

## Kierkegaard's Notion of Negativity as an Epistemological and an Anthropological Problem

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### Abstract

The paper reveals some connections between the epistemological and anthropological aspects of Kierkegaard's notion of negativity, thereby putting the concepts of necessity and freedom into focus. Thus different notions of subjectivity are taken up for discussion, on the one hand, subjectivity as certainty and, on the other hand, a dialectical understanding of the self. Regarding the notions of necessity and freedom as well as the different theories of subjectivity, I relate Kierkegaard to philosophers within the German idealism, that is, Fichte and Schelling, especially pointing to some crucial similarities between the philosophy and theology of Schelling and Kierkegaard.

Negativity is one of the key concepts in the thinking of Kierkegaard, playing a fundamental role both in aesthetic, philosophical and theological contexts. In this paper some central epistemological and anthropological aspects of this notion shall be investigated, thereby stressing some important connections between Kierkegaard's epistemological and anthropological reflections. In showing this, *Philosophical Fragments* will be related to notions of negativity in *Either/Or* as well as in the psychological works of Kierkegaard, that is, *The Concept of Anxiety* and *Sickness unto Death*. The main idea is, on one the hand, that Judge William's fundamental distinction between doubt and despair is taken up and refined by Climacus in a more specific metaphysical and epistemological context and, on the other hand, that the modal concepts introduced in *Philosophical Fragments* are transformed in the psychological and anthropological texts, thereby creating a new kind of negativity. In distinguishing different notions of negativity, as the central aim of the investigation, different notions of subjectivity will also be discussed in what follows, one focusing on subjectivity as certainty and one focusing on the concept of the self as a unity.

In Judge William's ethical theory surely the central inspirations come from the philosophy of Kant and Hegel. In a way William's theory is nothing but a revision of Kant's ethical thinking in a Hegelian manner. However, there is a further important source of inspiration operating in William's ethical reflections, one crucial for the understanding of the whole enterprise of the Judge. Both the fundamental question setting up William's ethical project as well as the way to treat this question has a counterpart to the central themes in Descartes' philosophy. William's fundamental question is formulated in the following way: "I have a valid claim against philosophy, as does anyone whom it does dare to dismiss on the grounds of total incompetence. I am a married man; I have children. What if I now ask in their name what a human being has to do in life?"<sup>1</sup> By asking this question William presupposes the possibility of asking such a question. He is not discussing whether it makes sense to pose such a question – he simply presupposes that the question can be answered. Now William qualifies this answer in an interesting way. The answer to the question what a human being has to do in life is a special kind of answer. If the answer does not rest on a conviction or on confidence it cannot be an answer. Furthermore, this conviction must be of such nature that under no circumstances can it be shaken. In other words, the conviction must be certain and secure or to put it in William's terminology, it must have the character of an "Archimedean point." But how can William be so sure that it is possible to attain such unshakable certainty? The answer is that there is a way or a method by which security can be reached, that is the negative method of despair, manifestly expressed in his invitation to Johannes: "What, then is there to do? I only have one answer: Despair, then!"<sup>2</sup> Both in regard to the ultimate aim of the project as well as the method to reach that aim, William comes very close to Descartes' investigations in the *Meditations*. However, as much as Descartes' way of thinking serves as a model for William, there is a crucial difference, concisely expressed in William's distinction between doubt and despair. It says, "Doubt and despair therefore belong to completely different spheres, different sides of the soul are set in motion.... Despair is precisely a much deeper and more complete expression, its movement much more encompassing than that of doubt. Despair is an expression of the total personality, doubt only of thought."<sup>3</sup> What differ-

<sup>1</sup> EO2, 172.

<sup>2</sup> 2 EO2, 208.

