, Pelagianism - Augustinianism, and humour - irony. These dialectic 'poles' must be viewed as the extreme opposite ends of a pendulum swing. Furthermore, these poles have no
continuance, or staying power, in their own right. Rather there is a constant swing from the one extreme to the other. It would seem then, that humour is an opposite concept to that of irony. Why then have we referred to them as being parallel? They are parallel in their function. By this we mean that irony and humour fulfill a parallel function when placed in their correct positions in the existential stages of life. Thus, we see Kierkegaard placing irony as the boundary zone of the aesthetic stage and humour as the boundary zone of the religious stage. Whether the two concepts are also parallel in essence, we will have to decide in the writing of this chapter. We might add here another difference between irony and humour: irony is always the aristocrat, remaining the private preserve of the philosopher, while humour holds within it the reconciliation of all existence.

The first concept which we must define in order to understand humour, is that of the comic or the comical. This concept is most fully developed in the book The Concluding Unscientific Postscript written under the pseudonym of Johannes Climacus. In this book Climacus tells us that the comic arises when the hidden inwardness which is the essence of subjectivity comes into a relationship with an existing environment. (We are not here suggesting that an environment could be non-existent, rather we mean that the inward passion is brought into conjunction with an environment which involves existence.) It would seem, then, that all existence is, in some measure, comical because it involves subjectivity and inwardness. This Climacus would agree with. He has
written: "The comic is in general present everywhere, and every type of existence may at once be determined and relegated to its specific sphere by showing how it stands related to the comical."

Thus, every type of existence can be assigned its respective existential stage by showing how it relates to the comical, that is by how much of the comical the existent human being has discovered. Implicit in this statement is the understanding that the different spheres of existential being have discovered differing amounts of the comical. This occurs because the discovery of the comical is a function of the hidden inwardness of subjectivity. Therefore, the more that one has developed one's hidden inwardness, the more one comes to discover the comical. If we accept as given that subjectivity is a positive determinant of human existence (as Kierkegaard does) then we may conclude, with Climacus, that;

"... it is true without exception that the more thoroughly and substantially a human being exists, the more he will discover the comical." -5

Having now established that the comical arises when hidden inwardness and existence are brought into conjunction with each other, we must seek to discover what factor in this juxtapositioning of the two acts as the agents which gives birth to the comical. The agent, simply stated, is contradiction, the contradiction which arises each time inwardness encounters an existent environment. Thus, each stage of life may produce a comical effect of greater or lesser proportion depending upon how well the existing individual has developed his hidden inwardness, and all
situations in life which are based on contradiction may be apprehended comically.* It is important to note that the stress in the preceding sentence is that the contradiction may be apprehended comically but this is not a necessary form for understanding the contradiction. Climacus has written, "The tragic and the comic are the same, insofar as both are based on contradiction; but the tragic is the suffering contradiction, the comical, the painless contradiction." -6 (emphasis Kierkegaard's)

What is the factor which dictates if the contradiction should be apprehended comically or tragically? Climacus would answer; "The difference between the tragic and the comic lies in the relationship between the contradiction and the controlling idea. The comic apprehension evokes the contradiction or makes it manifest by having in mind the way out, which is why the contradiction is painless. The tragic apprehension sees the contradiction and despairs of a way out." -7 Thus, the difference between the comic and the tragic lies in the relationship between the contradiction and the controlling idea. But what is meant by the controlling idea? It would seem, from the above quotation, that the individual has already made the decision whether to view the contradiction comically or tragically before he evokes the

* In The Journals Kierkegaard gives us several examples of this contradiction; the pastor who with an upward motion of his arm proclaims; 'The soul will rise.' while looking down to read his manuscript (v II entry 1753) or the young girl -who sets out to become a prostitute and fails at her chosen vocation. (v II entry 1741)
contradiction. If the individual has in mind the way around the contradiction when he views it, then he will apprehend the situation comically. If, however, he cannot see the way around the contradiction, he despairs of leaving it and thus views the contradiction tragically. Furthermore, we may say that to view the contradiction with the way around it in mind cancels the contradiction, therefore, to view the contradiction comically cancels the contradiction. This is the law upon which all legitimate apprehensions are founded.

The statement that all legitimate comic apprehensions are those where the contradiction is seen as cancelled because the controlling idea, that which brings to light the contradiction, has in mind the way around the contradiction, refers only to the legitimate comic apprehensions. To state that this or that form of the comic apprehension is legitimate carries with it the implicit understanding that forms of the comic apprehension exist which may be illegitimate. This Climacus goes to great lengths to explain and according to him the illegitimate comic apprehensions may arise in three ways. The first of these illegitimate comic apprehensions are those based in despair, the second of these are those which try to cancel the higher contradiction with a lower element, and the third of these illegitimate comic apprehensions are those which find no footing in any of the existential spheres of life.

It should appear most obvious that a comic apprehension based on despair would be illegitimate in that this itself
involves a contradiction because a comic apprehension, by definition, knows the way out of the contradiction and therefore views the contradiction as cancelled rather than viewing it in despair. It should appear to be just as obvious that the comic apprehension which is based in despair should be reoriented to become a tragic apprehension of the contradiction, and when this shift has been accomplished the contradiction so apprehended is on its way to being healed. -9

The second form of the illegitimate comic apprehension is more difficult to understand. We stated, above, that the illegitimate character of this form of the comic was based upon the attempt, by the controlling idea, to cancel the contradiction in something lower, or in something which is only chimerically (or apparently) higher. This statement carries within it the assumption that the contradiction, in order to be overcome, must be cancelled by something which is higher than it itself. Climacus has written the following to explain this phenomenon: "The lower can never make the higher comical, i.e. it cannot legitimately apprehend the higher as comical, and has not the power to make it comical. It is another thing that the lower, by being brought into conjunction with the higher, may make the relationship ridiculous. Thus, it is possible for a horse to be the occasion for a man showing himself in a ridiculous light, but the horse has no power to make him ridiculous." -10

Two things have been stated in this quotation. The first is that the lower cannot legitimately apprehend the higher as comical because it does not have the power to render that
higher object comical. The second statement is that the lower may provide the occasion for the higher to appear ridiculous if it is brought into conjunction with the higher. The two statements are explained in the context of a horse and its rider. To view the lower, the horse, as having the power to make the higher, the man, appear ridiculous is to imply, or at least to cause us to infer, that the horse could deliberately set out to render the man ridiculous, a statement which makes itself even more comical because it carries with it the contradiction of a horse plotting to show its rider in a ridiculous light. This increasing of the contradiction and rendering it still more comical then becomes a given occurrence whenever the attempt is made to cancel the contradiction in the lower or in the chimerically higher.

The third way in which the comic apprehension may be rendered illegitimate is if the relationship between the three existential spheres of life has become incorrect. Such a rendering of illegitimacy presupposes at least two conditions. The first of these is that the various existential spheres have a set relationship which must be correctly interpreted. The second is that the comical has a direct influence, or is influenced, by this relationship between the spheres. This Climacus acknowledges when he wrote that the test of the comical is found in the relationship between the stages which a legitimate comic apprehension presupposes. If these relationships are not correct then the comic apprehension must be illegitimate. Furthermore, a comic
apprehension which is not firmly rooted in the spheres is also *eo ipso* illegitimate. (This last sentence is of importance. If we leave the statement as it existed without this final addition it could be inferred that the comic apprehension can control the relationships between the spheres, that is, that it could be inferred that a legitimate comic apprehension causes the relationships between the spheres to be correct, and an illegitimate comic apprehension causes the relationships between the spheres to be incorrect. The truth is more complex. The comic apprehension may be rendered illegitimate if the relationship between the spheres becomes incorrect, but also the relationship between the spheres are rendered incorrect if the comic apprehension is proved to be illegitimate.)-12

The concept of guilt-consciousness is bound up with the concepts of existence and time as they are perceived by the individual in the ethical sphere of existence. Here existence is no mere abstract, a here today gone tomorrow phenomenon, as it might be viewed in the aesthetic sphere of life, nor is time simply the creation of man to mark his passing, rather, existence and time are concretions, as shown by the existence of concrete tasks which we, in our existence, must complete within a certain period of time. Moreover, we are ethically responsible for the completion of these tasks, and so the ethical individual begins his duty of completing these tasks. But now a strange movement occurs. Just as we decide to begin the ethical execution of these tasks we discover that time has
passed. Our decision has taken on the quality of immediacy because we have made the decisions to begin the tasks as if they were in an immediate situation, we have not begun we have simply decided to begin. Now we must begin a necessary prerequisite movement to the performance of an ethical task, we must die to immediacy. But even as we make that decision we have lost time because we have merely decided to die to immediacy which is an abstract apprehension of the task, and is therefore illegitimate. And so we become trapped within immediacy, conscious that we must break out to begin the execution of the tasks for which we are held ethically responsible, and at the same time unable to break out of the cyclical movement of immediate consciousness. As this consciousness of the loss of time and the failure to perform our assigned tasks increases we begin a process of suffering as our realization of our failure begins to take hold. Now along comes the consciousness of our guilt, which has built up interest at an incredible rate, and we become crushed down, aware that as a creature involved in concrete existence we are a creature involved with guilt. And so the consciousness of guilt becomes the sine qua non of the man involved in concrete existence. -13 Furthermore, this essential consciousness of guilt expresses the fact that as an existing individual we are in relationship with an eternal happiness. -14

The final statement, above, needs some explanation.

In The Postscript Kierkegaard (through the pen of Climacus)
contends that the essential consciousness of guilt which is the mark of existence is also the expression of an existing individual's relationship to an eternal happiness. He explains this seemingly contradictory statement by saying that the relationship is expressed in the very disrelationship which exists between the consciousness of guilt and the existence of an eternal happiness. At best this explanation is rather ambiguous. How may the existence of guilt show that an individual is in relationship with an eternal happiness? Climacusc explains this by beginning with the fact that the individual is an existing individual and is therefore guilty because he is involved in existence. Now if we relate this existing individual, who is essentially guilty, to an eternal happiness, the disrelationship, or contradiction, becomes obvious. The consciousness of guilt, then, may be seen as being as essentially expressive of this disrelationship as it is of existence because it is an essential expression of existence. By this we mean that because the consciousness of guilt is an essential expression of existence it then becomes an essential expression of the disrelationship between our existence and our eternal happiness. By the same token the existence of guilt-consciousness may be seen as expressing our relationship to the eternal happiness through its expression of this disrelationship. Moreover, as soon as one drops the concept of eternal happiness from his thought he also, essentially, loses the consciousness of guilt. And finally, we must note the fact that this juxtaposing of these two (the consciousness of guilt and the existence of an eternal
happiness) is not some transitory moment which occurs once nor does it occur once for all time, with its effect becoming everlasting, rather, we must make the action persistent, we must continually be in the act of juxtaposing these two concepts and in this is concentrated the pathos of our existence. This continuous action is called, by Climacus, the eternal recollection of the consciousness of guilt. The result of this action of eternal recollection of the consciousness of guilt is that the existing individual becomes dialectically related to his eternal happiness. The dialectic in the relationship is this; the existing individual is now related absolutely to his eternal happiness but not in such a way that he is closer to it, rather, he is related absolutely to his eternal happiness because he is as remote as possible from it. The dialectic in this relationship in its turn raises the pathos of our existence to a higher power by suspending our eternal happiness over our heads by the thinnest of threads and yet at the same time allowing us to grasp firmly to its promise.

If the consciousness of guilt is to be seen as the decisive expression of an existential pathos, we must ask ourselves when this consciousness comes into play, that is, at what point in time does one gain a consciousness of guilt; after the commission of one sin, ten sins, or perhaps a hundred sins? Because it is the consciousness of the guilt which is decisive it would not seem to be of importance to number the number of our sins because one sin is fully as capable of bringing to our conscience the consciousness of guilt as are ten sins or
even a hundred sins. Thus, the numerical compounding of sins does not establish that we have a consciousness of our guilt. Rather, it is the absolute consciousness of our guilt which when we day by day become guilty of new sins leads us back to the absolute consciousness of guilt and thereby preserves the eternal recollection of our guilt. -16 This phenomenon is characterized by Climacus with the term the totality of guilt. To say that man is possessed of a total guilt, or that he is totally possessed by guilt, is not to imply that all of a man's actions are guilty, rather, the very fact that we, as existing individuals, are caught in a totality of guilt allows that in this or that particular instance we may very well be innocent. Thus, the man who is essentially guiltless can never be guilty in a particular situation, but the man who is essentially guilty may very well be innocent in a given particular instance. Likewise, the commission of a single sinful act, even if we were to live as an angel from that day forward, is enough to render us essentially and totally guilty because that one sinful act when brought to consciousness and related to our eternal happiness decrees that the eternal recollection of guilt consciousness shall come into play. Furthermore, all the deeper apprehensions of our existence consist in the act of putting these two phenomena into juxtaposition. -17

We have now sketched out the concept of the consciousness of guilt as Kierkegaard, through Climacus, defined it. Let us now briefly pause to consider where, in an existing individual, this guilt-consciousness lies. Climacus would respond that the more abstract an individual is the less is he related
to an eternal happiness, and therefore, the more remote he is from guilt. This is because abstraction indicates an indifference to our existence while guilt was defined as the strongest self assertion of existence, and it is an existing subject who is to relate himself to the eternal happiness. Guilt-consciousness then, must lie within the imminence of the existing individual. This is because the existing subject becomes essentially guilty when he relates his guilt to his eternal happiness. To say that this existing individual is essentially guilty does not mean that he has become a new and depraved man by relating his guilt to his eternal happiness, rather, the concept of an eternal happiness surrounds the subject preventing a breach from occurring and thus the incompatibility of the two remains within the imminence of the individual. That this phenomenon of the guilt-consciousness is a function of imminence may also be seen in the concept of the eternal recollection of guilt as the highest expression of existential pathos. So high is the existential pathos of our treasuring up of guilt, that no outward act, such as penance, may make up for it, because an outward act cannot hope to express the depth of this pathos but only finitizes it. Thus, the guilt of existential pathos belongs essentially to the hidden inwardness, and the manner for expressing our consciousness of guilt is remorse (if only for a single fault) which constitutes the terrible experience of pathos, for remorse can never be seen by another. Let us now assign the concept of the totality of guilt-consciousness to its correct place in the scheme of the three stages of life.
Aesthetically the existing individual is considered as being basically innocent. The dialectic of guilt then places guilt and innocence on an equal plane and life becomes an alternation between the two. The existing individual is innocent in this moment and guilty in the next moment, as the immediate situation demands. There is no room for a concept of man as essentially guilty, nor for a concept of a totality of guilt of which we are conscious. Likewise, in the ethical stage the concept of a totality of guilt cannot be applied. Ethically we are responsible for the right completion of our ethical tasks and to deviate from this is wrong and we are ethically responsible for this wrong. But the guilt which accrues from this ethical wrong does not lie within the realm of a totality of guilt (although it points to it and builds towards it) because the concept of sin has not yet been posited, rather the wrong which is committed in the ethical stage is transitory because we can reverse the action and, although we are still guilty of having committed this wrong, we may again enter the realm of that which is ethically right. But now sin is posited. We are now in relation with the divine. Now our failure to perform our tasks becomes sin. Our guilt cannot now be wiped out by reversing the decision because it has been juxtaposed in a relationship with an eternal happiness, our eternal happiness, which is presupposed in the concept of sin. The totality of guilt now arises. Now the concept of guilt as a totality must be seen as belonging essentially to the religious stage of life because the concept of sin is presupposed in the concept of guilt-consciousness, and the
Positing of sin is the decisive expression of the religious stage of life. -22

The third concept which we must explain in our discussion on humour is the concept of the pathos*, or suffering, which is an essential part of our existence as man. This concept of pathos is correlative to the concept of humour and an adequate understanding of humour cannot be gained without an adequate understanding of pathos.

