1973

Kierkegaard and Nietzsche on the Self: An Inquiry into the Role of Power

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KIERKEGAARD AND NIETZSCHE ON THE SELF:

AN INQUIRY INTO THE ROLE OF POWER

BY

JOAN M. HOY

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

1973

ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the problem of becoming a self as it is presented in the philosophies of Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. Specifically it is concerned with the role which power plays in the development of the self. Since becoming a self involves motivation the problem is viewed in terms of Dietrich Von Hildebrand's categories of importance and their role in motivation.

The categories of importance are presented as the basic viewpoint from which the two philosophers are studied. This is followed by a presentation of basic notions of the self as they appear in the writing of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. Within this background the specific question of the role of power is investigated, first generally and then specifically as it applies to each philosopher. Next the self is viewed in terms of immanence and transcendence. Finally, with these concepts in mind, each philosopher's notion of the self is analyzed in depth.

After studying these two philosophers and their ideas on the role of power in becoming a self several things become clear. Although both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard are called the forerunners of existentialism there

is a great deal of difference between the two in their respective philosophies of man. Nietzsche claims to be against the development of a "type" of man and is regarded as a proponent of individuality. Yet will to power as an immanent drive leads one to the impersonality of fatalism. Therefore there is no true individuality, nor true self in Nietzsche's philosophy because he denies that relationship to another is essential to the self. Kierkegaard, who states that the proper relationship to God is absolutely necessary if one is to become a self, emerges as the true advocate of individuality. This is not the totally independent individuality which is often associated with existentialism but rather individuality which comes from being grounded in a greater Power.

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I. INTRODUCTION

PRESENTATION OF THE CATEGORIES OF IMPORTANCE

This paper wishes to examine the notion of the self which is present in the philosophies of Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. Of special interest will be the role of power in the process of becoming a self. The notion of power is central to Nietzsche's philosophy and his views on this point will be contrasted with Kierkegaard's. For Kierkegaard one does not become a self without being related to God. This view introduces the question of how a self is related to the Transcendent. First some basic ideas about the self and its possible motivations will be presented as a background against which to view the thoughts of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche.

The term "self" is one which is used in a special sense by Kierkegaard and his meaning of it will become clearer after his notions of despair and the overcoming of it have been put forth. For the present when speaking of possibilities of motivation I will use the term "person" and introduce the various philosophical distinctions regarding the self at a later time.

Dietrich Von Hildebrand's "categories of importance" will be helpful in outlining the possibilities of how a

person is motivated.¹ The first category is termed the subjectively satisfying. Here, the criterion of a thing's importance is whether it is important to someone. If a person is motivated, he is moved by something, something matters to him. Perhaps the most basic way someone experiences this kind of motivation is by feeling a need which he wants to satisfy. He is hungry or thirsty or lonely and seeks an object--food, drink, or companionship--to fill that need. The feeling of need is a feeling of lack in oneself and the ultimate object of need-fulfillment is oneself. Something outside of oneself may be used to fill the need, but it is because such an object is satisfying for oneself that one is motivated toward it.

Some persons view all objects of motivation in this way. If something is important for me then it is "good." The relationship to one's satisfaction is seen as the only source of importance the object has. However this is a narrow way of looking at things and disregards the fact that some things are important in themselves. Such things are said to have value. Value is the second category of importance.

One can be awestruck in the face of a beautiful sunrise or a waterfall, or moved to admiration by an heroic rescue by a fireman because such things are important in

¹Cf. Dietrich Von Hildebrand, Ethics (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972), Chapter 3, pp. 34-64.

themselves. A waterfall is not beautiful for anyone, it is just beautiful. Something which has value has value in itself. "The intrinsic importance with which a generous act of forgiveness is endowed is termed 'value' as distinguished from the importance of all those goods which motivate our interest merely because they are agreeable or satisfactory to us."²

There is a third category with which to characterize goods which motivate us. These are things which are objectively good for a person, such as health or freedom. These things are more than just subjectively satisfying and yet they are not independent of a relationship to a person as something which has value is. That which is objectively good for someone is dependent upon value in that one cannot know what is objectively good for a person without first knowing what things are good in themselves. Without a recognition of value one will remain in the realm of the subjectively satisfying. In this paper we will be concerned with the differences between the subjectively satisfying and value.

Because the realms of the subjectively satisfying and value are essentially different the response to each type of object of motivation will also be very different. In the area of the subjectively satisfying one responds

²Ibid., p. 35.

not to the object but to the need or desire in oneself which the object will satisfy. One responds to such an object not so much because it is good or important but because it is for oneself. On the other hand one responds to a value just because it is important. The value demands that one respond to it appropriately because it is the value and not because it is related to oneself in any way. Response to value

. . . has the character of an abandoning of ourselves, a transcending of the boundaries of our self-centeredness, a submission of some sort. Interest in the subjectively satisfying reveals on the contrary, a self-confinement, a relating of the object to ourselves, using it for our own self-centered satisfaction.³

We have seen two ways in which a person may be motivated and so two ways in which he may respond. In responding to the subjectively satisfying one is self-centered; in responding to value one transcends one's self-centeredness. In the next chapters we will see how Nietzsche and Kierkegaard view the ideal man in relation to these ideas.