<sup>3</sup> EO2, 212.

entiate these two kinds of negation is that despair is an act whereas doubt is what William calls “rest.” Doubt is dispassionate and disengaged, it is objective contemplation following the inner laws of thought and as such an expression of necessity: “for doubt is itself a qualification of necessity, and likewise the rest.”<sup>4</sup> Despair, by contrast, is a passionate act or choice and as such an expression of will and freedom: “The Personality is first set at ease in despair, not by way of necessity, for I never despair necessarily, but in freedom.”<sup>5</sup>

Now the difference concerning the negative method is also reflected in different concepts of certainty, security or “the absolute” involving different ways of understanding self-consciousness or subjectivity. The certainty Descartes finally arrives at, the only thing that exists with necessity, is the “res cogitans” or human self-consciousness. In the same way William also places certainty in self-consciousness, “himself in his eternal validity.”<sup>6</sup> In that way William is a true Cartesian and a truly modern thinker, but his conception of self-consciousness is radically opposed to that of Descartes, thereby undermining the Cartesian identification of certainty with necessity. Both Cartesian doubt and Cartesian security are an expression of necessity. The reason why Descartes grounds certainty in self-consciousness is that self-consciousness possesses a special kind of transparency, an immediate and infallible knowledge of one’s own mind, nowadays also called the first person authority. Without rejecting the notion of first person authority William is offering quite another conception of self-consciousness. What is specific about the first person authority is not a special cognitive capacity but a certain way of taking a stance on oneself or relating to oneself. To be conscious of oneself is much more than to have immediate knowledge of one’s beliefs and desires – it is a way of evaluating one’s beliefs and desires. William actually transforms Descartes’ cognitive notion of authority into a normative concept, terminologically expressed in the shift from the concept of self-consciousness to the concept of the self. First person authority is a matter of responsibility, competence and agency insofar as for a person to possess authority means being the author or the originator of an act. So self-consciousness is not a reporting on one’s inner life, but a doing of something. In William’s new conception, self-consciousness, will and action are closely linked together if not identical with each other,

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> EO2, 213.

<sup>6</sup> EO2, 209.

something that is left to another of Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms to give a concise expression. In *The Sickness unto Death* it is said: “A person who has no will at all is not a self, but the more will he has, the more self-consciousness he has.”<sup>7</sup> In transforming the Cartesian notions of self-consciousness and authority William also offers an alternative understanding of security and certainty. William claims that there is a kind of certainty different from that modelled on the mathematical concept of proof, thereby pointing back to Jacobi and to Kant and forward to the later Wittgenstein. So according to William, certainty is not an expression of necessity but rather an expression of freedom.

Let us now turn to *Philosophical Fragments*, more specifically to the Interlude, where the close connection between Judge William’s reflections and Climacus’ epistemological investigations comes to the fore. Let us first note how closely in this text metaphysical and epistemological categories are related to one another.

*Philosophical Fragments* entails what could be called Kierkegaard’s epistemological typology, unfolding some of Kierkegaard’s basic epistemological concepts. In order to give a full account of Kierkegaard’s epistemology, one has to consider many other of his texts. In fact some of Kierkegaard’s important epistemological concepts such as imagination and fantasy are missing in the *Fragments*, even Kierkegaard’s key notion of reflection is only presupposed in the text but never explicitly unfolded. Nevertheless *Philosophical Fragments* is one of the main sources of Kierkegaard’s epistemology. However, when one reads the text, there seems to be no clear unity or inner structure among the different epistemological modes. Different concepts such as knowledge, admiration, different modes of skepticism (Greek skepticism and Hegelian skepticism) certainty, faith, and what is called “immediate sensation and immediate cognition” are presented without there being a transparent connection. But this lack of transparency is only apparent. All the different epistemological modes are grouped around two different kinds of epistemology, that is the epistemology of necessity and the epistemology of freedom. The distinction and opposition of necessity and freedom is a central theme in Kierkegaard’s thinking, appearing in different contexts and serving different functions, but most explicitly unfolded in *Either/Or* and *Philosophical Fragments*. In both texts the opposition of necessity and freedom bear a polemic note against the speculative philosophy of Hegel. Now precisely that polemic note might lead us to the origin of the opposition. From Novem-