In our previous discussion on the totality of guilt and the guilt-consciousness we sought to show how this phenomenon springs into being when we juxtapose the reality of concrete existence with the possibility of a future eternal happiness. The result of this action is that the given individual becomes aware that he is a creature of guilt who through sin has fallen short of the mark demanded of him by his (perceived) eternal happiness. Let us now refine this concept slightly. Let us declare that this eternal happiness is at once the highest good which we may possibly achieve and is, moreover, the absolute telos, or goal, of our existence, toward which

* * There are three ways in which pathos may be viewed. If pathos is essentially related to how we view the Ideal in life then aesthetically it is quite correct to express this pathos through the medium of words. Thus the aesthete (poet) leaves his real self to dwell poetically in the Ideal. Ethically pathos is found in the actual physical sufferings of the individual. Existential pathos, however, arises whenever and wherever the Ideal of an eternal happiness is brought to bear upon the individual in such a manner that it transforms his being to align it with his conception of the Ideal. Thus the poet abstracts himself from the reality of his existence in order to express his pathos in words, the ethicist accepts the reality of his existence and suffers physically for the Ideal, while the existential man suffers in himself as he strives to transform his existence so that it will approximate that which is demanded by his Ideal Concept. (The Postscript pp. 347-350, a brief summary.)
we move in this life. Let us also redefine man to show that he is a creature, who, because he is involved with existence which is a synthesis of the finite and infinite, is also a composite of the finite and the infinite. Such a creature will be possessed of both finite and infinite teloi. The finite teloi are those goals which we someday gain, that is their fulfillment or end is within our grasp. The infinite telos is that which we cannot gain in this life. Because the finite teloi may be gained the action of willing them can never be considered absolute because there is presupposed in the finite teloi the possibility of gaining them. On the other hand, the infinite telos must be willed absolutely if we are to maintain any relation to it at all. Now, almost by necessity, a conflict will arise; should the existing Individual will to occur those teloi which he may gain in this life, or should he direct all his energies of willing toward the attainment of the infinite, absolute telos of his eternal happiness? If he is truly in relation with his absolute telos he must will it to exist infinitely, that is absolutely. Such an action must, again by a necessity, relegate all finite teloi to the sphere of those things which may have to be given up if we are to truly fulfill the action of absolutely willing the existence of the telos of our eternal happiness. How may we attain the knowledge that we are truly willing the existence of this absolute telos? We may gain this knowledge by submitting the whole immediacy of our life to the inspection of resignation, that is that we must be able to resign ourselves to the
necessity of giving up the finite teloi of our existence in order to gain the infinite, absolute telos of our eternal happiness. If we find a single hard spot, a single spot where we refuse to resign our finite teloi to the relative sphere, then we are not truly in relation with the absolute telos of our eternal happiness. And resignation, moreover, never slumbers but constantly submits our immediacy to inspection, demanding that we constantly place the finite teloi of our existence in the sphere of the relative.

Now, insofar as we have placed the individual into a relationship whereby he is related absolutely (infinitely) to the absolute (infinite) telos, the question may arise as to whether this individual is still in the finite world if he is existing in an infinite relationship. The answer is yes. Of course the individual is still in the finite world because he is still in the medium of existence. The individual's task is now, however, to express the fact that he is in a relationship with his absolute telos, and to make this expression existential, which qualifies it by demanding that it have no outward manner which could be seen to be saying: 'I am in relation with my absolute telos.' The expression must not be a testimony but a transformation whereby the whole life of the individual is brought into line with how he perceives his absolute telos. Such an expression occurs precisely when the individual so orders his life that all the finite telos of his existence are rendered to the adherence to the absolute telos, the test of which is found in the movement of resignation. But the striving to accomplish this two-fold task of adhering to
infinite without the outward expression of the action is the most difficult of problems and it is here wherein is concentrated the pathos of our existence.-23

It may be seen from the above that existential pathos is essentially an action, the action being the transformation of the given individual's life such that it is in line with his perceived absolute telos, an action which reveals itself through suffering. The difficulty which arises when we discuss existential pathos is a tendency to confuse action with outward activity. Outward activity may indeed seem to transform the individual's existence, he outwardly may show that he has transformed his existence so that it is ordered by the relationship with his absolute telos but this does not necessarily mean that he has transformed his inner Being. The transformation of the inner Being, the true Being if you will, is found in the action of continually placing ourselves in the relationship with an absolute telos, and through resignation assigning all finite telos to the relative sphere, and such a transformation involves suffering. With such a cyclical argument how can we ever reach the point of showing how suffering is the sign of a true transformation of the self? If we follow the argument in The Postscript we would begin by stating that to exist essentially is found in inwardness, that is, that the essential person is the inward turning person. If we accept this as the definition of true existence then existential pathos, which is related essentially to existence, must in some way act upon this inwardness. Such an inward action would essentially be a form of reflection, of constantly turning
to assess our Being. Such an inward reflection would involve suffering, the suffering of realization as we come to realize how little we have truly transformed our inward existence. Thus, true existential pathos finds its expression not in outward show but in inward suffering.-24

Given such an inward suffering as we have here defined (or attempted to define), the question must surely arise as to just how real this suffering in the inward self truly is. To begin our discussion on this topic let us quote from The Postscript: "But suffering as the essential expression for existential pathos means that suffering is real, or that the reality of the suffering constitutes the existential pathos; and by the reality of the suffering is meant its persistence as essential for the pathetic relationship to an eternal happiness." -25 This quotation has two parts. In the first part, we are presented with a given theorem. When we accept that suffering is the essential expression for existential pathos, we have posited its reality because the reality of the suffering constitutes the existential pathos. (Such a theorem can neither be proved or disproved but only accepted or rejected.) In the second part of the quotation this theorem is qualified by the proviso that the 'reality' of the suffering is its persistence as essential to the pathetic relationship to our eternal happiness. Furthermore, persistence, in this definition, must be seen as analogous to resignation in our previous discussion. Just as resignation served to guarantee that the given individual remained absolutely directed towards the absolute telos, so the persistence of suffering is the guarantee that the individual
has entered the correct position and is preserving himself in it.-26

If we accept the foregoing definition of the reality of suffering as being contained within the persistence with which the suffering individual sees his suffering as being essential to his relationship with the eternal happiness, then we should pause to consider how this essential or real suffering is expressed in our existence. Climacus concludes that the truth of the actuality of expression in suffering is not necessarily indicative of the reality of the suffering. By this he appears to mean that the existing individual who outwardly (in truth) appears to suffer need not be suffering in reality although the real sufferer will always express himself truly. The breaking zone between these two statements is found in previous paragraphs where we referred to the reality of the suffering as being contained in the persistence with which it is viewed. Thus, the existing individual who suffers in truth but not in reality will view his suffering as essentially accidental, as something he will cast away from his Being when he casts off the bonds of his physical form. Moreover, even if this suffering persists, that is even if it continues over an extended period of time, it is still viewed as being accidental to the individual's total Being. On the other hand, the existential man will view the suffering as essential to his Being because it is the expression for the relationship which he has with the eternal happiness, and such suffering must persist so that the relationship with the
eternal happiness may persist. Furthermore, the essential
reality of this suffering signifies that it relates essentially
to the religious stage of life. -27

The final topic we must deal with in our discussion on
the concept of pathos is whether it is possible to revoke the
suffering of pathos in terms of the absolute teleology. By
this is meant, is it possible to take a suffering which is the
essential expression of an existing individual's relationship
to an eternal happiness, and then to revoke the suffering by
rejoicing over the relationship which it signifies, thus,
effectively, placing ourselves beyond the suffering? Climacus
would answer this with a resounding No! Such a movement can
never be accomplished with pathos if it is to remain real. This
is because it is the very suffering of the individual which is
the essential expression of his relationship to the eternal
happiness. To remove this suffering means, ipso facto, that the
relationship has essentially ceased to exist.-28

In our opening paragraph to this chapter we stated that
there were three concepts which must be understood if we are
to be able to discuss the concept of humour as Kierkegaard
defined it. These three concepts were those of the comic,
the guilt-consciousness, and the pathos of life. We have in
the preceding pages attempted to define these concepts and
now, in the remaining portion of this chapter we may go on to
meld those earlier definitions together and thus discover
how Kierkegaard defined the concept of humour.

In the concluding paragraph of the previous section of
this chapter we drew to the readers' attention the implicit relationship between the religious stage of life and the existential individual, a relationship which was based on the apprehension of suffering as essential to our Being which was shared by both. In beginning this part of our discussion we may open with a quotation from The Postcript: "Since an existing humourist presents the closest approximation to the religious, he has also an essential conception of the suffering in which life is involved, in that he does not apprehend existence as one thing, and fortune and misfortune as something happening to the existing individual, but exists so that suffering is for him relevant to existence." -29 Thus, the humourist approximates the religious individual because both apprehend the suffering in life as relevant to our existence, but, whereas the religious individual goes on to accept the suffering as essential to the Being of the given individual the humourist does not, rather, he turns aside in deception and revokes the suffering with a jest. The manner in which this is performed is thus, the humourist comprehends the significance of suffering as it is relevant to existence, and understands that the suffering belongs to existence. This is the depth of his profound thought. But here he falters, he can go no further in his understanding of the suffering, he can accept the suffering as part of existence but he cannot explain the significance of the suffering itself. It is at this point that the humourist concludes that any attempt at explanation is not worth the effort and so he revokes his
profound thought and this action is the essence of jest. Hence when we encounter the humourist we encounter both pathos and jest and we are moved both to laugh and to cry.-30

That humour is able to comprehend the relevance of suffering to life indicates that it is closely akin to the religious mode of life. That it is unable to comprehend the significance of the suffering itself indicates that it does not lie within the religious sphere of life. Thus, we may conclude, along with Climacus, that humour exists as the boundary zone to the religious stage of life. As such a border zone humour will also comprehend guilt-consciousness as a totality. Thus, we will rarely hear the humourist talk of this or that guilt unless by using the particular he hopes to emphasize the totality of the guilt-consciousness. But human nature itself cannot accept this totality of guilt and so it continually puts it together with a childish faith that in some way the guilt may be removed. This juxtaposition in its turn produces a humouristic effect; we comprehend guilt as a totality, as infinite, and yet we hope to absolve ourselves from it and finitize the guilt by the performance of a penance. This juxtaposition is a form of the jest. Here we have a situation which is analogous to the situation which involves humour and suffering. Humour comprehends the totality of the guilt-consciousness and reflects upon it, but just as it comes to the point of giving an explanation of the guilt it tires of the task and revokes its profound thought. And what is the profound thought upon which the humourist reflects; "(that) the totality of guilt-consciousness in the particular
individual before God in relation to an eternal happiness is religiousness."-31 This is the profound thought upon which humour reflects, and then revokes its reflection in the jest.-32

We may now take as a given that humour comprehends guilt as a totality, and that in the action of revoking any serious reflection by humour upon this relationship between the guilt and the eternal happiness lies the phenomenon of the jest. But what happens when we have humour put together its apprehension of the totality of guilt with the relativity that exists between man and man. The result would be the discovery, by humour, of the comic, and the comic factor here is that the total guilt supports the whole relationship. Inasmuch as we have earlier defined the comic as arising in contradiction we may rightly ask where the contradiction lies in this juxtaposing of the consciousness of the totality of guilt with the relativity between man and man. The contradiction lies in the fact that a negative determinant, the totality of guilt, is used to determine the relativity between man and man. If the determinant were the positive determinant, that is the varying amount of goodness or innocence between the two individuals then the contradiction ceases to exist, but when the totality of the guilt is used the humour arises, for all men are equally guilty because they are involved in the consciousness of the totality of guilt.-33

Thus, we see that humour puts the totality of guilt, that is the eternal recollection of guilt, together with everything in life. But this does not mean that humour can relate itself
to the eternal happiness, that action belongs to the hidden inwardness of subjectivity because the eternal recollection of guilt cannot be outwardly expressed (which only serves to finitizes guilt, and is a childish hope that we may escape the totality). Rather, the eternal recollection becomes itself the characterization which shows the relationship to the eternal happiness. This hidden inwardness must also discover the comic, not because the religious man is different from the others, but precisely because he appears to be like all others though in reality he is burdened with the eternal recollection of guilt. Such an occurrence, the appearance which is the same as all other men while in reality being burdened with the recollection of guilt, it is at base a contradiction, and the discovery of the contradiction brings the hidden inwardness to the discovery of the comic, but the comic in this case is constantly fading because in the eternal recollection the religious individual is related essentially to the eternal happiness.-34

There now remains to us one last task before we go on to write a definition of humour, that is to again stress the correlative relationship between humour and pathos. In the early pages of The Postscript we find a discussion on this topic. Here Climacus concludes that it is necessary for the truly subjective individual to be fully as positive as he is negative, that is to have as much humour in his being as he has pathos. Such a balanced acquisition of pathos and humour is necessary because; "... the relationship provides a mutual security, each guaranteeing the soundness of the other. The
pathos which is not secured by the presence of the comic is illusion; the comic spirit that is not made secure by the presence of pathos is immature."—35 Such a relationship between the comic and the pathetic is exemplified by the following quotation from The Journals: "I wager my head that there is fully a 4 shillingsworth of gold on the binding of Heiburg's Urania. The contradiction lies in the pathos: to stake one's head, and then 4 shillings."—36 (And contradiction, as we know, is the basis of all comic apprehensions.)

Finally, let us refer back to a statement we made in the introduction to the chapter when we posed the possibility that humour and irony might be parallel in essence as well as in function. In The Postscript Climacus wrote: "Because humour is always a concealed pain, it is also an instance of sympathy. In irony there is no sympathy, there is self-assurance, and therefore, its sympathy is empathetic in an entirely indirect way, not with any man in particular, but with the idea of self-assurance as the possibility of every man."—37 From this quotation we may immediately dismiss any idea of humour and irony being identical in essence but might they be considered as parallel? Each contains a measure of sympathy, humour because it is concealed pain, irony because it is self-assurance, therefore this writer would conclude that they are parallel in essence in the same manner in which they are parallel in function, each offering the instance of sympathy as it is needed in the movement from one existential stage to the next.
Let us summarize the topics we touched upon in the course of this discussion on humour. We began with a discussion on the concept of the comic and concluded that a comical situation arises as a result of the contradictions which are a part of life. This contradiction may be viewed either as tragic or comic. The difference between the tragic and the comic lies in the way in which we apprehend the contradiction. The tragic apprehension sees the contradiction and despairs of a way around it, the comic apprehension sees the contradiction and knows that it holds within itself the way around it, and so it sees the contradictions as cancelled.

The second concept we discussed was that of the guilt-consciousness and the totality of guilt. In this discussion we sought to show how, once we posit the concept of sin, man becomes a creature of guilt who is guilty in a totality (not just in this or that instance) and that, moreover, he is a creature who is possessed of a consciousness of the totality of his guilt. We also sought to show how this guilt-consciousness arises when we apprehend ourselves as being a creature who is in relation with an eternal happiness.

Following this last conclusion we discussed the concept of pathos by showing how the suffering in our life arises when we place our existence in relation with our eternal happiness,
and, moreover, declare this eternal happiness to the absolute telos of our life. We also saw how, in the concept of pathos suffering is viewed as the decisive expression of existence, and, moreover, is capable of justifying itself because it is the decisive expression of our existence. As a result of our discussion on pathos we were able to move to a discussion on humour to show how it similarly (to pathos) apprehends the suffering in our life as a necessary sign of existence, yet it cannot explain the suffering and so it revokes its reflection in a jest. Similarly humour perceives the totality of the guilt-consciousness but cannot explain it and so again turns its thought into jest. We also sought to show how humour perceives the totality of guilt and by putting it in relation with the relativity between man and man discovers the comic by revealing the contradiction of attempting to determine the difference between the two on the basis of our equal standing in the totality of guilt. Now we come to the definition of the concept of humour. Humour is a phenomenon which is correlative to pathos and arises (like pathos) when we place our existence as creatures caught in a totality of guilt into a relationship with a perceived eternal happiness which we accept as the absolute telos of our existence. The phenomenon cannot explain this relationship and so it revokes its reflection in a jest. The jest itself
grows out of the comic situation of comparing man to man on the basis of their relative relationship to the totality of their guilt. Furthermore, humour, because it deals with issues rightly belonging to the religious stage of existence, viz., the comic, the totality of guilt-consciousness, and pathos, belongs within the religious stage but, because it cannot explain these concepts but can only reflect upon them and then revokes its profound thought, it must lie on the fringe area and so it acts as the border zone into the religious stage.