³Ibid., p. 39.

II. NIETZSCHE'S WELL-TURNED-OUT MAN

In this chapter we will see Nietzsche's description of the person who has turned out well and we will see that this person is one who is a master in the art of the subjectively satisfying. He is described as a man of solitude whose strength insures that everything will turn out well. His formula for greatness is amor fati, loving one's fate. We will see that one of Nietzsche's main points is that selfishness is absolutely necessary if one is to become oneself. Nietzsche sees this well-turned-out person or Overman as the creator of his own values, and ultimately he makes no distinction between the subjectively satisfying and value.

Master of the Subjectively Satisfying

In Ecce Homo Nietzsche's autobiography subtitled "How One Becomes What One Is," he offers a picture of the complete man.

What is it, fundamentally, that allows us to recognize, who has turned out well? That a well-turned-out person pleases our senses, that he is carved from wood that is hard, delicate, and at the same time smells good. He has a taste only for what is good for him; his pleasure, his delight cease where the measure of what is good for him is transgressed. . . . He is always in his own company whether he associates with books, human beings or landscapes; he honors by choosing, by admitting, by trusting. . . . He believes neither in 'misfortune'

nor in 'guilt': he comes to terms with himself, with others, he knows how to forget--he is strong enough, hence everything must turn out for his best.¹

There are several central ideas present in this one quote.

First, there is the statement that for Nietzsche a well-turned-out person is one who is totally concerned with the subjectively satisfying. His concern with what is good for himself accounts for his success. It is interesting that Nietzsche's description, though applying ostensibly to the whole person, is given in sensuous terms. The person who has turned out well "pleases our senses," "smells good," is "carved from wood" and has a "taste" for what is good for him, the subjectively satisfying. The sensuous experience is a reflexive one. One is concerned with the feeling within, rather than with the object which becomes only a tool, something to be used to create or satisfy a certain feeling. Even in matters of relationship, coming to terms with oneself or others, only the subjectively satisfying motivates such a person; relationships are ordered by their importance to the individual rather than by a sense of the worth of oneself and others as persons on a deeper level.

As Von Hildebrand noted, the realm of the subjectively satisfying is an imprisoning one. This is evidenced by Nietzsche's statement that a well-turned-out

¹Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo in On the Genealogy of Morals/ Ecce Homo, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 224.

person is "always in his own company." This is not the solitude of a person who separates himself from the crowd in order to concern himself with something deeper and more important but rather the solitude of one who fears contamination by others because it might upset his quest for what is "good" for him. Others are important only insofar as they can prove good or useful to the "successful" person. For one confined and isolated in this world, cut off from the realm of value, there is no mention of response to anything outside or above for its own sake.

Another central idea introduced here is the notion of strength. It seems that the well-turned-out person has such a strong sense of what is good for him that he suffers no wrongs from without (misfortune) or within (guilt). It is because he is strong enough that everything turns out for his best. Yet even this notion of strength is curiously narrow for it must be admitted that there are natural limits to physical and mental power. So if strength is able to insure that things turn out for the best perhaps it is because one has a limited view of what the best is. If the best is what is subjectively satisfying then it is conceivable that a certain amount of work and discipline could achieve this limited goal.²

²Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 267.

"In so far as the word 'knowledge' has any meaning, the world is knowable; but it is interpretable otherwise, it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings.-- 'Perspectivism.'

Amor Fati

Nietzsche himself tries to show that this notion of what is best is not narrow but the ultimate for man.

My formula for greatness in a human being is amor fati: that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it--all idealism is mendaciousness in the face of what is necessary--but love it.³

If one wants nothing to be different then in order to be true to oneself one must say that everything has turned out for the best. But there is a difference between a person who accepts and loves his fate because he sees only his own strengths and limitations, and a person who loves his life in humility yet recognizes a power greater than himself capable of effecting change.⁴ Kierkegaard believes strongly that with God all things are possible, and so, one does want things to be different. Such a person is not one who complains about his past and present and dreams about his future, but rather one who accepts his life for what it is, yet lives full of hope.

"It is our needs that interpret the world; our drives and their For and Against. Every drive is a kind of lust to rule; each one has its perspective that it would like to compell all the other drives to accept as a norm."

If Nietzsche were to admit an objective world as it really is he would be admitting a weakness, a lack of independence in regard to a transcendent reality. Therefore he interprets the world in terms of a drive, will to power, and says that everything is for the best, i.e. for me.

³Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, p. 258.

⁴Actually one cannot meaningfully speak of being true to one's drives. Nietzsche is unable to be true to

Selfishness

Our ordinary way of speaking of a person concerned only with what is subjectively satisfying is to say that he is selfish. Nietzsche uses this term frequently with a positive rather than a negative connotation.

At this point the real answer to the question how one becomes what one is, can no longer be avoided. And thus I touch on the masterpiece of the art of self-preservation--of selfishness.

For let us assume that the task, the destiny, the fate of the task transcends the average very significantly: in that case, nothing could be more dangerous than catching sight of oneself with this task. To become what one is, one must not have the faintest notion what one is. . . . Morally speaking: neighbor love, living for others, and other things can be a protective measure for preserving the hardest self-concern. This is the exception where against my wont and conviction, I side with the 'selfless' drives; here they work in the service of self-love, of self-discipline.⁵

Nietzsche does not wish to speak of becoming what one is as a goal or ideal to strive for, rather it is something which more or less happens when one allows the instincts and natural capacities to freely develop.⁶ So

his self but is true to his fate, actually identifying himself with his fate and so with necessity. Though he insists on his independence and strength he finds it necessary to identify himself with something greater--fate.

⁵Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, pp. 253-54. Actually in selfishness one does not become one's true self but wants to become what one is not, a self-centered totally independent and powerful person. We will see later how Kierkegaard speaks of the self in despair willing to be the self which it is not.

⁶This does not mean that Nietzsche believes that a great man is one who gives in to all his impulses. Rather he is one who sublimates his drives, uses his impulses un-

he has this curious combination of a person who always seeks what is best for himself without knowing at all what that self might be. For Nietzsche the self is only something abstract, he does not wish to admit the limitations of a concrete ideal, a distinct individual person.

In connection with this idea as quoted above Nietzsche uses the term "morally" and it will be interesting to see what he means by it. In the context it seems that whatever is selfish is moral. Anything which serves self-concern is morally good and that which hinders self-concern is morally bad. This is indeed a turning about of the general idea that morality is something objective which belongs to the realm of value, the important in-itself, not the subjectively satisfying which is always concerned with what is satisfying for a person. Of course Nietzsche was aware of the significance of the term "moral" and the fact that he wishes to use it for his own purposes seems to indicate that he has some understanding of the power of the moral realm.

This leads us to consideration of another way in which Nietzsche has tried to substitute the realm of the subjectively satisfying for that of value. He says he favors what is selfless because it may serve what is selfish. Another way of saying this is that what is gener-

til he can again let them go, knowing that they will serve his best interests. Cf. Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), pp. 220-225.

ally considered important in-itself--morality--is considered to be important by Nietzsche only because he sees it as important for himself. But removing the notion of importance-in-itself from value makes it indistinguishable from the subjectively satisfying. So although Nietzsche speaks often of values and his new relation to them, he is really in the realm of the subjectively satisfying, for he will not admit that values are given from outside a person and that they have an importance of their own apart from him.

Nietzsche speaks of his task, or at least the task of the Overman, Zarathustra, as being the transvaluation of all values. By this is meant a turning around of values, as was mentioned above with reference to the term "moral." Nowhere is this more evident than in relation to the source of values. Nietzsche views it as a sign of weakness to acknowledge that values come from outside the person. The Overman must be the creator of his own values.

That is your whole will, you who are wisest: a will to power--when you speak of good and evil too, and of valuations. You still want to create the world before which you can kneel: that is your ultimate hope and intoxication.⁷

Overman does not wish to acknowledge that anything is im-

⁷Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra in Portable Nietzsche, ed. and trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1968), p. 225. Cf. Nietzsche, The Will to Power, p. 85.

portant in-itself for he feels that this will lessen his own importance.

Nietzsche does not recognize that anything important in-itself really exists. He thinks that man posited the realm of the beyond or the in-itself in order to explain feelings within himself which seemed strange, overpowering, or superhuman.⁸ Because of his narrow view that importance is always related to a person Nietzsche does not recognize the fact that a genuine response to something beyond man is possible. "At bottom, man has lost the faith in his own value when no infinitely valuable whole works through him; i.e., he conceived such a whole in order to be able to believe in his own value."⁹ While it is true that there is a connection between value and a person's value, it is not true that man conceives Value in order to believe in himself. This is the way Nietzsche related to "value"; by seeing Overman as the giver of values, Overman has ultimate importance. Kierkegaard will explore the idea that man responds to value because a response is due, and from this response a true notion of the self does arise.

⁸Cf. Nietzsche, The Will to Power, pp. 85-87.

⁹Ibid., p. 12. Cf. Ibid., p. 141.