<sup>7</sup> SUD, 29.

ber 1841 to February 1842 Kierkegaard attended F.W.J. Schelling's inaugural lectures in Berlin entitled "Philosophie der Offenbarung," where he presented his so called "positive philosophy" as an alternative to Hegel's philosophy, which he called "negative philosophy." In these lectures the fundamental theme is the distinction and opposition of what is called *essence* (*quid sit*) and *existence* (*quod sit*) referring to two different and strictly opposed kinds of philosophy, a philosophy of necessity ("negative philosophy") and a philosophy of freedom ("positive philosophy"). It cannot be ruled out that William's reflections on necessity and freedom are a very early afterglow of Schelling's lectures. While attending Schelling's and other philosophical and theological lectures in Berlin, Kierkegaard was at the same time writing *Either/Or*. However, the context of William's reflections on the topics of necessity and freedom is quite different from that of Schelling. While Schelling's reflections are placed in a specific metaphysical context, William's considerations pertain to ethical theory and to a theory of subjectivity. These two perspectives are absent in Schelling's later philosophy, which consists partly of a metaphysical theory, partly of a philosophy of history or a philosophy of religion. The philosophy of the later Schelling is a philosophy of reason in the Kantian sense of the word, investigating the limits of reason in a new concept of history and revelation directly opposed to that of Hegel. Now in the case of *Philosophical Fragments* the relation to Schelling is much more direct. The crucial reflections in the "Interlude" are all of a metaphysical kind, alluding directly to Schelling's distinction between *essence* and *existence*. This is most explicitly formulated in the following sentence strictly directed against Hegel: "Possibility and actuality are not different in essence but in being. How could there be formed a unity from this heterogeneity, a unity that would be necessity, which is not a qualification of being but of essence, since the essence of the necessary is to be."<sup>8</sup> However, even though Climacus refers to Schelling's distinction between *essence* and *existence* and necessity and freedom, he engages these metaphysical concepts in a fashion rather different from Schelling. The difference is particularly striking in the way they unfold the notion of freedom. While Climacus explains the notion of freedom in the modal terms of possibility and actuality Schelling unfolds it in his philosophy of religion, in a speculative theory upon God's nature. According to Schelling, God's being is a being that no thought can ever get rid of and no thought can ever reach. God's be-

<sup>8</sup> PF, 74.

ing is the so called "*unvordenkliche*" being, and in that sense God's being is a necessary being. But God has the will and the power to suspend this being. A "different-being" the so called "*Überseiendes*" is thereby brought into existence corresponding to God's will. Climacus unfolds freedom into the modal terms of possibility and actuality, thereby drawing extensively on Aristotle's reflections in the *Physics*, not because he is not interested in philosophy of religion, but rather because he is interested in a philosophy of religion quite different from a speculative one. The investigations of modal concepts in the "Interlude" play an 'essential role in Climacus' so called "thought-project" presenting a concept of truth, the historical concept of truth, different from that of Socrates, thereby preparing for the non-speculative notion of "The Absolute Paradox." At the end of the paper I will briefly return to this issue. Maybe the difference between Kierkegaard and Schelling is only apparent.

Focusing now on the relations between the metaphysical and the epistemological reflections, I will start with what was called the epistemology of freedom. The introduction of the modal categories possibility and actuality serves the purpose of determining the nature of the historical stressing the notion of becoming as a change from possibility to actuality. So the first expression of freedom is becoming. However, the notion of becoming is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the determination of the historical. To give a full account of the historical we need the notion of negativity, in the terminology of Climacus called "the *illusiveness* of coming into existence." The meaning of this phrase, that is, the negative character of the historical, is revealed in the contrast between nature and history. While insisting on natural processes as belonging to the category of becoming, Climacus places the difference between nature and history elsewhere. The contrast between nature and history lies in the fact that whereas a change in nature only actualizes one possibility, an historical event is due to a choice between several possibilities. This difference is expressed in the following sentence: "Yet coming into existence can contain within itself a re-doubling, that is, a possibility of a coming into existence within its own coming into existence. Here, in the stricter sense, is the historical, which is dialectical with respect to time."<sup>9</sup> In contrast to processes in nature, historical events entail two kinds of freedom: as a change from possibility to actuality, the historical event happens by freedom, but as several possibilities are given,

<sup>9</sup> PF, 76.

the change from possibility to actuality is due to another kind of freedom, one that picks out the possibility to be actualized, thereby destroying all the other possibilities by denying their actualization.