Now that we have defined (or attempted to define) the concepts of irony and humour as Kierkegaard perceived them we are ready to show how they fit into the concept of the existential stages of life where they act as the border zones between the stages.
Footnotes

2. ibid p. 202
4. ibid p. 413
5. ibid
6. ibid p. 459
7. ibid p. 462
8. ibid p. 466
9. ibid p. 653
10. ibid p.
11. ibid
12. ibid p. 466
13. ibid p. 469
14. ibid p. 473
15. ibid pp. 470-474 a summary of ideas
16. ibid p. 477
17. ibid p. 471
18. ibid p. 470
19. ibid p. 474
20. ibid p. 479
21. ibid p. 482
22. ibid pp. 239 & 478 a compiling of the ideas presented in these two areas of the book

23. ibid pp. 350-370 a brief summary of the discussion on these pages

24. ibid pp. 386-395 a summary of one current of thought presented on these pages

25. ibid p. 396

26. ibid

27. ibid p. 398

28. ibid p. 404

29. ibid

30. ibid pp. 400-402 a summary of ideas

31. ibid p. 491

32. ibid pp. 488-492 a summary of ideas

33. ibid p. 492

34. ibid p. 493

35. ibid p. 81 (the paragraph summarizes pp. 81-83)

36. The Journals and Papers v. IV p. 97

37. The Postscript p. 491
The Existential Stages of Life

In our previous chapters we made several references to the stages of life which an existing individual goes through in his process of becoming. In this chapter we will briefly outline these stages of life, the laws of motion in the journey through them, and will also touch briefly on the concepts of immediacy and spontaneity. We will then explain how irony and humour fit into this progression of stages.

In his pseudonymous writings Kierkegaard identifies and then gives examples of three stages of life which occur, or may occur, in the life of man. These three stages are the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. There are two important things which should be noted before moving on to give a more indepth explanation of the three stages. The first of these is that the stages form a progression, that is we begin in the aesthetic stage and then move through the ethical stage to the religious stage. The second thing which should be remembered is that while this progression must occur in the movement to the religious stage, one need never progress at all. By this we mean that one need not necessarily progress from the aesthetic stage at all, and, by the same token, one may progress as far as the ethical stage and there become stuck quite fast. In stressing this movement of progress from one stage to the next we must mention two words which explain the
movement. These two operative words are 'will' and 'become'. We must will ourselves from one stage to the next in order to become what our self is capable of becoming.

The aesthetic stage of life is perhaps the most difficult of the three stages with which to deal. There are two ways in which we may view this state. The first is to view the aesthetic as the pleasure seeker who in his pursuit of sensual fulfillment ignores the choice between law and sin, good and evil. The second view is that of the aesthetic as the man presented with infinitely many choices upon which he reflects but from which he never chooses. While these two poles may seem disparate it will be seen that they have a common ground in that in each case the aesthete never comes to the point of making an absolute decision. The inability to come to the point of decision is best characterized by the term 'immediacy.' This term comes from Kierkegaard's own words: "What is the aesthetical in man, and what is the ethical? To this, I would reply: the aesthetical in man is that by which he is immediately what he is, the ethical is that whereby he becomes what he becomes. He who lives in and by and of and for the aesthetical in him lives aesthetically." 1 What, then, does Kierkegaard mean by the term immediacy? In his book *Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship* Mark Taylor adopts a definition of immediacy as that which is un-mediated, that is
the choice is never mediated to a higher level. While this serves as an excellent base for a definition, this writer feels that it should go further. By the term immediacy Kierkegaard appears to mean exactly that, that the decision is made in its immediacy without any reference to the ethicality of the decision and its consequences. The decision is, if you will, made spontaneously and can be reversed in the next moment as easily as it was made in this moment. In order to illustrate this immediacy of the aesthetic stage Kierkegaard divides the stage into three sub-stages which we traverse in developing our aesthetic characteristics. These sub-stages are described in two principle sections of Kierkegaard's work, in the section entitled "The Immediate Stages of the Erotic or the Musical Erotic" in the book Either/Or, and in "In Vino Veritas" in the book The Stages on Life's Way.

The first sub-stage is characterized by desire in a state of dreaming, where the object desired is not a specific object nor even a class of objects but lies in the realm of general sense fulfillment. To illustrate this sub-stage Kierkegaard draws upon child-life and youth-life as the examples par excellence of this phase of desire dreaming. This is not to say that childhood and youth are periods of sleep walking where the senses are not yet awake. Rather the child and the youth are most sensual, most physically aware, with the
world outside daily defining their being. If, then, the child and the youth are the most sensual of the periods of our life how can we characterize these as states of dreaming, what marks these periods off from the time of mature adulthood. Kierkegaard has written: "... child-life and youth-life is dream-life, for the innermost thing, that which in the deepest sense is man, slumbers, and so the child is dreaming."-4 Thus, the child and the youth slumber in their inwardness, their Being is defined by outward determinants, by the stimulation of the senses. In contrast the mature adult is inward, his Being is defined by his subjective assessment of his surroundings. The child and the youth are immediate in their decisions but innocently immediate. The one desiring and the object of desire are inextricably bound up together and so the child and the youth are unaware of the subjective or ethical considerations which surround their search for sensual fulfillment.

The second sub-stage is best characterized by desire as awakening. By this, Kierkegaard means that desire, which in the first sub-stage has lain dormant within the individual's total fulfillment of his physical sensual desires, has become directed towards an object which is outside the individual, and thus is becoming desire in a concrete sense. It is important to note that the desire is in the process of becoming
concrete. A dialectical relationship now exists between the desire and the object of the desire, the one cannot exist without the other. However, the object of the desire is not specific. In this period of young manhood the desire becomes a tool of discovery, the innocency of the first sub-stage has been lost and the young man knows he desires an object but has yet to have the object specified. In his task of discovery the young man is aware of the immediacy of his decisions. He is searching for the rightful object of his desire and so his decisions must, to some extent, be immediate in order to accomplish the discovery.

Now if the first sub-stage of the aesthetic has been characterized as desire sleeping and the second sub-stage has been characterized as desire awakening, the third sub-stage may be characterized as desire triumphant. The aesthete in the third sub-stage is not bound up with this object of desire nor is he in the stage of discovering who will be the object of his desire, rather, his desire is full blown and directed at individual objects. An example of such an aesthetic is the seducer, such as Don Juan, who makes it his life work to seduce as many women as possible. In discussing the character of a seducer as an example of the third sub-stage we must modify our concept slightly. Normally, a seducer must have a certain amount of reflection in regard to his
victim, a reflection which does not relate to the definition we have previously given of immediacy. The seducer as representative of the third sub-stage would need to be immediate in his decisions if he is to be in the aesthetic stage and therefore he can have no reflection in relation to his victims. His decisions must be immediate and unreflected.

The aesthetic stage, as it has been presented above, may be seen in the developing desire for sensual fulfillment which accompanies our progress from childhood through adolescence to mature (physical) adulthood. In each sub-stage we stressed the immediacy of the decision which had been made in the search for sensual fulfillment. The aesthete's decisions are always made in the immediate moment, they contain no reflection upon the future consequences of the action, and therefore, do not take any steps to mediate the nature of the action to a higher level of perception where it may be viewed as a moral decision or as a religious decision, but rather allows the action to remain at the level of base physical fulfillment.

The second stage of life is that which Kierkegaard characterized by the term the ethical stage. In contrast with the aesthetic stage where the decisions are immediate and do not reflect upon the possibility of any consequences arising from the action, the ethical stage always places the
ethical individual in the position of making a choice between right and wrong, between law and sin. Such a choice is by its nature an absolute choice, that is the choice is made once for all time and it then becomes eternal in its nature. Moreover, the absolute character of the action of choosing is the sine qua non of the ethical decision. The choice made absolutely is ethical and vice versa. As the fictitious Judge William wrote: "... only by choosing absolutely can one choose the ethical. By the absolute the ethical is always posited."—7 (This should not be seen as a contradiction to our statement on p. 45 where in our discussion on humour we said that a decision made wrongly in the ethical stage could be reversed. Such a wrongly made decision is a slipping back into the immediacy of the aesthetic stage, or a falling into error or sin. The results of such a decision may be stayed by the positing of the absolute ethical decision.) Here we might pause to ask what it means to make an ethical choice, what does the word ethical mean within this context. The character of Judge Williams has written: "The ethical is the universal, and so it is the abstract. In its complete abstraction the ethical is therefore always prohibitive. So it appears as law."—8 The ethical then is the abstract universal of prohibitive law. But an abstract apprehension of the ethical is not a truly absolute choice of the ethical. Rather it is
an illegitimate attempt to gain the ethical. How, then, may the apprehension of the ethical be rendered legitimate? In order to do so we must make the ethical concrete, and then we enter the field of morals and customs. But such an apprehension is still abstract as long as the morals and customs remain objective rather than becoming a subjective part of the individual's make up. This difficulty is resolved when the individual realizes that he is indeed the universal man and begins to appropriate to himself the possibility that he is both an individual and the universal. But how does the individual appropriate to himself this universal? According to Judge Williams duty is the universal, that is, what is required of one is the universal, i.e. duty. Therefore, the ethical choice is always the choice which involves the universal, which, by the above, is the performance of the duty required by the prohibitions of the law. We may add here that this universal which we appropriate to ourselves by the duty of fulfilling the prohibitions of absolute law is also divine in its character because it is absolute and universal.

The third state of life which Kierkegaard identifies is that state which he has called the religious stage. If the aesthetic state has presented the phenomenon of choice as immediate, that is that the choice is made in and for the moment with no attempt to attain goals nor with any reflection
upon the consequences of the action, and the ethical state has presented choice as the absolute decision between right and wrong, then the religious state will present us with a third option. It will reveal the paradoxical nature which a choice may acquire if the choice is made in and by faith.

To explain what we mean when we say that a choice acquires a paradoxical nature when made in and by faith, we must look at what happens when a particular individual is called by God to the performace of a specific duty or service. Writing under his own name in *On the Difference Between a Genius and an Apostle*, Kierkegaard said: "Between God and man, then, there is and remains an eternal, essential, qualitative difference. The paradox-religious relationship (which quite rightly, cannot be thought but only believed) appears when God appoints a particular man to divine authority in relation be it carefully noted, to that which God has entrusted to him."-13

Thus, the paradox-religious relationship comes into play at the point in time when God appoints a particular man to divine authority. This paradoxical relationship arises because of the difference which necessarily exists between God and man, and exists not only between God and the chosen individual (the apostle speaking or acting under divine authority) it also exists between the apostle and the rest of mankind (because
the paradox-religious relationship is everlasting and cannot be mediated in the equality of eternity).—14 The outcome of being placed in the paradox-religious relationship is that the apostle when faced with making a choice must ground his choice, not in the immediacy of aesthetic fulfillment nor even in the rigid ethicality of the universal law, but rather in the very paradox of his relationship to God. Now we have already seen that the ethical choice is the universal absolute of prohibitive law. How, then, can we say that the choice made in the religious state may be allowed to transcend the universal? The choice made may transcend the universal through faith. Faith is itself paradoxical in its nature, insofar as through faith the individual becomes higher than the universal determinants of the law, and grounds his relationship to these universal determinants in his relationship to the absolute. Thus, the individual in the position of faith is given by God an absolute duty toward God which we must fulfill. Such an absolute duty may transcend the rigid dictates of the universal because the individual so chosen has been lifted above the universal by virtue of his being called to a specific task by God. —15

In the foregoing paragraphs we attempted to present the three states of existence as they relate to the phenomenon of choice. We saw the aesthetic state presented as choice
made in an immediate situation while the ethical state was contrasted to this by presenting choice as the rigid decision between good and evil, law and sin. The religious stage presented us with a third option, the phenomenon of choice as paradoxical in its nature when the existing individual's existence is governed by his faith relationship with God. We have, moreover, stressed throughout this paper, the relationship which these three stages have, not only to each other, but also to the concepts of irony and humour. The relationship was characterized, in our introduction to this chapter, as a progression which began in the aesthetic stage, moved through the ethical stage, and finally ended in the religious stage, a progression in which irony functioned as the boundary zone between the aesthetic and the ethical stages, and in which humour functioned as the boundary zone between the ethical and the religious stages. This arrangement of the stage has not been arbitrarily formulated by Kierkegaard, rather, the stages have been ordered in relation to a definite criterion. This criterion is their relationship to the dialectical development of the hidden inwardness. The basis of this relationship is the degree to which the existing individual guarded himself against the development of the hidden inwardness for to that same degree will his acquisition of the religious state be diminished. 16 In the following paragraphs
we will present the stages of existence and the concepts of irony and humour as they stand related to the development of hidden inwardness.

We have seen the first stage of life, that of the aesthetic, characterized by choice as an immediate decision on the part of the existing individual. According to Kierkegaard, such an immediate person has his inwardness entirely in externality and the dialectic of his development rests outside of him. The dialectic of such an individual is the synthesis of the finite and the infinite in his Being which corresponds to the external dialectic of fortune -- misfortune, as the governing power in his life.

He will never come to exist in an essential manner because his decisions are always immediate and do not contain any inner reflection. In contrast, the ethical individual is turned inward but his inwardness is developed as a self-affirmation against himself, and the dialectic of his inwardness is that he struggles daily against himself. The dialectic, however, does not remain until the end. Instead, the ethical individual guards himself against the fulness of inwardness by carrying within himself the possibility of his own conquest of himself. Now we come to the religious stage of existence. Here the existing individual is reflected inward in the consciousness of the fact that he is existentially
in the process of becoming while at the same time he is in relation to his eternal happiness which is his absolute telos. The development of the religious individual's hidden inwardness becomes a dialectic enterprise whereby he struggles in the process of becoming and essentially existing while at the same time he crushes this essential self, which he is in the process of becoming, before his God. In this dialectic is concentrated the pathos, yes and even the humour, of his existence.—17

Now that we have discussed how the three stages of life stand in relation to the development of the dialectic of hidden inwardness we may proceed to see how the ironist and the humourist stand in relation to this dialectic before going on to establish, once again, where the ironist and the humorist stand in the progression through the stages. According to Kierkegaard the ironist is turned inward but his inwardness is found in the exercise of the consciousness of the contradiction. The ironist's inwardness is, then, a guarding against the fullness of the development of inwardness by making the provision that the inwardness is found only when the ironist encounters the contradiction. The humourist, on the other hand, is turned inward in the exercise of the absolute contradiction but this inwardness is still undialectical and can only approximate the dialectic inwardness of the religious stage. The humourist does not crush the self he is essentially
becoming before God, rather, he encounters the absolute con-
tradiction and reflects upon it but before his profound thought
can be concluded he revokes it all and holds the reflection
up to jest. - 18

Throughout this paper we have stressed that irony and
humour function as the boundary areas between the stages of
existence with irony functioning as the boundary area between
the aesthetic and the ethical stages, while humour functions
as the boundary area between the ethical and the religious
stages. In our chapter on humour we outlined how and why
humour functions in this way (which we shall recap shortly)
now our task is to explain how irony serves this function.
We may begin with two seemingly contradictory statements from
The Journals. The first of these is: "Irony is native only
to the immediate (where, however, the individual does not
become aware of it as such) and to the dialectical position." - 19,
and the second is: "The most ironic category (notice also that
it is the absolutely moral category) is singleness, that single
individual. The single individual can, in fact, be every man
and, eminently so, any man who ethically and ideally wishes to
be the highest." - 20 These two quotations appear to stand in
opposition to each other. One proclaims that irony is native
only to the immediate state and to the dialectic position,
the other proclaims that the most ironic category is that of
the single individual who 'ethically and ideally wills to be the highest'. Let us now see if these two positions may be reconciled. In explaining the second statement Kierkegaard tells us that while any man could become the single individual it is likely that such an individual shall never exist. This sets up a dialectic relation between facticity and ideality (what is—what ought to be) which is simultaneously ironic and ethical. -21 (Note also its relationship to the dialectic, finite -- infinite, which exists in the composition of the immediate individual's being). The first quotation may be further explained to be a third entry from The Journals. In that entry Kierkegaard tells us that irony is the unity between ethical passion which serves to accentuate in inwardness the private self, and outwardness which abstracts from the self. -22 Irony, then, appears to be a combination of the dialectic of inwardness found in both the aesthetic and ethical stages. It takes the outwardness of the dialectic in the aesthetic stage and places it in relation with the inwardness of self-affirmation which characterizes the ethical stage. Thus, the ironic response straddles the boundary between the aesthetic and the ethical and the ironist may be an ethicist although this is not a necessary occurrence. -23 Finally, we may say that irony is never justified in standing over against immediacy simply because it is a higher existential state than
immediacy, only an existential ironist can be seen as justified in taking such a stance. -24 (This is important to note for it refers back to the two types of irony we established as existing in our chapter on that concept. These two types of irony, irony unmastered and irony mastered, will be referred to again later in our discussion).