III. KIERKEGAARD: SELF AS THE INDIVIDUAL BEFORE GOD

In this chapter we will see that for Kierkegaard man is truly himself only when he recognizes himself as spirit, as an individual before God. Since God is the Ultimate Value, Kierkegaard is in the realm of value here. The more one is conscious of oneself as existing before God the more self one has. For Kierkegaard man ought to be motivated by his desire to be related to God, not by his desire to become himself. The true consciousness of oneself comes only through despair as far as Kierkegaard is concerned.

In contrast to Nietzsche's description of the person who has turned out well we have Kierkegaard's description of a person whose life is wasted.

. . . But only that man's life is wasted who lived on, so deceived by the joys of life or by its sorrows that he never became eternally and decisively conscious of himself as spirit, as self, or (what is the same thing) never became aware and in the deepest sense received an impression of the fact that there is a God, and that he, he himself, his self, exists before this God, which gain of infinity is never attained except through despair.¹

Kierkegaard does not view here the realm of the subjectively satisfying as most important for a person as

¹Søren Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death in Fear and Trembling/ The Sickness Unto Death, trans. by Walter Lowrie (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1954), pp. 159-60.

Nietzsche does, rather he sees that a person who is concerned only with making himself happy and avoiding any sorrow is wasting his life. Kierkegaard is primarily concerned with that which is beyond the subjectively satisfying, value.

Three ideas are very closely related for Kierkegaard: that man is spirit, that man is self, and that man exists before God. Indeed Kierkegaard says that for a man to be aware that he is spirit or self is the same thing as the recognition that God is and that man exists before this God. God is the Ultimate Value, more than anything else He is important in Himself. Therefore a man's recognition of the fact that he exists before God and what this entails is basically a relation to the Ultimate Value. Whereas Von Hildebrand speaks of the response which is demanded by a value Kierkegaard speaks of the self as being properly related to God if it is to become itself. These are different ways of speaking about the same basic phenomenon. We can see here Kierkegaard's implicit notion that a man who has lived fully, not wasted his life, is one who is concerned with the realm of value.

Consciousness and the Self

The relation between consciousness of God and awareness of the self is made very clear in Kierkegaard's writing in these two parallel passages.

Generally speaking, consciousness, i.e. consciousness of self, is the decisive criterion of the self. The more consciousness, the more self. . . .

. . . .

The more conception of God, the more self; the more self, the more conception of God. Only when the self as this definite individual is conscious of existing² before God, only then is it the infinite self. . . .²

These quotations show that Kierkegaard in speaking of consciousness is not talking about merely an intensification of self-awareness as might be present in Nietzsche's well-turned-out man who is very much attuned to what is "good" for him. Rather he is speaking of a consciousness in which a person is aware of his true self and metaphysical condition, that he is an individual before God.

This notion that it is necessary for a person to have a concept of God in order to become his true self is also connected with the idea of fate. We saw that for Nietzsche amor fati is the formula for human greatness. Kierkegaard strongly disagrees with this.

The determinist or the fatalist is in despair, and in despair he has lost his self, because for him everything is necessary.

. . . The fatalist is in despair--he has lost God, and therefore himself as well; for if he has no God, neither has he a self. But the fatalist has no God, or, what is the same thing, his god is necessity.

. . . The worship of the fatalist is therefore at its maximum an exclamation, and essentially it is dumbness, dumb submission, he is unable to pray.³

Man must always have possibility, the possibility of re-

²Ibid., p. 162, p. 211.

³Ibid., p. 173.

sponding to value, of being related to God, in order to become himself.

Nietzsche thought that whenever a man responded to a power greater than himself he became a slave to that power. So he saw all relations between man and God as slave-master relations. Kierkegaard challenges this with the view that it is the fatalist who is a slave, a slave to necessity. For the fatalist no genuine free response is possible. A person who believes submits in obedience to God, but this is not a slavish act but a full personal response to the call of value. Such a person realizes that a response is due the value, yet he is not forced to respond.

The only response which Nietzsche is prepared to allow, is a response which will serve the interests of the person. A response for the sake of the value is always seen as slavery; one only responds when it serves selfishness. This is a critical difference between Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. For Nietzsche one seeks that which will serve the development of Overman. For Kierkegaard one should seek to be properly related to God, and the self then emerges from this relationship. Von Hildebrand states,

Man as subject and person is ordered and destined to this personal relation with God, his nature is ordained to transcend itself and to be capable of a real self-donation. The fact that this self-donation is the exclusive way for man to attain his perfection, that is, to actualize all the values which he is able

and destined to realize, in no way implies that the self-donation is a mere means for self-perfection.⁴

Von Hildebrand here makes the connection which we mentioned before between the response to value and the relationship to God. This quote which so clearly distinguishes the motivation (relationship to God) from the consequences (self-perfection) helps to make clear the differences between Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard reaffirms the Christian notion that one must lose oneself in order to find oneself. For all of his emphasis upon subjectivity Kierkegaard would never hold that a man becomes his true self by striving to do so, but only by being an individual before God.