Now all the different epistemological modes of freedom, or different types of apprehending the historical, are modes of this other kind of freedom. So when Climacus states that "Belief is a sense of coming into existence,"<sup>10</sup> the notion of becoming referred to is becoming in the sense of the re-doubled. I will return to the notion of belief later.

In the *Fragments* there are three ways of apprehending the historical: wonder, doubt and belief. According to Climacus, wonder is one way of apprehending the historical. He says, "The historian once again stands beside the past, stirred by the passion that is the passionate sense for coming into existence, that is, wonder."<sup>11</sup> In being this, wonder is an expression of freedom in the re-doubled sense, in so far as wonder relates to events that are the result of a human effort based on a decision. Now in spite of being a "passionate sense of coming into existence," in comparison to doubt and belief, wonder is a deficient expression of freedom. Though being a sense of becoming, wonder is primarily directed against the content of the historical event and not, as is the case with doubt and belief, against becoming in itself. Turning now to the notion of doubt, I want to refer to a paper written by Paul Müller titled, "Tvivlens former og deres rolle i erkendelsen af det historiske."<sup>12</sup> In his very interesting paper, Müller tries to give an account of the background of the epistemological reflections in *Philosophical Fragments*, unfolding the very complex and very compact epistemological considerations of this text. The starting point of the paper is the claim that what is called "Greek skepticism" does not qualify as a genuine candidate for apprehending the historical. According to Müller, focusing on Climacus' notion of "*in suspensa*," this kind of skepticism has the same characteristics that, in Kierkegaard's other writings, are often associated with knowledge, namely, sheer possibility, indifference and undeterminedness, thereby lacking the fundamental requirement for apprehending the historical, that is, interest. Based on a close consideration of *Johannes Climacus or De omnibus dubitandum est*, Müller points to another concept of skepticism fulfilling this requirement by using as a springboard the criticism

<sup>10</sup> PF, 84.

<sup>11</sup> PF, 80.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Müller "Tvivlens former og deres rolle i erkendelsen af det historiske" in *Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift*, 1974, pp. 177-216.

of immediacy or "immediate sensation and immediate cognition" formulated in *Philosophical Fragments*. With very subtle examinations of *De omnibus dubitandum est*, Müller distinguishes between two kinds of doubt or reflection, a dispassionate and disinterested one and a passionate and interested one. Focusing on the relations between the concepts of "reality" and "ideality" as the main theme in *Omnibus dubitandum est's* considerations on skepticism, Müller points to the notion of consciousness as the place where the latent contradiction between "reality" and "ideality" becomes obvious. The crucial point made in this text is that consciousness not only makes the relation between "reality" and "ideality" possible, but is the relation itself, in the mode of a contradiction. The nature and the becoming of consciousness can only be explained from contradiction, thereby pointing to a passionate mode of reflection and skepticism.