Now that we have outlined how the concept of irony functions as a boundary area between the aesthetic and the ethical stages of existence we may review how we saw the concept of humour as functioning in a similar way between the ethical and the religious stages. In our previous discussion on this topic we stated that humour is closely akin to the religious because it is able to comprehend the relevance of suffering to our existence, but it is not actually within the religious because it is unable to comprehend the significance of the suffering itself. The humourist, as it were, takes the suffering of human existence and reflects upon it (comprehends its relevance to existence) but before he can come to any profound conclusion (comprehend the significance of the suffering itself), he revokes his reflection by positing the jest. The humourist, then, approximates the hidden inwardness of the religious individual but has guarded himself against its fullness by positing the jest. From this we may conclude that humour functions as the passage way, or boundary area, between the ethical and religious stages of existence.
In our discussion, above, on the religious stage of existence we have presented two ways in which the religious individual may be characterized. The first was to characterize the religious individual as he whose choice took on a paradoxical quality when made in and through faith. The second was to characterize the religious individual as he who has attained the fullness of the hidden inwardness. Here a question arises as to whether these are two forms that the same individual may take, or whether one is perhaps a more developed state of the other, or a different acquisition of the religious state all together. We may begin formulating an answer by briefly quoting from one of Kierkegaard's journal entries: "The spontaneous or immediate religious person does many things which the infinitely reflected religious person, when he does the same things because they are fair, must interpret half humourously and half penitently."-25 This statement tells us two things. The first of these is that two types of religious individuals do indeed exist, those who are spontaneously or immediately religious, and those who are religious through infinite reflection. The second thing it tells us is that the infinitely reflected religious individual relates directly to our assessment of the religious individual of hidden inwardness insofar as both reflect on the dialectic of humour and pathos which is established as existing in the
humourist and religious states. The second form of the religious individual we have already established as existing, but how can there be a 'spontaneous or immediate religious person'. Such a state is a contradiction in terms if our discussion on the stages of life is to have had any validity, viz. the aesthetic individual is immediate, the religious individual is reflected inward in dialectical development. Perhaps, then, there is a second form of immediacy, a form which is native only to the religious state of existence. Such a possibility presents us with two difficulties. The first is how immediacy may be attained after one has left the aesthetic state and entered the ethical and religious states, the second is how this immediacy relates to those characteristics of inwardness which we described as integral parts of the religious state of existence. The first difficulty seems, at first glance, almost insurmountable. To acquire immediacy a second time appears to present us with an unreconcilable contradiction. Kierkegaard, however, is able to bring about this reconciliation. He has written: "No doubt immediacy can be attained again . . . (but) immediacy is attained again only ethically: immediacy itself becomes the task--you shall attain it."-26 Thus immediacy can be attained again but there is a break, a losing of the immediacy of the aesthetic state after which one's ethical task becomes to attain again one's immediacy. This immediacy, however, will never be entirely like the immediacy of the
aesthetic state, rather, it will always be accompanied by reflection, but the reflection will be ethically subordinated to the spontaneity. -27

The possibility of immediacy being again attained can thus exist, but does there exist, in actual fact, a form of immediacy native only to the religious sphere? Kierkegaard would answer affirmatively. In discussing the completeness of Christian life Kierkegaard has stressed that as such it must have: "Immediacy or spontaneity -- that is faith (distinguished from that which is the merely human development is called the immediate because there is an intervening historical issue -- sin etc.)" -28 Thus the immediacy found native in the religious state is that which we call faith. But this is not to be confused with the purely human immediacy such as we find in the aesthetic stage. This immediacy is distinguished by the intervening historical issue of sin. Moreover, it requires a consciousness of this issue of sin. By this consciousness faith becomes more concrete than mere immediacy because it is accompanied by the reflection of deepening hidden inwardness directed at the issue of sin and forgiveness of sins. -29

We began this section by posing the question as to whether these were two forms of the religious state, the infinitely reflected and the man of faith, or whether faith might be a more mature development of the religious state. Both
assessments present us with two major difficulties. The first is to assess whether all men in the religious state do, in fact, have this faith (although they are perhaps unaware); the second is how this state of faith is acquired. In *The Journals* Kierkegaard directly answers these questions and it is worth quoting the entry at length to summarize part of what we have said:

This is to say that most men never reach faith at all. They live a long time in immediacy, finally they advance to some reflection, and then they die. The exceptions begin the other way around: dialectical from childhood, that is, without immediacy, they begin with the dialectical, with reflection, and they go on living this way year after (about as long as the others live in sheer immediacy) and then, at a more mature age, faith's possibility presents itself to them. For faith is immediacy or spontaneity after reflection. - 30

Here Kierkegaard clearly states that most men, even those in the religious state, never reach faith at all. Most live in a state of natural immediacy then advance to a state of greater or lesser reflection and then die. The man of faith, however, proceeds in a reverse manner. These individuals have never been held in the aesthetic state* but have from childhood been engaged in the dialectical development of hidden inwardness.

* We do not here mean to suggest, nor do we believe Kierkegaard in this entry meant to suggest, that some individuals are, in effect, born into the religious state, rather, we are all born into the aesthetic state but the rare cases, mentioned above, quickly leave behind this state and become engaged upon the task of developing their hidden inwardness.
and then, only after long years of reflection on sin and the 
goodness of sin do faith's possibilities present themselves. 
Faith, then, is not so much a parallel form of the religious 
state as it is a more mature, or advanced form. Faith occurs 
after reflection while most individuals never manage to go 
beyond the point of reflection.

We now have one more task to complete before we proceed to 
our next chapter. In our brief discussion of the relationship 
between choice and the religious state we stated the choice 
becomes paradoxical in nature when it is made in and through 
faith. We then went on to show how this paradox-religious 
relationship (as Kierkegaard named it) comes into being when a 
particular existing human individual is appointed to a 
particular task by God. Such a relationship has been described 
in one of the journal passages as an "impenetrable immediacy". 
Such an immediacy is, moreover, impossible in the state of 
infinity reflected religiosity because it would become 
dialectical. No longer would God call man to an immediate 
response to his command. Rather, God would have to leave the 
option of responding open to man, and this would, moreover, 
involve the possibility of man's responding wrongly, either by 
failing to venture into the task, or by venturing incorrectly. 
Such a reflection immediately casts the religious individual 
into that curious state of temptation, native only to the, 
religious state, which the Germans call Anfechtung, whereby,
in contrast to temptation proper, where the lower tempts man, the higher becomes the tempter and tries to frighten man back from his ordained task. This is not to say that the man of faith will not encounter Anfechtung, he will, for he has already passed through the phase of reflection, rather, in relation to his appointed task he will proceed spontaneously but always accompanied by the possibility of falling prey to Anfechtung and so his progress will be accompanied by dread and fear and trembling.
Footnotes


4. ibid

5. Either/Or v. I p. 64

6. ibid p. 73-81 a summary

7. ibid v. II p. 150

8. ibid p. 214

9. ibid p. 208

10. ibid p. 214

11. ibid


14. ibid

15. Fear and Trembling p. 80


17. Hong & Hong: Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers (Bloomington, Ill.: Indiana U. Press 1970) v. II p. 462
-a blending and summarizing of both pieces.

trans D. Swenson 9th ed.
18. The Journals and Papers v. II p. 462
19. ibid p. 250
21. ibid
22. ibid v. II p. 267
23. The Postcript p. 448
24. ibid p. 464
26. ibid v. I p. 424
27. ibid v. IV p. 297
28. ibid v. II p. 4
29. ibid
30. ibid p. 11
The Concepts of Dread and, Fear and Trembling

In the concluding paragraphs of our last chapter we made reference to the concept that a decision which is made in and by faith is made in dread and with fear and trembling. These two concepts, that of dread and that of fear and trembling, are of signal importance to our discussion on the relationship between the concept of irony and the religious stage of existence. In order to write this chapter we will draw on three works, all pseudonymous, as well as upon select passages from The Journals and Papers and The Concluding Unscientific Postscript. The three works we will utilize are The Sickness Unto Death, written under the name Anti-Climacus, The Concept of Dread, attributed to Vigiilius Haufniensis, and With Fear and Trembling, penned under the signature Johannes des Silentio.

As with other concepts which we have discussed in the foregoing pages the concepts of dread and of fear and trembling must be discussed within a certain context. In order to establish this context for our discussion we must discuss two other concepts, that of despair (which relates to dread), and that of the Anfechtung, or spiritual trial (which relates to fear and trembling).

In our previous chapters we saw the development of a systematic arrangement for the existential stages of life. In this system the stages were arranged according to the development
of the hidden inwardness which they showed. The arrangement, in ascending order (if such a term may be used) began in the aesthetic stage, moved to the ethical stage, and ended in the religious stage. The areas of transition were the occurrence of irony (aesthetic/ethical) and the occurrence of humour (ethical/religious). This criterion of arrangement, the amount of the development of hidden inwardness, may also be seen as the amount of self which the existing individual has developed. If we view the criterion for judging the stages in this way then the aesthetic stage is seen as that stage having the least development of self and the religious stage is seen as that having the most development of self. Here we might ask what is meant when we are described as having a self. In The Sickness the following, rather complicated, definition of self is given: "What is the self? The self is a relation which relates itself to its own self . . . the self is not the relation but (consists in the fact) that the relation relates itself to its own self." -1 Here we have a definition of the self which is based on the idea that a relation exists in man and that the self consists in the fact that this relation relates its self to its own self. But what is the relationship which constitutes man? We earlier defined man as being a synthesis of the finite and the infinite, the temporal and the eternal. Now so constituted man is a relation between two factors but has not yet gained a self. In such a synthesis the relation
takes the role of the third term and each element relates to the other and to the relation through the relation. Such a relation is a unity between the two factors, but a negative unity. If contrary to this, the relation relates itself to its own self then the unity becomes a positive factor and the self has come into being.* Moreover this relation must have either constituted itself, or have been constituted by another. If the relation was constituted by another then the relation not only relates the elements and also its own self, but it also relates the whole to that external power which constituted the whole relation. Thus the human self relates itself to its own self and, because it is a derived relation, relates itself to another. -2

Now when we posited such a relation as we have above outlined, that is a self, which has been constituted by another, there are two forms which the despair may take. These two forms of the despair are the despair of not willing to be oneself, and despair of willing to be oneself. -3 At this point we must pause and ask where this despair lies, that is where

* This formula of a relation relating itself to its own self is extremely difficult to explain and this writer feels, in all honesty, that he cannot elaborate more fully. The base line in this discussion is our acceptance that man is a creature of both infinite and finite parts which relate to each other, and moreover the relation between the two is capable of relating to its own self. Kierkegaard explains this further by showing how man is a relation between body and soul and that this relation, if it is aware of itself and relates to itself, then it is a self and this self is the spirit which is the essence of man.
in the human being this despair manifests itself. Anti-Climacus would respond that despair lies in the consciousness, and that the question of whether the despair is conscious or not will determine the qualitative difference between despair and despair. That a difference between despair and despair exists may readily be seen when we take the element of consciousness as the decisive element. If we do that we find that the unconscioness of self becomes the decisive element in the determination of self, that is, the more consciousness of self we have the more we have of the self. If the despair is a sickness of the self it stands logically that the same method of increase will also be true of the despair. Thus the more consciousness of self, the more self, leads us to the conclusion the more consciousness of despair, the more despair.

Let us begin discussing the way in which despair may manifest itself by discussing the despair which is unconscious that it is despair, or, correlativey, the unconsciousness of having a self, and an eternal self. This type of despair is the most common in what Christian thought calls 'the world', that is, in paganism. In this form of despair a man is unconscious that he is a self and that this self relates to that which constituted it, and also to the infinite element in the synthesis. Such a man is caught entirely within the sensuousness of his nature. That such a man is in despair must
be taken as a given in that he is not aware that he is in despair, and yet his actions show that he despairs, albeit unconsciously, of having a self which is in relation with the eternal.

The second type of the despair with which we will deal is that of the despair of consciousness, which despair is not only conscious of being in despair, but it is also conscious that it is a self having an eternal component. Two prerequisites are necessary in order to be truly consciously in despair. These two prerequisites are, a true conception of what constitutes despair, and, a clearness about one's own self. The first condition means that the person in despair must have a real grasp of what despair is and its universal character. Thus the truly conscious desparier knows that not only is he in despair, but that all other men are also in despair. (This is in opposition to the pagan who sees himself as in despair while all about him others are not in despair). The second condition requires that the desparier be aware of his own self, that is that he be aware that he is possessed of a self wherein there are elements of the eternal, and that he be aware that this self is in despair. This despair of consciousness may take either of two forms, that of despair of not willing to be oneself, which is the despair of weakness, or that of despair of willing to be oneself, which is the despair of
defiance. (The difference between these two forms of despair is exceedingly relative for as soon as one has said the despair of not willing one has implied a certain amount of defiance, on the other hand no defiance is without some admission of weakness on the part of the defier.-7

The despair of weakness itself may take either of two forms, despair over the eternal. The despair over the earthly is pure immediacy and as such it is a passive despair. The immediate man is, in a passive despair. The immediate man is, in a bodily sense, existent, when misfortune or fate befalls him then he is 'in despair,' but passively, not understanding what it fully means to be in despair. Thus the immediate man grieves over the fate which befell him and stripped him of some earthly treasure, (note that it is despair over the loss of some earthly treasure). and proclaimed that he was in despair, and yet the truth of the matter is that he is in despair because he has lost the eternal, but this is not a thought which enters his mind. This is like the despair of the pagan, but it is the despair of the Christian pagan, it is the despair at not willing to be oneself, or despair at not willing to have a self, or it is despair at willing to be another beyond one's self. Such a despair is devoid of any kind of reflection (as befits that which is of pure immediacy), because it is a despair over the loss of something earthly. But let us now modify this despair slightly, let us add to it a minute amount
of reflection. Now the despair of weakness is qualitatively different, the despairer does not despair over something earthly but rather he despairs over the earthly. Thus when the despairer despairs over something particular he despairs over the whole of the earthly existence of man. As soon as the qualitative difference is affirmed an essential advance has been made in the consciousness of the self, and this in turn becomes the dialectical first stage for that form of the despair of weakness which is in despair over the eternal. This second form of the despair of weakness may be characterized by saying the despairer despairs over his weakness. The despairer becomes aware that it is a weakness to attach such importance to the earthly but instead of taking courage and in faith humbling himself before God in his weakness, he despairs the more over his weakness, and his despair is that he has not willed to become what he himself is capable of becoming.