Consciousness and Despair

One must recognize that one is an individual before God in order to become one's true self, and yet Kierkegaard stated above that this "gain of infinity is never attained except through despair." For Kierkegaard if one wills to be oneself apart from one's relation to God then one is in despair. For Nietzsche one must will to be oneself independently of any greater power if one is to become oneself.

Despair is the sickness of the soul, the "sickness

⁴Von Hildebrand, Ethics, p. 222. Cf. Dietrich Von Hildebrand, Liturgy and Personality (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1960), p. 46, in which he talks about the fact that the personal transformation should never be the motivation for value response.

unto death." Because all men have sinned, all men are in despair.

The possibility of this sickness is man's advantage over the beast; to be sharply observant of this sickness constitutes the Christian's advantage over the natural man; to be healed of this sickness is the Christian's bliss.

So then it is an infinite advantage to be able to despair; and yet it is not only the greatest misfortune and misery to be in despair; no, it is perdition.⁵

Here again the notion of consciousness in relation to the self is present. Man's ability to despair, his self-consciousness makes him different from animals. But heightened consciousness is not enough, one must have true consciousness, i.e., a recognition of the fact that one is an individual before God. One goes through despair to a realization of oneself as spirit, but again it is the relationship to God rather than the development of self which is the motivating factor. This realization of oneself as spirit is not referring to spirit in the ontological sense of man being spirit, conscious, in order to hope or despair. When Kierkegaard refers to man as spirit he is referring to the fact that he can be related to God.

Kierkegaard speaks of several stages of despair:

First comes despair over the earthly or something earthly, then despair over oneself about the eternal. Then comes defiance, which really is despair by the aid of the eternal, the despairing abuse of the eternal in the self to the point of being despairingly determined to be oneself. . . . The despair which is the passageway to faith is also by the aid of the

⁵Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, p. 148.

eternal; by the aid of the eternal the self has⁶ courage to lose itself in order to gain itself.

One despairs over the earthly when one gets so bound up in the earthly, the finite, that one allows it to become all important. This is a person who is caught up in the joys and sorrows of life and so has wasted his life.

Man can only become a self because the eternal, God, has allowed him to become one. At the same time eternity demands that one become a self. In experiencing this tension one can turn to faith or despair. If one despairs over oneself about the eternal, one feels that the demand to become oneself is too great and so one loses hope. This is an example of what results from a narrowness which looks only to a person and sees nothing beyond.

There are two stages of despair by the aid of the eternal. The first is defiance. It is the eternal in man which allows him to become a self, but a person who is defiant feels he can use the eternal for his own purposes. On his own power he feels he can become himself. Yet it is not his own power but the eternal which enables him to feel this way. One who defiantly wills to be oneself is actually denying one's true self, for one's true self is related to God. The motivating factor in defiance is to overcome despair and become one's self.

In the despair which is the passageway to faith on

⁶Ibid., p. 201.

the other hand one does not abuse the eternal and try to use it for one's own ends. Rather one acknowledges the eternal and allows that one must give the eternal its due. By so doing the self is willing to lose itself, to admit that it cannot become itself on its own and so relies on God to make the impossible possible. In despair which leads to faith, one does not overcome despair by willing to be oneself but by hoping in God, by recognizing that one is an individual existing before God who must respond to Him for His own sake.

There is something of a paradox here, for if despair is the opposite of faith how can despair be the passageway to faith. This despair is the recognition of the fact that one is finite, and alone can do nothing.

The despairer understands that it is weakness to take the earthly so much to heart, that it is weakness to despair. But then, instead of veering sharply away from despair to faith, humbling himself before God for his weakness, he is more deeply⁷ absorbed in despair and despairs over his weakness.

This despair can be the passageway to faith if one accepts one's limits and then believes that with God all things are possible. In which case it is no longer despair but hope.

Although Kierkegaard speaks of these stages of despair, one is better than another only when considered

⁷Ibid., p. 195.

from the limited viewpoint of intensity of consciousness.

To become the self, existing before God, the only true alternative to any form of despair is faith.

There is no merit in being in despair in a higher degree. Aesthetically it is an advantage, for aesthetically one has regard merely to strength; but ethically the more intense kind of despair is further from salvation than is the lower.⁸

We will consider further the meaning of despair in becoming a self after first examining several ideas concerning power.

⁸Ibid., p. 232. When Kierkegaard speaks of aesthetics, he is not referring primarily to the realm of beauty but to the realm of feeling. Consider the following quote from Conrad Bonifazi, Christendom Attacked: A Comparison of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche (London: Rockliff, 1953), p. 124. This quote shows the relationship between the aesthetic and the true relation to God.