Surely in any survey of Kierkegaard's epistemology, *De omnibus dubitandum est* must be an important text, but for Kierkegaard's essential reflections on different modes of doubt, one does not need to go deeper into this text. I think it is possible to consider this text as an extension of insights concerning different forms of skepticism already formulated in Kierkegaard's other writings, especially *Either/Or* and *Philosophical Fragments*. In any case there is absolutely no reason to replace the epistemological reflections in *Philosophical Fragments* with these of *De omnibus dubitandum est*. The important distinction between disinterested and dispassionate kind of doubt and passionate and interested one is already formulated in the distinction between "Greek doubt" and doubt as a mode of cognition (Hegelian or Cartesian methodological doubt). Now this distinction is formulated in a conceptual context somewhat different from that of *De omnibus dubitandum est*, that is, the opposition of freedom and necessity, which points back to William's reflections on doubt which is also imbedded in the same opposition. In this context doubt is either an expression of freedom ("Greek doubt") or an expression of necessity (Hegelian or Cartesian doubt): "Greek skepticism was a withdrawing skepticism; they doubted not by virtue of knowledge but by virtue of the will. (They denied assent.) This implies that doubt can be determined only in freedom, by an act of will, something every Greek skeptic would understand, inasmuch as he understands himself, but he would not terminate his skepticism precisely because he *willed* to doubt. We must leave it up to him, but we must not lay at his door the stupid opinion that one doubts by way of necessity, as well as the even more stupid opinion that, if that was the

case, doubt could be terminated.”<sup>13</sup> By being an act of will “Greek skepticism” is an expression or act of freedom and by being a kind of cognition, Cartesian and Hegelian skepticism is an expression of necessity. While the modern form of skepticism, using doubt as a mean to unshakable knowledge, thus trying to escape or get rid of skepticism, ancient skepticism deliberately wants to remain in doubt, to avoid mistakes. Now in *Philosophical Fragments*, as in *Either/Or*, the crucial claim is that there is a kind of certainty that is not the product of proof and logical conclusions. In *Either/Or* this idea was spelled out in a new interpretation of self-consciousness, called the “self” corresponding to a new concept of doubt, called “despair.” In *Philosophical Fragments* this very same idea is expressed in the epistemological notion of belief, the second genuine expression of freedom, corresponding to the Greek notion of doubt. Not being a cognition but an expression of will, doubt can only be overcome by another expression of will, opposite that of withdrawal, that is belief as a resolution: “The conclusion of belief is no conclusion, but a resolution and thus doubt is excluded.”<sup>14</sup>

Turning now to the psychological and anthropological writings of Kierkegaard and to new notions of negativity and subjectivity, I start out with a short presentation of Kierkegaard’s transformation of the modal categories introduced in *Philosophical Fragments*. One could say that the psychological writings transform the purely metaphysical and logical categories of possibility, reality and necessity into psychological or phenomenological concepts. Obviously they do this in different ways. In *The Concept of Anxiety* the problem of freedom is taken up in an analysis of anxiety, thereby stressing a certain sense of the notion of possibility, “The possibility is to be *able*.”<sup>15</sup> In *Sickness unto Death* we are confronted with another kind of transformation. The key notion of this text is the notion of the self, and the nature of this self is explained in the terminology of Anti-Climacus as a unity of possibility and necessity. What is interesting about this definition is that both possibility and necessity refer to the same thing, man in his concrete existence. It says: “The self is ‘*kata dunamin*’ just as possible as it is necessary, but it has the task of becoming itself. Insofar it is itself, it is necessary and insofar as it has the task of becoming itself, it is possibility.”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>15</sup> CA, 49.

<sup>16</sup> SUD, 35.

Here possibility and necessity refer to something different from the denotations of metaphysical and logical notions. Firstly, there is a dialectic between the categories of necessity and possibility and secondly these categories are of an existential character, expressing different ways of man’s relating to himself or different ways of understanding oneself. These different ways of understanding oneself Anti-Climacus addresses under the heading of *Despair as Defined by Possibility/Necessity* which portrays respectively the fantast, representing the existence of possibility, and the fatalist, representing the existence of necessity. Now there is a conflict between these two ways of understanding oneself. To live the life of the fantast is to live in total lack of necessity: “In possibility *everything* is possible,”<sup>17</sup> while to live the life of the fatalist is to live in total lack of possibility: “The determinist, the fatalist, is in despair and as one in despair has lost his self, because for him everything has become necessity.”<sup>18</sup> So the dialectic between different ways of understanding is not only an existential dialectic, it is also a negative dialectic. The ways of understanding oneself are equally legitimate and yet strictly opposed to each other. By making this clear Anti-Climacus is pointing to something that could be called “the negative structure of human existence” which is most explicitly expressed in the *Postscript*: “Precisely because the negative is present in existence and present everywhere (because being there, existence is continually in the process of becoming), the only deliverance from it is to become continually aware of it....The negativity that is in existence, or rather the negativity of the existing subject (which his thinking must render in an adequate form), is grounded in the subject’s synthesis, in his being an existing infinite spirit.”<sup>19</sup> In this quotation negativity is presented as a structural determination of human existence.