The second form of the conscious despair is that of the defiant willing to be oneself. This form of despair is the abuse of the eternal in one's self by being despairingly determined to be oneself. In this despair there is posited a consciousness of the infinite within the self, but it is a consciousness of the infinite in the most abstract sense, which detaches the infinite self from the power which posited it. When such an abstract infinite self is posited, the self now
wills to be what it will create itself to be. This is the des-
pair of the self made man, the man who has, defiantly, willed
himself to what he would be.-9

We earlier stated that a self must either constitute itself
or be constituted by another. We also stated that if the self
was derived it was also, essentially, in relation with that
power which constituted it. What is this power that has con-
stituted the relation which brings about the self in man? Let
us follow Anti-Climacus' lead and bestow upon this constituting
power the name of God with all the qualities and qualifications
with which that name is endowed. Now the self, as we have
described it, above, undergoes a change, it is no longer merely
the human self but now it is the self directly in the sight of
God and this has added a whole new quality, a whole new dimension
to the self we proposed, for now it has God as the rod by which
we measure it. How does having God as a measure affect the
self, and by that also affect the despair? It does so in the
following manner. The potentiation for the despair is in
direct proportion to the consciousness of self which we possess.
Thus the more consciousness of self the more the despair is
potentiated within us. Likewise the self is potentiated
with regard to the measure which we use to measure it. The
more infinite the measure, the more infinite the self. When
God is posited as the measure for the self the potential for
the self becomes infinite, and only when the existing individual
becomes conscious that he exists before God is he capable of becoming an infinite self. Thus the self which is posited as existing before God is infinitely conscious that it is a self, and if it is infinitely conscious of its selfhood the potential for it to be in despair is also posited infinitely. Here we must emphasize that God is not a power which is external in the way in which another person may be seen as being external. Rather, each self carries within it its own conception of God. When the self does not will as God wills then it is in despair, either through weakness or through defiance, because it is disobedient to the will of God. But what is it to be in a state of dissolution before God? It is sin. How have we arrived at sin from discussing despair? Anti-Climacus has defined sin as; "Before God, or with the conception of God, to be in despair at not willing to be oneself, or in despair at willing to be oneself."-10 The emphasis must here rest on the phrase 'before God', since is despair before God. Thus the despair is rendered sinful because before God we despair in weakness to be that which we may become, or because we despair defiantly to be that which we have become, as a standing over against the divine measuring rod which measure our acquisition of self.-11 The statement that we 'stand over against God' carries with it the implication that to be in sin is a position which the existing individual takes up before God, and this is the view of orthodox Christianity, a view which
Anti-Climacus fully endorses. Sin is a position taken up by the existing individual who, in full consciousness, deliberately stands himself against that which he has the potential to become, and this stance is taken up before God, who is the measure of what the self can become. 12

Thus man is a creature who stands before God in sin, sin either by despairing at willing to be oneself, or by despairing defiantly to be oneself. That we have committed this or that particular sin ceases to be of importance for this only makes manifest the fact that before God we are in sin. The use of the phrase 'before God' in sin is of noteworthy importance. It implies that man is in a state called 'in sin' which comes into existence when he stands 'before God'. But in such a conclusion consistent with Kierkegaard's thought? In The Sickness he tells us that sin is a consistency of evil which is itself possesses a certain power. This consistency of evil is in the deepest sense sin as an existent state. Thus one sin, through this potential evil, leads to the commission of another sin, and the particular acts of sin give expression to the fact that the existing individual is in a state of sin, and, more importantly, by this we become conscious that these sins lead to other sins and point to the fact that we are continuously in sin. (Again, please note, we are conscious of being in this state of sin.) Sin, as potential despair, will manifest itself
in either of two ways. The first is to despair over being in a state of sin, which despair expresses the fact that we are continuously in a state of sin which has power over us and therefore prevents us from gaining a state of goodness. The second is despair over the forgiveness of sins. In this latter case the individual has come face to face with Christ as the expression of God's forgiveness of our sin and yet defiantly refuses to accept this grace.

If the existing individual exists in a continuous state of sin where the commission of one sin leads to the commission of another sin, it must be that at some point in time the existing individual entered into a first sin which plunged him into the continuity of sin. The discussion of what constitutes the first sin, that which dogmatically is called original sin, more properly belongs to our discussion on the concept of dread.

In explaining, or attempting to explain, original sin we immediately run into a difficulty. This difficulty is the tendency of Christian orthodoxy to explain away the origin of sin in the existing individual by assigning all the blame (if such a term may be here used) to the figure of Adam. The result is that Adam ceased to be a man like all others, either because he alone brought sin into the world, or because he alone did not have sinfulness within him but rather acquired it after
his creation, a fact brought more sharply home when we pause to consider the Atonement. In the Atonement we are told that Christ made satisfaction for original sin (according to Haufniensis), but in Adam original sin is not the same thing as it is for other men. He did not sin because sin was presupposed in him, rather original sin was for him the commission of an actual sin, and so Adam is left alone, of all the human race, outside the grace of the Atonement. How then, can we solve the riddle of Adam, how can we construct a concept of original sin which will include Adam in its explanation of human sinfulness? We may do so by bringing Adam back into the race by positing the concept that every existing individual is at one and the same time both himself and the race. Thus that which explains Adam explains the race, and that which explains the race explains Adam.-14 But how shall we accomplish this task? Haufniensis proposed to do so by positing the concept of the first sin.

When we posit the concept of a first sin we again encounter difficulties with traditional conceptions. Traditionally a qualitative difference exists between the first sin of Adam and the first sin of all subsequent men; Adam's first sin posited sinfulness as a consequence for all subsequent men; the first sin of all subsequent men presupposes sinfulness as a condition for their sinfulness. Now if we accept these
traditional conceptions of a first sin we again find ourselves placing Adam as a fantastic creature who exists outside of the human race. Therefore our concept of a first sin must be modified. Let us begin by discussing what is meant by the term 'first' in relation to sin. According to Haufniensis there are two ways in which this term 'first' may be viewed in relation to sin. If we see it as a numerical 'first' then no history can result from it either in the individual or in the race.

It is number one in a long line of numbered sins and each individual is simply another manifestation of this enumerated list of sins. If on the other hand, we see this 'first' as an historical first, it becomes possessed of a new quality. This sin is the first sin which will spawn a history of sin in the individual. Now each individual contains within him the whole history of the race as well as his own history, that is, each individual shows again how sin has been brought into the world by his first sin. This goes for Adam as well as for all subsequent men and so Adam is again brought into the human race. -15

To posit a concept of an historical first sin presupposes that prior to the commission of that sin the existing individual lived in a state without sin, a state of innocence, which is lost at the time of the commission of the first sin. Much time and paper has been taken up in attempts to explain this concept.
of innocence and how Adam lost it and how subsequent men never really possessed it, all of which fasten great blame upon Adam for losing it, and at the same time place him outside the race because he was the only individual who possessed this innocence. But what is the situation of man's innocence in a system such as we posited above? If the race is the individual and the individual the race, as much for Adam as it is for all subsequent men then the innocence, and the method of losing it must be the same for Adam as it is for all subsequent men. Thus Adam lost innocence through guilt just as all subsequent men have lost innocence through guilt. If it was not innocence that was lost, then he and we had not become guilty, just as he and we could not become guilty if we were not possessed, originally, of innocence. And what is innocence? Innocence is ignorance, 

How does this innocent ignorance relate to the definition of self which we posited in our earlier discussion, a definition which requires self-knowledge to realize self? An existing individual is a synthesis of body and soul, but a synthesis demands a third element, and the third element is the relation which binds thesis to antithesis, body to soul. Now if the relation is aware that it is the relation between the body and
the soul, that is, it knows itself to exist and relates to its existence, then it is no longer simply the relation between body and soul, but is as well the self. And with the positing of the self we have the positing of the spirit which is the result of the synthetic relationship of body to soul. The spirit is both hostile to, and friendly to, the synthesis between body and soul. It is friendly in that it arises in the synthetic relation and must continually consult the relation if it is to survive. It is hostile because it constantly disturbs the repose of the synthesis, a repose of innocent ignorance, by demanding self-awareness. But how do we arrive at a definition of innocent ignorance as the repose of the synthesis of body and soul? In The Concept of Dread Haufniensis tells us that in innocence man is determined only in the immediacy of his natural condition, he is determined only in the synthesis of body and soul. In this state the self has not yet been posited (is not yet self-aware) and so the spirit slumbers, awaiting the discovery of self which will call it to its fulness. In the meantime it projects a dreamlike reality for itself which lies outside of itself. But is all peace and repose in this state? In this state the spirit cannot do away with itself lest the existing individual sink down to the animals, yet neither can the spirit relate itself to itself as long as the reality is projected outwards in dreaming. Thus there is more than just peace and repose
in this state of innocence, there is also a tension, like a
note so deep one cannot hear it but only feel it as a dis-
turbing vibration. But what is this tension, this factor
which disturbs the repose of the synthesis? Haufniensis answers
us: "... there is peace and repose, but at the same time there
is something different... What is it then? Nothing. But
what effect does nothing produce? It begets dread." -17
Thus this tension is, in reality, nothing, but this nothing is
not without its effect for in the individual it produces dread
(anxiety, angst). But what is this nothingness? This nothing-
ness of the spirit, it is, if you will, a presentiment of the
reality of the spirit, but a presentiment to fantastically
projected that it becomes nothing. Dread now encompasses the
existing individual. On the one hand he flees from it fearing
the nothingness which hovers near, on the other hand he clings
to it desiring to know what lies beyond the nothingness he
perceives. This is the apex of innocent ignorance, but we must
not confuse it with animal brutality. We have no knowledge of
good or evil rather we are innocent of such distinctions, our
knowledge of good and evil is a nothingness which begets dread,
and in this dread we both desire to know good and evil, yet
also fear to know them. Now this dread of knowledge carries
within it a presupposition, it presupposes the existing in-
dividual to have the freedom to choose either good or evil.

105
"And of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat", but the very prohibition presupposes the existence of a freedom which allows man to eat of this fruit, that is, we are possessed of the freedom to eat or not to eat, but the prohibition tells us 'Thou shalt not'). But to presuppose freedom presupposes the existing individual's awareness of the existence of freedom. And how do we become aware of the existence of this freedom? We become aware of our freedom through the existence of the prohibition, the 'Thou shalt not' posits the possibility that Adam, and we, might very well eat of the fruit. And this prohibition springs in Adam a sense of dread, for it posits the possibility of freedom. The nothingness of innocence now ceases to be and is replaced by the possibility of our being able. But this possibility is there but of what we can have no conception and so the dread remains. If we view original sin, and the fall, as the leap made by each individual which changes his life qualitatively thereafter, then dread, as here explained, is a necessary presupposition. Dread renders the existing individual powerless to resist sin and so the first occurrence of sin is always one of weakness. This weakness in its turn appears to make the individual not accountable for this sin, but this is the very trap of dread. We deny our culpability in this first sin and whost which follow after it are likewise denied for 'I was not
responsible for the first sin'. But what is dread? What
dread is not is guilt, nor is it a heavy burden of suffering.
In *The Journals* this definition is given: "Dread is a desire
for what one fears, a sympathetic antipathy; dread is an alien
power which grips the individual, and yet one cannot tear him-
self free from it and does not want to, for one fears, but what
one fears he desires."—19 This definition is at once both am-
biguous and yet plainly set forth. To describe something as
a sympathetic antipathy* is a contradiction in terms, it
describes a force which in the same action attracts and repels,

* We may accept this definition of dread with little reservation.
While many of the entries in *The Journals* appear, on the surface
at least, to flatly contradict what has been written in the
parallel passages in the texts of the various books, this
definition agrees almost word for word with the definition
of dread on p.38 of *The Concept of Dread*.

+ In *The Concept of Dread* Kierkegaard identifies two forms of
dread which he names objective dread and subjective dread.
Objective dread may be explained by the phrase "by Adam's
sin came sinfulness into the world". The phrase contains
an external reflection, sin has not just affected Adam, but
it has come into the world, and has acquired significance
for all creation. Objective dread is thus the effect of
dread in the non-human sphere. Subjective dread is the dread
which we as existing individuals possess, and which is posited
in us as a result or consequence of sin. In latter individuals
this subjective dread becomes more and more reflective. We
are able to reflect more upon what dread is and thus it becomes
more of a something. This something is a complex of prese-
timents all of which add up to nothing. (*The Concept of Dread*
pp. 47-72, a summary of the nub of the argument on these pages.)
but is this not the very thing which dread, in this discussion does? Dread, then, is at once the desire for what one fears, and the fear of what one desires.

It would appear from our discussion that dread is a form of temptation which assaults the existing individual, but this is far too casual a conclusion. In *The Journals* Kierkegaard mentions that in *The Concept of Dread* dread is seen, correctly as a 'middle term' in relation to temptation, and then goes on to tell us how dread is, in fact, the dialectic of temptation.—20

To unravel this statement is extremely difficult because Kierkegaard does not set down a definition of what he means when he writes the word 'temptation'. The closest we can come to discovering his meaning is to read between the lines of a number of passages in *The Journals*. When we do so we find that temptation has two factors involved in its action. The first is that we must be tempted from within ourselves, the second is the same external object which is lower than man entices us towards it. To better explain this, temptation is the inward desire for the pleasure given by an object which is external to us, which desire entices us and leads us to sin. If we use this as the definition of temptation then dread may be seen as the dialectic of temptation in that, while temptation is a desire which leads us to commit sins, dread is a fear which leads us to commit sins. As the middle term in relation to temptation dread
must be seen as being present as a necessary prerequisite of temptation. If we did not possess a dread (anxiety) of what might exist after we have sinned, temptation could never entice us to sin.

The discussion on temptation leads us easily into a discussion on the concept of the Anfechtung (Anfælgtelse) or spiritual trial. This is a concept which we, in our preceding chapter, referred to as a curious form of temptation where the higher attempts to frighten a man back from his perceived calling in the paradox-religious relationship. To discover what is meant by the term Anfechtung we must go back to our discussion on the ethical and religious stages of life. In contrasting the two states one may come to an understanding of what is meant by Anfechtung. Here it must be stressed that the discussion of the Anfechtung is at the same time the discussion on the concept of Fear and Trembling.

In our discussion on the ethical stage of life we noted that the determinants of the ethical were universal in their character and were also, therefore, divine. This universality of the ethical determinants may be expressed in another way by saying that they apply at all times and in all places. This individual character of the ethical determinants means that the ethical lies immanently within itself, that there is nothing outside of the ethical which is the telos for the ethical, and moreover, the ethical is the telos for everything that lies
outside of it. Furthermore, the ethical as the universal is pre-eminently the manifest, the revealed. In contrast to this man, in the immediate conception of body and soul, as physical and physical characteristics, is the hidden, the concealed, the creature whose being is defined by inward (subjective) determinants. If such a man as we have here posited seeks, as the particular individual, to ground his telos in these universal ethical determinants, then his task becomes the task of abolishing his particularity in the universal. Thus he must develop out of his concealment and reveal himself to be within the universal, or, in other words, he must give up the subjective inward determinants which govern his life and express his actions outwardly by adhering to the ethical determinants of the universal. Whenever such an individual shrinks away from this task, whenever he will to persist in the concealed inwardness, whenever as the particular individual he wills to assert his particularity as over against the universal then he sins and is in temptation. Such an individual can only leave this state of being in temptation by, in penitence, abandoning himself as the particular in the universal and by thus proclaiming that the universal ethical determinants are the ground of his talos he declares them to be absolute. Now, if this is the highest thing which can be said about a man and his existence, then the ethical as his telos becomes absolute and takes on the
characteristics of being his eternal happiness which at every instant and even to eternity, must be maintained lest, by suspending his relation to it, he forfeit it. When this has occurred the individual has entered into an absolute relation to the absolute, and the ethical has become, for that individual, the divine. As such every duty (for duty is the essence of the ethical) becomes duty toward God insofar as the universal is the divine. If this is all that may be affirmed of the relationship between God and man then the individual cannot come into a personal relationship with God, rather, through duty he comes into relation with other men in fulfillment of the ethical determinants which are for the divine. 