"For this reason [Romanticism's making of religion a pantheism] Kierkegaard wished to dethrone the aesthetic way of life, to make the disclosure that a natural awakening within the soul to the all-pervading presence of the Divine was falsely identified with true Christian faith, and to combat an intimate mixture of Christianity with present sentiments, in order to bring to evidence the fact that Christianity is not a poetical Weltanschauung, but a new beginning, by the grace of God, of a life beyond human possibility alone."

IV. THE NOTIONS OF POWER

In this chapter we will look at various notions of power. First we will look at the meanings of the term power as we ordinarily use it. In this context we will be concerned with power as a capacity; with mastery or the development of powers; and with power and its relation to control. Then we will examine Nietzsche's philosophy of will to power which is a central concept to his entire philosophy. Finally we will see how power fits into Kierkegaard's philosophy, especially in relation to despair.

Meanings of Power

There are several ways in which we use the term power in our ordinary language. When we say that someone has the power to do something we might mean two things. Power might mean ability, e.g. if we say, "He has the power to pick up the book" we mean that he is physically able, he has the capacity to perform the action. However if we say that someone has the ability to be an Olympic swimmer we are referring not merely to his physical capacity but also to the fact that he has mastered certain skills. We might say that his powers had been developed. In either case the person has the power whether he is actually performing the action or not. However, a power is

only evident through action. In both of these cases power refers to the ability to control the world, in this instance one's body and its physical motions. This notion of control is very important to the notion of power.

In addition to physical control we also speak of self-control or self-discipline. But here again we are primarily concerned with actions. With regard to self-control or discipline someone like Hitler might be equal to Florence Nightingale. Both were able to discipline themselves in such a way that they might achieve a desired goal. But there is a difference between a person who is considered strong because of his self-control and a person who has strength of character.

Strength of character has something to do with discipline, with the power to control one's drives or urges in such a way that they are integrated into one's whole personality. The power to control a drive is not just the power to control actions. A drive or an urge is something which pushes a person from behind, it has power over him and comes from a need which he has.

Perhaps an example will clarify the fact that one has not controlled an urge just by controlling actions. Perhaps a man has a strong urge to drink and not wishing to become an alcoholic he tries to stop drinking. He may discover that he especially feels like drinking when he is lonely. So he finds someone to fill his loneliness and so no longer drinks. Yet he is still within the realm

of needs. It is just that his need for companionship was stronger than his need to drink.

The controlling of drives involves motivation or meaning. As long as one is motivated by trying to fulfill the drive or need, one is being motivated from within. But there is another possibility of motivation besides need and this is love. When one is motivated by love one is responding to that which is good in the other, rather than to the attraction of something which one sees as satisfying a need which is within.

This turning from the need within to the call of the other can be termed conversion. It is this power of conversion which enables one to control drives, not just will power or self-control. It is the strength of the appeal of the value which allows one to move from the immanent realm of need to the transcendent realm of love. One's will is essential to the conversion experience but it is not sufficient for it. The appeal of the other is that it is good and one should respond appropriately. This response is one of self-donation. One is not converted by will power but the will is necessary in that one freely gives his response to the other because it is due him. One responds to what is positive or of value in the other, rather than being concerned with the lack or nothingness in oneself which one feels in need. Here we have seen how the realms of the subjectively satisfying and of value are related to the notions of power.

Nietzsche and Power

In this section of the chapter we will be concerned with Nietzsche's philosophy of power. For Nietzsche, life is will to power and power is concerned both with control and with one's instincts. Will to power is greatest in those with amor fati, those who love their fate. In the drive for power one becomes a nihilist. For Nietzsche perhaps the ultimate power is achieved when one destroys values and creates new ones for oneself. Any recognition of an objective value or of a greater power than oneself is a sign of weakness for Nietzsche.

Let us examine the ways in which Nietzsche uses the notion of power. Nietzsche states that "Life is will to power."¹ Several things are evident just in that one phrase. The fact that life is equated with will to power indicates that for Nietzsche this will to power is all encompassing. He views everything in terms of will to power. All actions are motivated by this will to power. "Will to power" itself indicates that power is an end. One does not use power for something else but one moves always with an eye to increasing power.

It is clear from many passages that when Nietzsche uses the term power he is concerned with control, and especially with identifying power with the realm of in-

¹Nietzsche, The Will to Power, p. 148.

instincts.² He speaks precisely in the terms outlined above about power being concerned with controlling the world and then with self control in the following passage.

Evolution of man

a. to gain power over nature and in addition a certain power over oneself. (Morality was needed that man might prevail in his struggle with nature and the 'wild animal.')

b. If power has been attained over nature, one can employ this power in the further free development of oneself: will to power as self-elevation and strengthening.³

Two things are especially important in this quotation: one is the notion that morality is seen as good by Nietzsche only when it advances the person, in this case when it helps man gain power over nature; the second is that will to power is seen as self-elevation and strengthening. Here again we see that this strengthening of the self is an end for Nietzsche and that everything is viewed in terms of its "goodness" for the self, the realm of the subjectively satisfying.