In the following I want to elaborate on this notion of a structural anthropological negativity by drawing in some thoughts from the tradition of German idealism. The idea of equally legitimate and yet strictly opposed ways of understanding oneself is a prominent thought in all post-Kantian idealist thinking, playing a fundamental role not only in the philosophy of Hegel but already in the philosophy of Schiller, Fichte and Hölderlin.<sup>20</sup> Apart from Plato’s reflections on fortune and

<sup>17</sup> SUD, 37.

<sup>18</sup> SUD, 40.

<sup>19</sup> CUP1, 81f.

<sup>20</sup> See Dieter Henrich *Der Grund im Bewusstsein, Untersuchungen zu Hölderlins Denken* (1794-1795), Stuttgart 1992, pp. 221ff.

poverty in the *Symposion*, which are also alluded to by Climacus, this idea represents a novelty in the history of philosophy. For example, Kant only knows of equally legitimate oppositions as expressions of the pseudo-knowledge of metaphysics. In his moral philosophy Kant actually works out a fundamental conflict, that between “*Sinnlichkeit*” and “*Vernunft*,” but at the same time he denies them equal legitimacy, placing “*Vernunft*” over and against “*Sinnlichkeit*.” Among the German Idealists Fichte is the most prominent figure to promote the new idea of equally legitimate and yet strictly opposed ways of understanding. The basic idea of Fichte’s masterpiece, the *Wissenschaftslehre* from 1794, is the idea of the so called “absolute I.” This “I” is limited or restricted by the so called “Not-I” standing in strict opposition to the “I.” Now this opposition does not mark a static situation but rather represents a dynamic process. This dynamic structure Fichte calls “*Einbildungskraft*” (imagination) thereby unfolding the notion of the “I” as the movement of infinity and correspondingly unfolding the notion of the “Not-I” as the movement of finitude. The movement of infinity is limited by the movement of finitude, which then again is limited by the movement of infinity and so on. Now according to Fichte there is no definitive end to this dynamic process, but precisely by having this character, the dynamic process of still new ways of mediating between the opposed movements is the expression of the power and freedom of human subjectivity.

When one compares this Fichtean idea to Kierkegaard’s negative dialectic of existence, there are some remarkable similarities worth noticing primarily concerning the reflections on the notion of subjectivity as a dynamic process being created and kept alive by equally legitimate and yet opposed tendencies of life. However, two basic Kierkegaardian ideas separate Kierkegaard’s negative dialectic of existence from that of Fichte’s. What I have called Kierkegaard’s structural theory of anthropological negativity is not grounded in the power and supremacy of subjectivity, as is the case of the Fichtean theory, but rather in just another kind of negativity, namely the insufficiency of subjectivity or human existence. The other idea separating Kierkegaard from Fichte is the Kierkegaardian theory of life as a “course.” Although being a dynamic process, human subjectivity does not have the character of an unending change, the self being a unity of possibility and necessity is something different from an unending change. While the first story, the story of the insufficiency of subjectivity is told by Vigilius Haufniensis, the second story, the story of the unity of the self, is told by Anti-Climacus in *The Sickness unto Death*.