In terms of the faith relationship of the religious stage of existence the relationship between God and man presents a contrast to that in the ethical stage. In the faith relationship the individual enters into a personal relationship with God which is based on his action of grounding his telos in the absolute eternal telos. When the individual does this the relation between man and God becomes an absolute relationship which surpasses the relationship between the individual and the ethical determinants. This does not mean that the universal ethical determinants are not relevant to the individual in the faith relationship, rather, they are rendered relative to the absolute relationship. Thus the individual performs his universal duty but he performs it before God, which gives it a
qualitative difference from the duty performed by the individual in the ethical stage. To explain this more clearly the ethical individual loves his neighbour because it is part of the universal ethical determinant, and is in relation with God because of the divine nature of the universal determinants. The individual who is in the faith relationship is first and foremost in relation with God. As a result of this the man of faith loves his neighbour because it is an expression of his love for God. Moreover, the universal determinants may be suspended if the relationship to God demands it. When this occurs the individual as the individual has asserted his particularity as over against the universal determinants.

We may see immediately that what we have here presented as the essence of the faith relationship is identical with what we defined as sin in the ethical state. Are they in fact the same or is there a qualitative difference between the state of sin and the state of faith? The determination as to whether the individual is in sin or in the faith relationship lies solely within the subjective assessment of the given individual which is again an assertion of the individual as the particular as over against the universal. The existence of the faith relationship will thus ever remain a paradox to the ethical state because it asserts the individual as the particular as over against the universal and yet the individual still remains in relation with the absolute. -22
Because of the similarity which appears to exist between faith and temptation we must attempt to establish a set of criteria by which we may determine whether the claim to be in the faith relationship is real or whether, in fact, the individual is in temptation. In our earlier discussion on faith we posited the proof that the authority with which the given individual spoke was the ground which established whether he was in faith or not. This proof is itself a highly subjective determinant insofar as the individual claiming the faith relationship is the only one who can rule on whether or not he is actually speaking with the authority of the divine. In the book On Authority and Revelation, Kierkegaard again discusses how the reality of the faith relationship may be determined and concludes that the extraordinary individual, that is the individual in the faith relationship, is recognizable by his willingness to make sacrifices for his own sake and for the sake of the divine. This criteria is again a highly subjective one. Not only are the sacrifices made for one's own sake, which is a contradiction to the ethical sphere but the determination as to whether they are really made for the sake of the divine still lies within the immanence of the given individual. It should be increasingly clear that when we are speaking of the faith relationship we are speaking of something which defies all attempts to objectify its existence.
because, ultimately, the determination as to whether the
given individual acts in faith or in temptation rests with
the subjective inwardness of the individual himself; he
believes himself to be called by God and must act accordingly
even if it renders the ethical relative, or even suspends the
ethical in reference to his action. How may the individual
who is so called come to the conclusion that he is acting in
faith rather than in temptation? The answer is that he can
never totally come to such a conclusion until the task is
ended. The reason for this is because as long as he is in
the process of performing his task of faith he is in temptation,
but that form of temptation which is called Anfechtung.

What, then, is the Anfechtung? In The Journals we are told
that what temptation is outwardly the Anfechtung is inwardly. This,
again, stresses the similarity between them, but we must
not imagine that they are identical. If we were to compare
them we would find that Anfechtung lies a whole quality higher
than does temptation. This conclusion is based on the difference
which Kierkegaard saw in the inclination which we have toward
temptation and Anfechtung. The temptation is in accord with
our inclination while Anfechtung is contrary to our inclination.

In continuing this comparison we would find that the orienta-
tion of the given individual is also different. In temptation
the individual is enticed by a lower object (in accordance
with his inclination toward the object). In Anfechtung the
individual is confronted with the higher which tries, or so it would seem, to frighten the individual back from his perceived calling into the faith relation (which drawing back from faith is contrary to our inclination). Moreover, humanly speaking the individual who suffers under the anfechtung is completely without guilt, he does not provoke himself to think these thoughts, as he does in temptation, rather, the thought plague him day and night and appear to come from outside of him. -28 Anfechtung then, quite properly belongs to the religious stage of existence and more particularly to the last stages (the call of faith) and arises when the given individual discovers the limit to which he will be called to act in relation to his faith relation and expresses the reaction of this limit against the individual who is finite in his existence. Anfechtung is, if you will, the reaction against the individual who is absolutely expressing the fact that he has entered into the absolute relation, and the anfechtung is the very opposition of the absolute itself. -29 Furthermore, the anfechtung is, in many ways, the sine qua non of the faith relationship for it can only affect the individual who is decisively involved with God, that is, the individual who is in the faith relationship, and it will appear to him as pride, as a voice accusing him of claiming the faith relationship out of pride rather than with humility accepting it as the task he must bear. -30
If all this is true of the anfechtung we are justified in asking why God would choose to expose those whom he has called to such a painful test. According to Kierkegaard God does so in order to strengthen and mature the chosen individual in respect to his task of faith. But how does the anfechtung serve to strengthen the resolve of faith that has been made by the given individual? It does so in the method by which the anfechtung must be met and conquered. With temptation the method is to avoid that which tempts us but with the anfechtung we must struggle forward trusting, in faith, that God has truly called us to this task, and this struggle is always accompanied by fear and trembling. What is meant by this phrase 'fear and trembling'? By this Kierkegaard is describing the psychological affect which the sinful appearance of faith produces in the individual called to the faith relationship. As long as the two bear a close resemblance the chosen individual must ever be in fear that he has, in reality, stepped into sin, and this fear will always also be accompanied by a psychological trembling that such an event might be in the process of occurring.*

* The discussion on fear and trembling, I think, will always be this sketchy no matter how learned in Kierkegaard the author might be. Like the whole topic of mastered irony and its relation to the religious in man's life, the concept of fear and trembling is never fully defined, rather it is alluded to as in the discussion in the book Fear and Trembling. In this book the topic that is actually discussed is the anfechtung and the concept of fear and trembling is left for us to gain by osmosis, but the reality of the book is that the topic of fear and trembling is plainly set forth in all its terrifying psychological dimensions because the discussion on anfechtung is the discussion on fear and trembling.
We may see at once a relation between the concept of dread and the concept of fear and trembling which arises because of the similarity which exists between temptation and faith. As dread is to despair so fear and trembling is to the anfechtung. Here, however, we must make a distinction between the dread which precedes and accompanies the commission of the first sin and the dread which precedes and accompanies the commission of subsequent sins. Fear and trembling relates to the anfechtung as the latter form of dread relates to despair, but it relates also to the first form of the dread. Before fear and trembling can grow out of the anfechtung it must be preceded by the first form of dread, that is, the anxiety over the nothingness which will be our lot if, because of our sin, we are left all alone in the world, totally forsaken, even by God.

Thus all things lead back to dread, but what of this dread, is it just a caprice of man's mind or has it perhaps been placed within our psychological makeup for a definite purpose? In our discussion on dread we have already established that dread is the possibility of freedom, and, we will add here, that with the aid of faith this dread becomes absolutely educative because it teaches us to recognize our finite parts for what they are, deceptions. How is this process accomplished? To be educated by dread is to be educated by possibility, and to
be educated in accordance with our infinity. Now to be so educated requires two things of the individual, it requires that he be honest toward possibility and that he have faith. When the individual is thus postured possibility will disclose to him all the finitudes of his being but will reveal them as infinite. This intinitizing of the finite in its turn will provoke dread which will overcome the individual until he in turn conquers it by faith. When an individual is so educated he will learn to overcome dread not by avoiding it but by trusting in providence. He will then, through experience, learn that the anticipation of the possibility is far more dreadful than the actually of the event. And what is providence? It is the faith that all is within the plan of God and so the soul finds rest in providence. Likewise does dread discover guilt. The individual who sees his guilt as finite becomes lost in the finite and must have his guilt decided and pronounced by an external agent. But guilt is never really finite, rather, it is infinite. When the infinity of guilt is brought home to the individual he is assailed by dread, by the possibility of the, he knows not what, which may happen to him. When he is thus assailed by dread the individual must flee to where he may find repose, and he will find this repose only when he, in faith, grasps onto the atonement.-31

In introducing the themes of dread and fear and trembling we made reference to them as being of signal importance in any
discussion on the relation between the concept of irony and the religious stage of life. An in-depth discussion on this relationship is more properly consigned to our concluding chapter, we will thus content ourselves with a few brief remarks as a concluding sentence to this chapter. Kierkegaard will ultimately draw his view of the terrible irony of life from this base of the similarly of appearance between temptation and faith.
Footnotes

1. Kierkegaard, S.A.: The Sickness Unto Death

2. ibid

3. ibid

4. ibid p. 162 and p. 175

5. ibid pp. 175-180, a summary

6. ibid pp. 180-182, a summary

7. ibid p. 182

8. ibid pp. 184-200, a summary

9. ibid pp. 200-207, a summary

10. ibid p. 208

11. ibid pp. 208-213, a summary

12. ibid pp. 227-231, a summary

13. ibid pp. 236-255, a summary


15. ibid pp. 27-32, a summary

16. ibid pp. 32-34, a summary

17. ibid p. 38

18. ibid pp. 37-41, a summary


20. ibid p. 41

22. *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 64-129, a summary of a major theme in these pages


26. ibid v. IV p. 268


28. The *Journals and Papers* v. IV p. 259

29. The *Postscript*, pp. 410-411

30. The *Journals and Papers* v. IV p. 267

31. The *Concept of Dread*, pp. 139-145, a summary
Christ the Absolute Paradox Which Offends and Scandalizes

In an appendix to this paper we have proposed a series of theses upon which the content would be based. In the first of these we proposed that a direct, although implicit rather than explicit, relation could be seen as existing between the concept of irony as Kierkegaard defined it and Christianity. This relationship was based on Kierkegaard's contention that the figure of Christ is the absolute paradox which offends and scandalizes. We might add, moreover, that an understanding of this relationship is an integral part of gaining an understanding of Kierkegaard's understanding of the relationship between the concept of irony and the religious stage of life. We must therefore pause to explain the concept of Christ as the absolute paradox and show how this is an offence to Reason and a scandal to man.

Much of Kierkegaard's Christian theology was written as a reaction to the Hegelian system of rational theology. In this Hegelian system man is in the image of God only insofar as he possesses self-awareness. At the time of the fall man gained knowledge which pointed out to him his inadequacies of self-awareness. Thus, he has become self-alienated. Christ is the incarnation because he is the explicit statement of the divinity, or self-awareness, implicit in all men. His crucifixion becomes necessary as the end of God as a finite being and also marks the death of the God of Law and Judgement who is set over against mankind. The Kingdom of the Spirit is the union, or communion, of all men who have been liberated
from self-alienation by the teachings of Christ. The teachings of Christ are not seen as divine rubrics but rather are ethical imperatives by which all men may reach the highest level of self-awareness. -1

In contrast to this Hegelian system we have Kierkegaard's statement from Training in Christianity: "The God-man is not the unity of God and mankind ... that an individual man is God is Christianity, and the individual man is the God-man." -2

The term 'God-man' will seem paradoxical in its construction, and rightly so, for this is implicit in Kierkegaard's understanding of the role of Christ. But here we must add a qualification the term God-man is not just a paradox, rather it is the paradox of paradox, the absolute paradox. What does Kierkegaard mean by such terms as 'paradox of paradox' and 'the absolute paradox'? Kierkegaard defines three types of paradoxes, a relative paradox, a true paradox, and the absolute paradox. The relative paradox relates to purely human qualities and arises when two human individuals are juxtaposed.* Such paradoxes are relative because they do not exist for all eternity but rather disappear once this earthly life is over. Moreover, these paradoxes can be mediated, or explained, to a higher level of understanding by the acknowledgement that such differences can exist between two given human individuals.

The true paradox is that which exists in the paradox-religious stage of life, the paradox-religious relationship between God and the chosen individual. Such paradoxes are eternal in their nature, however, they can be mediated to a higher level

* Such a relative paradox would exist between two twins identical in every way except that one is destined to grow up a genius, the other mentally handicapped.
of understanding by the acknowledgement that the given individual has been called to enter a paradox-religious relationship. The third type of paradox is the absolute paradox. This paradox must not only be eternal in its nature, it must be impossible to mediate it to a higher level of understanding. What could exist that would fulfill these requirements? In *The Journals*, Kierkegaard has written: "Insofar as philosophy is mediation, it holds true that it is not complete before it has been the ultimate paradox before its own eyes. This paradox is the God-man." -3, and also: "The absolute paradox would be that the Son of God became man, came into the world, went around in such a way that no one detected it, in the strictest sense became the individual human being who had a trade, got married, etc." -4 Thus, the God-man is by definition the ultimate, absolute paradox because it is the unique union between God and individual human existence; it is the absolute existing as a human being within the medium of existence. -5 But why should God consent to bring about this unique union between himself and man, to what end has this been achieved? To answer this we must again return to our discussion on sin.

For Kierkegaard the terms 'God' and 'Truth' are interchangeable. Thus when we make reference to the Truth we speak of God and likewise when we say God we are saying Truth. Moreover this Truth, this God, is not bound into the finitudes of time and space, rather it is absolutely, eternally, transcendent. Next to this God, the Truth, let us juxtapose man the creature in the finitudes of time and space. This creature, man, is
pre-eminently a creature who, because of his finite nature, will make decisions in immediacy based on his subjective desires and feelings. Such subjectivity is by its nature sinful. What, then, is the relationship which exists between this absolute, eternal Truth and the sinful creature man? In The Philosophical Fragments we are told that such a creature as man must be seen as existing beyond the pale of Truth, as constantly departing from Truth by existing in a state of Error or sin. This dichotomy between man, the creature existing in Error and the absolute, eternal Truth is the absolute unlikeness which divides man from God.

If such an absolute unlikeness as we have here posited exists between man and God how may man enter into a paradox relationship with God? To do this man must first become aware of the absolute unlikeness, but here a hindrance arises. Man has no point in his experience, nor even in his Being, by which he might measure this unlikeness. The result is that man's Reason, in its attempt to mediate the absolute unlikeness, at last confuses the like with the unlike and causes the two to merge. Thus God and man become two names for the one being. It is necessary, then, for man to acquire a teacher to teach him of the absolute unlikeness. But what man could become such a teacher? None! It must therefore be that God, in some way, consents to be the teacher. But what is God's purpose in consenting to become the teacher to man? God loves the learner, sinful man, and his purpose grows out of this love. In love God is given to understand man's nature and to draw
him out of Error into Truth by revealing himself to man, and
by this revealing to man the image he should be. This action
is hindered by the absolute unlikeness which is a yawning
abyss separating man from God. Man, because of his sinful
nature, cannot cross this chasm. God, because of his love
for the learner, will not cross it lest he crush the learner.
Thus, the Law has come into existence. The Law comprises the
universal dictates of the ethical which are therefore divine
in their nature. As such, they are a revelation of God
because they reveal to man that Truth whom God is, and in
whose image man is created. Moreover, by entering into a
relationship with the Law, man may attain an understanding of
the absolute unlikeness and by thus following the Law achieve
a likeness with God. But the relationship with the Law has
not succeeded. Man still exists in Error. Therefore God,
in his love for the learner, must reveal to man the creature
he might become, and so he is resolved to bring about a
communion or union between himself and the learner.