Nietzsche has a curious notion of will. He does not agree with the idea that man has a free will which is his great power and his great responsibility. Nietzsche sees freedom of the will as the means by which Christianity has made men feel guilty for their actions.⁴ Von Hildebrand

²Cf. Kaufmann, Nietzsche, pp. 233-35, pp. 220-25.

³Nietzsche, The Will to Power, p. 218.

⁴Cf. Ibid., p. 232. Also Nietzsche, Genealogy of Morals, pp. 59-60, p. 69.

describes will in the following way:

The will is in our immediate power. Its unique character is clearly revealed by the fact that its immediate issuance from our spiritual center is the only case of a fiat in our human existence.⁵

By this is meant that as soon as we will anything the act of will is immediately present. We are the source of our acts of the will. Nietzsche would say that it is not so much that the will is in our power, but rather that will is our power. One has power because of an act of the will. Nietzsche claims that all will or in any case greatest will is will to power. Von Hildebrand would say that the will as it is necessary to value response is the most fitting act of the will. For Nietzsche will is not concerned with conscious control but the will to power is the development of one's own instincts.

This relationship of power to instincts is very important to Nietzsche's thought. When he speaks of Overman as the ultimate manifestation of will to power, he does not wish to speak of him as an ideal, but rather as something like the ultimate natural man. This is evident in the following passage in which Nietzsche speaks of himself.

Its [my instinct's] higher protection manifested itself to such a high degree that I never even suspected what was growing in me--and one day all my capacities, suddenly ripe, leaped forth in their ultimate perfection. I cannot remember that I ever tried hard--no trace of struggle can be demonstrated in my life; I

⁵Von Hildebrand, Ethics, p. 201.

am the opposite of a heroic nature. 'Willing' something, 'striving' for something, envisaging a 'purpose,' a 'wish'--I know none of this from experience.⁶

Here Nietzsche makes clear that all his power is in his natural capacities, everything is within. Kierkegaard will disagree strongly with this view that the perfection of one's immanent capacities is the greatest perfection for man.⁷

Power and amor fati

It may be noted here that Nietzsche's description of himself in the above passage indicates how his notion of will to power is related to the idea of amor fati. In amor fati one wills nothing to be different, yet Nietzsche also says that for those who are strongest their whole will is the will to power. So it would seem that will to power is identical with loving one's fate. Indeed Nietzsche has said he did not will or strive for anything but rather found his capacities suddenly developed and accepted himself as he was. Nietzsche describes more clearly in the following passage how he views power and will.

I assess the power of a will by how much resistance, pain, torture it endures and knows how to turn to its advantage. I do not account the evil and painful

⁶Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, pp. 254-55.

⁷See Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, pp. 179 and 189.

character of existence a reproach to it, but hope rather that it will one day be more evil and painful than hitherto.⁸

Here the strongest will is one which can love its fate. It is interesting to note that here again the notion of importance for oneself is present. A will is strong not only because it endures, but because it endures for its own advantage. For the Christian one endures suffering because it is demanded by a higher value and though it may prove to be beneficial to the development of oneself, this is not the purpose for submitting to the suffering. Nietzsche evidently hopes that life will become more evil and painful for then one could show greater power in enduring greater suffering. The Christian submits in obedience to the demands of value, but endurance of suffering is not the only response, and in any case the motivation is not the development of the self.

Will to power and values

We have seen how the will to power is concerned with self-fulfillment and the subjectively satisfying. Now let us look specifically at how the will to power is related to values. When Nietzsche speaks of values he speaks of nihilism. Nietzsche refers to two kinds of nihilism, active and passive. In passive nihilism, one views nihilism as an end and lives in total meaninglessness.

⁸Nietzsche, The Will to Power, p. 206.

ness with no values at all. In active nihilism one sees oneself as the destroyer of values. Nihilism is seen as a stage which one passes through, rather than as an end in itself. Active nihilism is ". . . a sign of increased power of the spirit."⁹ Nietzsche sees himself as such an active nihilist. Being able to destroy values increases one's power of spirit, in the ontological sense of the word. Nietzsche uses spirit here as that which distinguishes man from animals or men from men. For Kierkegaard spirit is primarily concerned with one's relation to God, spirit as concerned with the spiritual.