The fundamental idea in *The Concept of Anxiety* is the inexplicable character of sin. Now this thesis is also a thesis about the inexplicable character of human consciousness or human subjectivity. The vehicle of all the psychological reflections in this text is the idea that human subjectivity cannot ground itself, or cannot explicate itself. The origin of human self-consciousness is forever obscured and therefore all of Vigilius’ reflections on the state of innocence, characterized by the ambivalence of anxiety as “a qualification of dreaming spirit,” are, as is repeated again and again, nothing but a precondition or the possibility of human consciousness. Between the possibility and the reality of self-consciousness lies the inexplicable “leap.” Now the first expression of human consciousness is an opposition of or a conflict between what Vigilius calls “moments of the synthesis.” This synthesis is formulated in different ways by Vigilius, as the synthesis of “the physical and the mental” or as the synthesis of “the temporal and the eternal,” but the essence of the notion of synthesis is that it is constituted by moments belonging together. This belonging together of the moments is due to the equal legitimacy of the moments. Human existence, being a synthesis, does not mean that separately existing moments are brought together, but that human existence *is* the relation between moments. Now being the relation between moments, human existence is a fragile creature since the moments of the synthesis are opposed to each other. The problem of subjectivity is that it is composed or constituted of equally legitimate but yet opposed moments. This, I think, is the meaning of the phrase formulated by Climacus that human existence is “wondrously constituted.” Being constituted in that way means no single moment can annihilate the other. One moment can prevail over the other, but it cannot annihilate the other. This is expressed when Vigilius says a “disorganization in one shows itself in the other,” which does not mean that the relation between the moments is broken but rather this is just another expression, that is, a negative one, of the relation.<sup>21</sup> So the notion of subjectivity or human existence as a synthesis is both a determination of human existence, while at the same time it formulates a task, the task of bringing about a unity of the opposed moments thereby opening to an understanding of subjectivity as a process, expressed in the notions of life as a “course” or the individual having a “history.”

<sup>21</sup> See Arne Grøn *Begrebet Angest hos Søren Kierkegaard*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1993, p. 20.

I now turn to the second idea which distinguishes Kierkegaard's thinking from the philosophy of Fichte. In as much as Kierkegaard stresses the processuality of subjectivity, the task of bringing about a unity between moments refers to something quite different from the Fichtean conception of an unending interplay. This does not mean that Kierkegaard opts for a conception of unity as a result, for he surely does not. One of the most fundamental problems in Kierkegaard is to show how it is possible to combine his idea of processuality with his idea of a unity, neither referring to an open interplay nor to unity as a result. This problem of unity is taken up in *Sickness unto Death* in his theory of the self as the unity of possibility and necessity. In this text Kierkegaard formulates a concept of unity adequate for uniting the moments of the synthesis, that is, a unity which, preserving the equally legitimate moments, transforms these moments. Now in formulating this Climacus points directly to God. The problem of the fantast was the total lack of necessity leading to a neglect of his concrete existence. So the problem of the fantast is a problem about necessity, but not any kind of necessity, not the necessity of the structure of society and not the Hegelian concept of reason, but the necessity of the self being "posited" by God. It is a central claim made by Anti-Climacus that only due to its being "posited" by God can human existence be a concrete existence, thereby claiming at the same time God to be this notion of necessity. The problem of the fatalist was the lack of possibility, not any kind of possibility, not the possibility of fantasy or wild imagination, but the possibility of God or God as possibility. So God is both necessity and possibility. God is the instance that qualifies existence as necessity, and likewise God is the instance that qualifies the existence as possibility by being the possibility of abolishing necessity: "the existence of God means that everything is possible."<sup>22</sup> Finally, as mentioned above, let me briefly take up the relation between Kierkegaard's and the later Schelling's philosophy of religion. Reading Anti-Climacus' reflections on God, there seems not to be a deep division but rather a kind of similarity. As noted earlier, according to Schelling, God is at the same time the necessary being, ungraspable of thought, and the power and will to suspend his necessary being. So maybe it was a pity that Kierkegaard left Schelling's lectures before the final part which consisted of Schelling's philosophy of religion. Maybe Kierkegaard would have enjoyed Schelling's reflections on the nature of God.

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<sup>22</sup> *SUD*, 40.