There are three possible ways in which this union
between God and the learner may be attempted. The first way
would be for God to reveal himself to the learner in all his
glory. The learner would then give up his life in Error by
the joy he feels at having the divine apparition before him.
Such a method would indeed reveal God to man and would indeed
reveal to man the absolute unlikeness between God and man.
It would not, however, bring about a communion between God
and man. The second method by which this could be attempted
would be for God to catch the learner up into himself and
transfigure him. The learner could then leave his state of Being in Error by declaring that he has misunderstood God's purpose for him. This method would certainly bring about a communion between God and man but it would not necessarily reveal the absolute unlikeness. Man would then be led into thinking that the unlikeness is a misunderstanding of God's purpose for him, rather than accepting it as growing out of the fact that God is eternally transcendent while man is finite. Both methods, then, must be seen as not fulfilling the requisite conditions. How, then, may God bring about this union? It may be brought about by God's taking the form of a man in order to bring about an understanding between God and man. In this method, God will not come as the most powerful of men lest the earthly glory be a reflection of his heavenly glory, but rather the most humble of men, the servant. In this method the absolute unlikeness would be revealed to man by revealing the very unlikeness between God and man, that is, that man is a finite creature created in the image of God. The communion of God with man would then be accomplished by man's entering into a communion with this God-man. Moreover, this human covering must in truth be the form which the God takes lest he fall back into one of the deficient methods of teaching. What could exist which could in truth bring about this taking of human form by God. This task could only be accomplished by the action of the mystery of the Incarnation, whereby God descends to earth to be born of a human mother so that he will be in physical truth man. Who may fulfill these
qualifications? We cannot point to any one man and say this is the Incarnate God because of these proofs, rather faith tells us that Jesus of Nazareth, called the Christ is the Incarnate God.6

Now, when a given individual confronts the absolute paradox of the Incarnation he must seek either to prove or disprove its existence as relative to his life and thereby either gain faith (accept it) or take offence (reject it). But how does one prove that such a phenomenon exists? In the book Training in Christianity we are told that such an enterprise is the most foolish of contradictions since any 'proofs' which might exist serve only to prove that such a phenomenon is at variance with human reason. Nor do the proofs normally advanced by Christendom suffice to prove the Incarnation. These proofs are all based on scripture, which, according to Kierkegaard, is sacred history written to show that at a certain period of time an individual appeared who by words and signs sought to show to other men his divine nature. These signs, however, were never meant to be used as the basis of proof for Christ's divinity, rather they were intended; "... to make a man attentive so that once he has become attentive he may arrive at the point of deciding whether he will believe or be offended."7 Scripture, then, should act as a catalyst and force one to either accept or reject Christ's divine status. Indeed, this is the interpretation which Kierkegaard believes Christ himself assigned to the proofs (miracles) when he replied to the question put to him by the disciples of John the Baptist; "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive
their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the
deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the good
news preached to them. And blessed is he who takes no offence
at me." (Mtt. 11:4-6) This statement is not a proof of
divinity but is issued in a way of a challenge to John, a
challenge to have faith that Christ is the expected one, or
to take offence and reject him. And so our given individual,
like the Baptist, must take note of the challenge. He is,
if you will, at a cross-roads where he must make the decision
either to continue to travel down the road of faith with its
bumps and hazards, or to take instead the less frightening
road of doubt. But whichever road he will decide to travel
down he must still make the halt. And what causes the halt?
It is the absolute contradiction which arrests man's under-
standing, and this absolute contradiction is: "... that a
man is required to make the greatest possible sacrifice, to
dedicate his whole life as a sacrifice — and wherefor? There
is indeed no wherefor. 'Then it is madness' says the under-
standing. 'But whenever the understanding stands still in
this wise, there is the possibility of the offence.' "8 Thus
our understanding is brought to halt by the contradiction,
contained within the absolute paradox, which requires the
sacrifice of all, even one's life for no humanly tangible
reason.

The given individual encountering Christ in his daily
struggle of "Wilt thou believe" does not necessarily reason,
out why the fact of Christ offends him in the above form. For
him his encounter is more immediate. Such an immediate encoun-
eter may take one of two forms.

The first form of the offence is that of exaltation that is, we are offended each time Christ, who appears to us to be an individual man like all others, claims divine status or in any way suggests that the qualification 'God' should be attached to him. This form of the offence is firmly rooted in scripture and is made possible each time Christ performs a miracle or forgives sins, actions which imply his divinity.

In regard to our taking offence at the performance of a miracle we are told that such an action must be seen as a way of signifying something, but what is this meant to signify? In *Training in Christianity* we are told: "It signifies that this individual man makes himself out to be more than man, makes himself out to be something pretty near to being God."-9 Thus the miracles serve to signify Christ's claim to divine status and in this they provoke the offence. And why? The answer is found in part of the definition which is given for the term offence. In *The Sickness Unto Death* we are told: "Offence is unhappy admiration. It is therefore akin to envy, but it is envy which is worst of all against oneself. . . the natural man cannot welcome . . . (that) which God has intended for him; so he is offended."-10 Thus we are offended with Christ because we are envious of him. Why are we envious? We are envious because we, as mere men, cannot do what the God-man is able to do, viz. the performance of a miracle.

The second part of the definition brings us to the discussion on the second form of the offence of exaltation.
As natural men (that is as immediate in our being) we cannot accept that gift which God is prepared to grant to us, namely, the chance to reach atonement with him, which gift is preferred each time the God-man proclaims the forgiveness of sins.

There is no greater distinction between God and man than that which is found in the fact of sin. Man is a sinner. For that reason he may never, despite being in the divine image, claim divine status. Christ appears to his contemporaries as the unknown God-man. He is in nature both God and man, but to his contemporaries he appears as mere man. Despite appearing to be a man Christ goes about healing the sick by telling them that their sins are forgiven. This is an offence to the natural man, that one, in all respects like others, should claim for himself the most decisively divine attribute, that of the forgiveness of sins, and by this imply that he is divine. (For Kierkegaard this action should be an offence not only to Christ's contemporaries but also to us today. The only reason this offence does not occur is because in Christ-endom man has been given so fantastic a picture of Christ that it no longer offends. For Kierkegaard the Jews were quite right to be offended by this claim of a man to be able to forgive sins. It is only a high degree of dullness which prevents Christians today from also being offended.-11)

There is a second factor, beyond our envy of Christ's claim to divine status, which comes into play in this form of the offence. This second factor is the sense of shock we feel when we are confronted with the figure of a poor lowly, and
humble man who bids the poor, the sick, and the suffering
to his side and then offers them -- the gracious forgiveness
of their sins. This is indeed shocking, moreover it is an
offence to the ego of man that another man should presume
to claim to be able to forgive sins.

The second form of the offence which Christ presents us
with in our daily encounter with him is that of lowliness.
The major revelation of this form of the offence arises in
the Passion narratives. Here, as nowhere else, the apparent
frailty and the impotence of the God-man is exhibited. As
Anti-Climacus wrote: "But if there were need of any proof of
the fact that the possibility of the offence belongs essentially
to the experience of faith, it is exhibited here . . . by the
possibility of offence which consists in the fact that the
God-man suffers exactly as if He were a mere man."-12 This,
then, is the offence of lowliness, that the God-man does not
come as the warrior king righting wrongs with his 'terrible
swift sword', but as a lowly man, as the son of a carpenter,
who also is executed as a criminal, and who when he is near
death does not step from the cross in unscathed glory to seek
his vengeance but rather offers up his life with the anguished
cry "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" What an
offence it is that this one who claims divine status, and
whom we believed on as the apostles, should allow himself to
die thus. In the end our offended minds can only say, 'This
is not God but only a poor, powerless, and suffering man'.

These two forms of the offence of Christ do not occur
independently of each other, but rather simultaneously. We are offended that Christ, the lowly man, should claim divine status; at the same time we are offended that one who is God, or claims to be, should be so abased as to be a poor man. Christ is not "glory attired in glory", and so we refuse to accept him as divine, yet he works wonders and signs which continually posit the possibility of offence. This brings us at all times to the point of decision; will we be offended, either that a man should claim to be God, or that God should seek to be man, or will we have faith and enter into a partnership with Christ.

For Kierkegaard the idea of the offence is inseparable from the idea of faith in Christ. Indeed, the offence acts as a foil, or negative mark of the Christ, the God-man. It is what prevents Christ from becoming an idol. We do not directly see the God in the man, and so we cannot set Christ up as an idol, rather, we must have faith that this lowly man is the Incarnate one. The offence is the expression of the difference between God and man. The God-man may call attention to what it means to be a man, and show that prestige and power do not necessarily mean that one is close to God, but he must also issue the warning that he is the unique incarnation of the divine, and therein arises the offence; "The God-man... exists only for faith, but the possibility of offence is just the repellent force by which faith comes into existence -- if one does not choose instead to be offended."-13 Thus faith is called into existence as the force in the individual's life which will meet and conquer the offence.

133
The idea of the offence is drastically open to the criticism that it is no longer relevant. The situation of the offence, say the criticism, ended with the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. Kierkegaard rejects this criticism. Writing in *Training in Christianity* he said that eighteen hundred years makes no difference to faith. We must still today encounter the God-man and decide whether to accept him or reject him (take the offence). As he wrote; "... the possibility of offence at Christ qua God-man will last to the end of time. If you take away the possibility of this offence, it means that you also take Christ away, that you have made Him something different from what he was, the sign of the offence and the object of faith."-14 And Christ will always remain the offence because the appearance of Christ as the Inviter to faith is not that of God, but that of the humble man. To remove this offence, which is in effect what happens when Christ is rendered uncontemporary, is to make him something else than the unique union of God and the individual man. If this action occurs, Christ can no longer be the object of faith, for it is his dual nature, the contradiction of which is offensive, which is the object of faith. Moreover, the appearance of Christ as an offence is not an accidental relationship, nor is it restricted to a few select men of faith. Rather, this is the stumbling block for all. The possibility of the offence is present every time man encounters the God-man and is the expression of the yawning qualitative gulf between the two, which only faith can bridge. All men who would enter a relationship with Christ must stop and consider the Incarnation in the
light of the offense of exaltation and of lowliness. Only when an individual has done this may he be said to be possessed of faith.

In the title of this chapter we referred to Christ as the absolute paradox being a scandal as well as an offence. In all of his works Kierkegaard makes mention of this term and its relationship to Christianity only three times. From these brief sentences we may conclude that he saw the term scandal as being synonymous with the term offence in reference to the action of Christ as the God-man. More than this, however, he saw the whole of Christianity as being permeated with a scandalous overtone. This scandalous nature of the Christian faith arises in its requirement that the faith relationship with God be a disciplined spontaneity, rather than the occasional immediacy of the natural man's religious adherence. (By the term disciplined spontaneity we are attempting to express the idea of the faith relationship as a constant factor in the life of the believer. The Christian believer must have his life permeated with, and directed toward the maintenance of, his relationship of faith with Christ.)
Footnotes


4. ibid p. 401

5. ibid v. VI p. 130


7. Training in Christianity, p. 98

8. ibid p. 121

9. ibid p. 98


11. ibid p. 247

12. Training in Christianity, p.107

13. ibid p. 122

14. ibid p. 94

15. ibid a summary of the theme of the book was presented in these paragraphs.


17. ibid v. VI p. 336

18. ibid v. VII p. 368.
A Chapter of Conclusions

We have now come to that point where conclusions must be drawn out of what has preceded and thereby a validity be granted to the scholar's endeavour. As such is now our task we must begin by stating in a most concise manner what has prompted us to undertake this research. There is a fundamental relationship between Kierkegaard's concept of irony and his understanding of the faith relation between man and God. This relationship, however, is never explicitly stated, instead it flows as an undercurrent throughout the whole spectrum of Kierkegaard's work. Insofar as this paper must have a theme or thesis as its base, it would be the explanation of how this implicit relationship between irony and faith is, in fact, the binding string, which ties together all of Kierkegaard's highly diverse writings, the pseudonymous literature, the edifying discourses, the Christian literature, and the various journals, papers, and incidental literature, into one harmonious whole.

Because our task is the exploration of the relationship between irony and faith, we should set out in very clear terms how Kierkegaard defines irony and how he perceives it to function in the life of the given individual. He begins by adopting the basic dictionary meaning of irony. This definition states that irony is a literary device whereby that which is said is different from, or the opposite of, that which is meant.

Springing out of this definition Kierkegaard defines three ways in which irony may be used by a given individual. The first of these is that most common usage of the term irony
whereby an individual might say of a given event, "That is ironic," and thereby mean that the event so designated is different from, or opposite to, that which should have occurred in the logical sequence of events. This use of irony is, in essence, a gentle humour. The second usage if found when a given individual chooses to adopt a stance of opposition against his society, or some particular facet of his society, and, in the manner of Socrates, speak against its right to continue to function and exist. Such irony is biting in its attack and attempts to make fools of those it faces. By thus rendering "madness more mad", and "foolishness more foolish", the ironic device serves to tear down the actuality it faces.*

Irony is used thirdly as a literary-poetic device. In order to function in this way the irony must become a mastered moment. By 'mastered' Kierkegaard means that its function is disciplined and controlled. Now the mastered irony, in contrast to the Socratic irony, does not mock the actuality it faces, rather, it defines the elements of the poetic piece so that each element receives its due amount of attention.

* An example of such Socratic irony is the following passage from Plato's Protagoras: "I said, knowledge is the food of the soul; and we must take care, my friend, that the Sophist does not deceive us when he praises what he sells, like the dealers wholesale or retail, who sell the food of the body; for they praise indiscriminately all their goods, without knowing what are really beneficial or hurtful . . . In like manner those who carry about the wares of knowledge and make the round of the cities, and sell or retail them to any customer who is in want of them, praise them all alike; though I should not wonder, O my friend, if many of them were really ignorant of their effect upon the soul." (The Works of Plato; The Modern Library; Random House Publishers; New York, N.Y. 1928; p. 199) In this example, the irony of Socrates is bitter in its attack upon the actuality of Hellas and its claim to impart wisdom.

138
The poetic piece now teaches an individual that the elements of life, the innumerable moments which make up the individual's actuality, are, in fact, finite in their nature. Each moment, like each poetic element, then receives the attention due to it, neither too little nor too much, and fades away. Likewise this realization teaches us that our earthly life is itself but a finite moment in the greater actuality of the divine plan.*

Now to say that mastered irony is irony whose function is 'disciplined and controlled' is at best a hazy definition. Mastered irony is a contemplation of the ironic totality of a

* Examples of this poetic irony abound throughout the works of Shakespeare. To use an example of irony in the comedies we may look at the character of Malvolio in the play Twelfth Night. Shakespeare's statement of Malvolio, and hence of the pompous courtiers who surround Elizabeth, is entirely Socratic in its use of irony with a devastating delight being taken in the task. However, the irony is still mastered. The poetic piece does not become a tragedy evoking sympathy for Malvolio, rather we are caused to laugh at him and moved to cry with him. In the end we are taught to realize the finite nature of our fondest dreams lest we, like Malvolio, find them as imagined and ephemeral as was his infatuations with Olivia. In the dramatic plays we might quickly look at the tragedy of Othello. In his final speech he remembers an incident in his life where he was called upon to execute a Turk for the murder of a Venetian, and did so by stabbing him in the chest, and re-enacts this by committing suicide. The action is more than simply the last ditch stand of a man afraid of facing his punishment. In a very real sense Othello is the Turk. Not only were the terms 'Turk' and 'Moor' seen as correlative in Elizabethean English, but Desdamona is the daughter of a Venetian nobleman. Thus in actual fact the suicide is not so much a re-enactment as it is a recreation. The terrible irony of Othello's life is thus revealed. In this instance of irony the law abiding soldier-citizen is suddenly seen as the murdering Turk and his action in Aleppo foreshadows the action he must take as Governor of Cyprus when faced with a similar situation, and we, in the audience, may reflect upon this total irony of Othello's life.
given poetic piece in a manner similar to that in which an eastern mystic might contemplate the totality of the universe and its existence. Therefore each individual use of the device in the piece will no longer be seen as an instance unrelated, except in form, to the other instances. Each instance will function within the piece's total ironic outlook, and will build toward the attainment of that totality. We may use Shakespeare's Hamlet (both the play and the character) as an example of this contemplative nature of mastered irony. In the play Hamlet the hero is drawn to his destiny by a series of ironic events. We, in the audience, are able to see these individual instances as building toward a climax which will reveal the total irony and futility of Hamlet's existence. But we would expect him to remain unaware of the essential oneness of these events. We would expect him to respond to the occurrence of each individual event with the phrase, "This event is ironic," yet not be able to see forward to the ironic climax of his life. Instead Hamlet steps off the stage, as it were, and comes down into the audience and with us contemplates this total premeditation of his life with irony. Thus his soliloquies become a meditation on this totality of irony within his life, and he sees each individual instance as being another step in the inexorable series of events which will lead to his downfall and to the revelation of the futility of his existence.

There should be no doubt in the mind of any serious student of Kierkegaard that we are dealing with a man who has mastered the use of the techniques of irony. Although
examples of his irony exist in almost every work, one piece stands as a perfect example of his ability to use common and Socratic irony. In the introduction to Fear and Trembling, we find these opening lines: "Not merely in the realm of commerce but in the world of ideas as well our age is organizing a regular clearance sale. Everything is to be had at such a bargain that it is questionable whether in the end there is anybody who will want to bid."-1 Although the words here approximate those of Socrates in Protagoras (see explanatory note p. ) the feeling behind them is entirely different. Socrates' statement is biting and sarcastic as it calls to task the philosophers he faces, Kierkegaard's statement is not. Instead his irony here is like the gentle humour of common irony. The passage is ironic but it leads us to laugh with the philosophers of his age rather than at them. On the other hand the sentences which immediately follow in the introduction are entirely Socratic in their emphasis. "Every speculative price-fixer who consistently directs attention to the significant march of modern philosophy . . . is not content with doubting everything but goes further. Perhaps it would be untimely and ill-timed to ask them where they are going, but surely it is courteous and unobtrusive to regard it as certain that they have doubted everything, since otherwise it would be a queer thing for them to be going further."-2 Here the humour is biting and sarcastic in its attack on the schools of philosophy which Kierkegaard faced.

If we were to choose one single work of Kierkegaard's as an example of his use of mastered irony it would have to be
The Philosophical Fragments. In this book individual examples of both Socratic and common irony abound*, but each individual instance of irony is subordinate to the overall ironic theme of the text. This theme is to reveal the total irony of any human existence by a discussion of the concept of the Moment. By his use of the term 'moment' Kierkegaard would appear to adopt the Socratic definition; "every point of departure in time is eo ipso accidental, an occasion, a vanishing moment."-3

Thus the whole existence of man is accidental because he is bound into time. But man is more than just a finite creature, he is also possessed of an infinite component. Man is therefore a creature of infinite being bound into the finitude of time and who possesses an awareness of this dichotomy within his nature. This is the terrible irony of human existence. The moment now functions to make man aware of this terrible irony at every second of his existence. The moment is therefore mastered because it functions as a point of contemplation upon man's existence. If we translate this concept of the moment into the literary sphere we will immediately see the manner in which Kierkegaard's whole corpus of writings may be viewed as a creation of mastered irony. Each individual book now stands independently as a work of irony but no one book will predominate. Each will contribute instead to the irony of the whole construction and we see emerging the theme of the total

* Example of irony may be seen on almost any page. Perhaps the best example of this is the chapter "The Paradox and the Offended Consciousness (An Acoustic Illusion)", where the style of writing approximates the Dialogues of Plato.
body of writings. This theme is revealed to be an exploration of the all pervasive nature of irony in human existence.

How do our previous chapters serve to amplify this theme which we see as running throughout Kierkegaard's writings? In our chapter on the concept of irony we concluded that for irony to gain its true validity in human existence required that it be viewed as a mastered moment. When irony was so viewed it became the point of absolute beginning in the life of the existing subject, and the subject might then be said to have gained a truly human existence. This, however, was the validity of irony in this present life. Any discussion on the eternal validity of irony required an understanding of humour. The discussion on humour and its correlative term pathos, brought us to the realization of the sinful nature of man through its discussion on the guilt-consciousness and the eternal recollection of guilt. This then led us to discuss the three existential stages of life. These stages are the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. A given individual will progress through these stages as he goes through his life. This movement (which is ascending rather than lateral) is precipitated by the acquisition of the Self on the part of the existing individual. The Self is acquired by the existing individual in the task of infinitely reflecting inwardly about his being. This means that the more infinite our inward reflection upon our being becomes, the more we will acquire of the Self. In the progression through these stages is an ascending one beginning in the aesthetic and moving through
the ethical to the religious stage, then we may conclude that the aesthetic stage has the least acquisition of the Self and the religious stage the greatest acquisition of the Self.

In this scheme of the ascending stages of life and humour function as the points of transition between the stages. The common and Socratic forms of irony are native to the immediate mind and confront the reality of the aesthetic life in an attempt to tear it down in favour of the Ideal, or ethical, stage.* Humour, on the other hand, is more skeptical. It sees the contradiction which exists between the reality of life and the ideality of the possible in life and reflects upon the suffering which this contradiction gives rise to. But before humour can reach a serious conclusion and comprehend the reality of this suffering to human existence, it revokes its reflection and posits the jest. Because humour is able to see the contradiction between that which is real and that which is Ideal, it must lie above the ethical stage. Because it is able to reflect upon the suffering which the contradiction sparks, but cannot comprehend the necessity of this suffering in human life, it must lie below the religious stage of life. Humour, therefore, marks the point of transition between the ethical and religious stages of life.

Existing parallel to the religious stage of infinite reflection is the religious stage of the faith-relation between

* There is a correlative relationship between Kierkegaard's understanding of the Ideal and his understanding of the ethical stage of life. The ethical imperatives are an attempt by man to bring about the advent of the Ideal state of existence.
the believer and God. This form of the religious stage (sometimes referred to as religiousness 'B') is set apart from the infinitely reflected religious existence because of the spontaneity which is an integral part of its composition. The spontaneity is a form of immediacy, but it is not the immediacy of the aesthetic stage whereby decisions are made to fulfill the immediate needs of our sensuousness. Instead the immediate decisions of spontaneity are made in order to fulfill the needs of the faith relationship. Thus, in spontaneity, we might make an immediate choice of either an aesthetic, or a religious nature but in each case the decision is subordinate to our faith relationship. Because of this spontaneous nature of the faith relationship the believer may never be sure whether he proceeds in faith or whether he has succumbed to temptation (despair). This daily questioning of his motives becomes the *anfechtung*, or spiritual trial, which he must undergo in order to be confirmed in his faith. Because of the similarity of appearance between temptation and faith the believer will find that the making of every spontaneous decision will be preceded and accompanied by dread (anxiety). Moreover, it will give birth, in man's mind, to the fear that he has stepped into temptation and to a psychological trembling at the thought that such an event may be in the process of occurring.

If we translate the concept of the faith relationship into Kierkegaard's Christian terminology we will find ourselves in an encounter with the Absolute Paradox of the Incarnation.
When we encounter the Incarnation as this Absolute Paradox we find ourselves cast into the position of making the choice to have faith in the God-man or to take offence and reject his divine claim. This phenomenon of the offence is correlative to the phenomenon of the anfechtung and affects the Christian believer at every instant of his existence. The Christian believer is never in the position of saying, "I have attained faith," rather, he must always find himself saying, "I will attain faith." Moreover, the Christian believer must always face the possibility that in his acceptance of Christ as the God-man he may have ventured wrongly in his task of faith.

This similarity between faith and temptation is the irony implicit in the faith relationship. The particular instances of this irony are found at the beginning points of faith, in the story of Abraham in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis, and in the phenomenon of the Incarnation. The first of these instances of irony may be expressed by saying that Judaism, a faith founded on adherence to ethical law, traces its beginning to the breaking of a law, the murder of a son by his father.* The second instance of irony is the three-fold irony upon which Christianity is founded; the irony that man would accept God as revealed only when he appeared

* In a very real sense Abraham has murdered Isaac in this act. Although he has not actually plunged the knife into Isaac's breast, the Isaac he received back from God, which he receives by virtue of the absurd, will be, physically the same Isaac but the relationship between the father and the son will be irreparably altered, because the action of Abraham will always stand as a chasm between them. Although Kierkegaard never actually states this there are many passages in Fear and Trembling and in The Journals where similar conclusions are suggested.
as man; the irony that a faith which teaches that all men are sinners began with what in human terms is a symbol of sin, a pregnancy out of wedlock; the terrible irony that the faith which demands purity of spirit began when God, through the action of the Holy Spirit, begat him who in human eyes was an illegitimate son.

That these events may be seen as instances of irony is certainly true, but may they be considered to be mastered moments of irony? There are two criteria upon which we may base any conclusion. The first is to determine if these moments of irony which caused faith to spring into being are contemplative in their nature. The second is that a mastered moment of irony is the absolute beginning point for all truly authentic human existence.

How may we determine if these moments of irony are contemplative in their nature? In our previous discussion we stressed that mastered irony contemplated the totality of man's life and gave us to understand and to learn from the irony implicit in human existence. The irony in human existence is that man is a creature of infinite being who is in relation with the infinite Being who created him, yet who is bound into the finitudes of time and space, and who is aware of the dichotomy of the finite and the infinite within his nature. The instances of irony as the beginning points of faith may be seen as contemplative in nature because they teach us of this dichotomy by stressing the very-finite nature of our most fondly held ideas when they are placed in juxtaposition with
the eternal divine plan as it is revealed through the actions of God.

Now that we have established that these instances of irony may be viewed as contemplative we may ask whether they assist in bringing into being a truly authentic human existence, and if so, what is a truly authentic human existence? A careful reading of the literature suggests that Kierkegaard would answer the latter part of the above question by stressing the total nature of the human creature. Thus the truly human existence would recognize that man is a synthesis of body and soul which is in relation with its creator. An individual so constituted would be aware of both his aesthetic and his ethical needs, but both would be subordinate to, and controlled by, his relation to his creator-God. Moreover, Kierkegaard has said, in his journals, that any human existence which has not had the assistance of a dead and departed one in its beginning moments is trivial indeed. Now, insofar as both Judaism and Christianity have had the assistance of a dead and departed one which assisted in bringing the life of faith into being, viz. Isaac and Jesus, then we may consider the life of the believer as not being trivial. And, insofar as the life of faith embraces the total quality of the nature of man, we may consider that it is a complete life, a life worthy of man, and therefore a truly authentic human existence.

From these two paragraphs we may conjecture that Kierkegaard would, himself, have considered the instances of irony at the beginning points of faith as moments of mastered irony.
These mastered moments of irony are never a past or a future moment but are always a present moment. In our daily life of faith we must continually face the irony of human existence and realize the futile and ephemereal nature of our most fondly held desires when they are made subordinate to the divine plan, and it is in this realization that there lies the hope for redemption and the possibility of man’s atonement with God.

We have now come to the end of this paper. We have established the possibility that there is an implicit relationship between Kierkegaard’s concept of irony as a mastered moment and his concept of the faith relationship between God and the believer. This relationship, we saw, is based on the terrible irony that a relationship made in faith with God can, for all intents and purposes, appear to be temptation to sin. We also saw (we hope) how the correlative theme of the explanation of the irony implicit in human existence may be seen as the binding string which ties together all of Kierkegaard’s literature. Although there are areas within this theme as yet unexplained, or only partially explained, a fuller development would require a more precise definition of, and discussion of, the concepts of the Moment, Recollection, and Repetition, a task which is beyond the scope of this paper.
Footnotes


2. ibid


APPENDIX

The following is a list of the twenty-four theses upon which the content of this paper was based.

1. In the writings of Kierkegaard there appears to be an implicit relationship between his concept of irony as a mastered moment and his concept of the faith-relation between the believer and God.

2. In the book *The Concept of Irony* Kierkegaard defines two types of irony, irony properly so called and irony as a mastered moment.

3. Irony as a mastered moment must be seen as the beginning point of all truly authentic human existence.

4. Therefore, if a given individual is to be considered as having a truly human existence he must be seen to be in possession of a moment of mastered irony within his own life.

5. The concept of humour is a parallel concept to that of irony. Humour and pathos are correlative terms and an understanding of both is dependent upon an understanding of sin.

6. Kierkegaard develops a construct of three stages of life which an individual may go through in his process of becoming what he is. These three stages are the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious.

7. The three stages of life may be ordered in accordance with either of two criteria: 1. by the manner in which the given individual makes choices (i.e. the aesthetic=immediacy of choice, the ethical=the absolute choice, and the religious the choice as paradoxical in its nature), or in accordance with the amount of inner reflection which the given individual possesses (i.e. the aesthetic=the least reflected, and the religious=the most reflected).

8. Irony properly so called arises in the immediate consciousness.

9. Humour, and therefore pathos, approximate the infinitely reflected consciousness of the religious stage of life.
10. Therefore irony and humour are the boundary zones between the stages of life. The arrangement of these stages is thus:

the aesthetic -- irony -- the ethical -- humour -- the religious

11. Within the religious stage of life there are two forms which the individual's existence may take, that of the individual of the infinitely reflected consciousness, and that of the individual called into the paradox relationship of faith with God.

12. Spontaneity is an integral part of the paradox relationship of faith.

13. On the surface the spontaneous action required in the paradox relationship of faith appears to be identical with the immediate action which occurs in the aesthetic stage of life.

14. Because of this the given individual cannot be sure if he proceeds in faith or if he is succumbing to temptation.

15. Therefore the given individual will be accompanied in his task of faith by dread (angst) and with fear and trembling.

16. Christ as the incarnate God is the absolute paradox.

17. Therefore his existence is an offence to Reason and his appearance a scandal to man.

18. The paradox-religious relationship of faith places the totality which is man into relation with the eternally transcendent God.

19. The individual in the faith relationship therefore retains the aesthetic and ethical parts of his being but as subordinate to his God relationship.

20. Because all these facets of existence are present in the faith relationship, the faith relationship must be seen as the most truly authentic form of human existence.

21. Therefore it must contain a point within it which could be seen to be a moment of mastered irony.

22. The moments of mastered irony are the beginning points of faith.
23. These moments are found in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis and in the phenomenon of the Incarnation.

24. The irony is that a faith founded on adherence to ethical law began with the murder of a son by his father, and that a faith founded on purity of spirit began with what in human terms would be a pregnancy out of wedlock.
Bibliography

Primary Sources

Hong & Hong (eds): Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers  
( Bloomington, Ill.; Indiana U. Press, 1970)

Kierkegaard, S. A.: Christian Discourses, trans. W. Lowrie,  

Concept of Dread, the, trans. W. Lowrie,  

Concept of Irony, the, trans. L. Cappel,  

Concluding Unscientific Postscript, the,  

Either/Or v. I trans D. Swenson, 2nd ed.  


Fear and Trembling, trans W. Lowrie, 5th ed.  

Of The Difference Between a Genius and An Apostle, trans. A. Dru,  
(New York, N.Y.; Haper & Row; 1962)

On Authority and Revelation, trans W. Lowrie,  
(New York, N.Y.; Haper & Row; 1966)

Philosophical Fragments, the, trans D. Swenson,  

Point of View for My Work as an Author, the  

Sickness Unto Death, the, trans W. Lowrie,  

Training in Christianity, trans W. Lowrie,  
Secondary Sources

Livingston, J.C.: Modern Christian Thought
(Toronto, Canada; Collier-MacMillan; 1971)

Taylor, Mark C.: Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship
VITA AUCTORIS

Frederick Neil Watson

1954 Born on the 2nd of January at Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

1976 Graduated from the University of Manitoba with the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies

1980 Graduated from the University of Windsor with the degree of Master of Arts in Religious Studies.