Nietzsche notes two causes of nihilism:

1. The higher species is lacking, i.e., those whose inexhaustible fertility and power keep up the faith in man. . . .
2. The lower species ('herd,' 'mass,' 'society') unlearn modesty and blows up its needs into cosmic and metaphysical values.¹⁰

The notion that man can destroy values, or posit them, involves a failure to recognize the primary fact that values are important in themselves, and independent of the will of man. One can refuse to recognize a value, or give a negative response to a value, but this does not affect the importance of the value itself. Perhaps individuals or society do mistake their needs for genuine

⁹Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 19.

values but this is not to say that there is not a great difference between needs and values.

Nietzsche feels that faith in anyone other than man is a sign of weakness. So he says that men of power are needed to keep up the faith in man and so maintain values. In contrast, for Kierkegaard, man does admit a certain weakness in putting his faith in something beyond himself. He admits that on his own he cannot do everything. Only with God are all things possible. Such a man humbly accepts his weaknesses, his finitude, yet by his relationship to the Infinite, he is actually stronger as a self.

Nietzsche sees the Overman as the ultimate example of one of the higher species who will keep up the faith in man.

Another ideal runs ahead of us, a strong, tempting, dangerous ideal, to which we should not wish to persuade anybody because we do not readily concede the right to it to anybody: the ideal of a spirit who plays naively, that is not deliberately but from overflowing power and abundance--with all that was hitherto called holy, good, untouchable, divine; for whom those supreme things that the people naturally accept as their value standards signify danger, decay, debasement, or at least recreation, blindness, and temporary self-oblivion; the ideal of a human, superhuman well-being and benevolence that will often appear inhuman.¹¹

Nietzsche admits here his reservations about the ideal of the Overman, perhaps because he has some idea of the intrinsic importance of value and recognizes the danger of

¹¹Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, p. 299.

of man's assuming the power of the Infinite for himself.

The lack of deliberate will is mentioned in this passage again. Overman plays with values from his overflowing power. The notion of play not only reiterates the association of power with the instincts, but also introduces the idea of a lack of seriousness.¹² Overman sees himself as above values and so able to toy with them. He says others accept them as value standards but for him they signify decay. Nietzsche returns again to the realm of the subjectively satisfying. This image of playing with values, of a continual tearing down and building up is for Nietzsche the image of the greatest power for man.¹³

Kierkegaard and Power

In the final section of this chapter we will deal with power and its place in Kierkegaard's philosophy. Kierkegaard has a different concept of will than Nietzsche. For him will is as essential to the self as is consciousness but this is not just wilfulness, but the will necessary for a right relation to God. Kierkegaard does not think that man is already a self and that he must just

¹²Cf. Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, p. 202, in which he speaks of the despairing self experimenting with his self, acknowledging no power over it and hence lacking seriousness. Nietzsche's Overman plays with value, yet accepting amor fati as his greatness he has no real possibilities in his life.

¹³Cf. Nietzsche, The Will to Power, p. 14, where he speaks of nihilism as being "partly destructive, partly ironic."

accept this self, rather one becomes a self only by establishing the right relation to God. One cannot become a self merely by developing one's powers. How Kierkegaard understands power is most clear in his writings on despair. In despair one wishes to tear oneself away from the Power which constitutes every human self. The despairing self wishes to have complete control over the process of becoming himself. Only by being willingly related to God, the greater Power, does one truly become oneself.

Consciousness, will and self

Kierkegaard does not speak specifically of a philosophy of power. However he does speak of man's will and in writing about despair his views on power are made clear. In regard to will Kierkegaard would agree with Von Hildebrand's view. Man's will is essential to becoming a self, as is his recognition that he is an individual before God.

The more consciousness, the more self; the more consciousness, the more will, and the more will the more self. A man who has no will at all is no self; the more will he has, the more consciousness of self he has also.¹⁴

As it was shown above when Kierkegaard refers to consciousness of self he is not referring merely to an intensified self-awareness, but rather to an awareness of oneself as existing before God. So too when he speaks of

¹⁴Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, p. 162.

the relation of will to the concept of the self, he does not mean that a person who is willful or stubborn has a strong concept of the self. For Kierkegaard will, consciousness and self are all relational.. They are always in relation to a transcendent Being either in despair or in faith. For Nietzsche will and consciousness and thus the self are reflexive. They are turned to the satisfaction of the need within, they are concerned with what is good for one and there is no transcending relation.

Kierkegaard emphasizes "the more will the more self," because he realizes that a strong will is absolutely necessary to the relation to God. One responds with obedience, with self-donation, to the other when one is motivated by the value of the other. Obedience is not a slavish act but a free response given by a person who has the strength to "will one thing." Such a person does not view this act of will as an evidence of his power but rather as a means to achieving the right relationship to God, the Ultimate Value.

The Self and possibility

We saw that Nietzsche thinks a man only becomes what he already in some way is; and that one can best become what one is by merely allowing one's capacities to develop and by following one's instincts. Kierkegaard has this to say:

However, a self, every instant it exists, is in process of becoming, for the self kata divinity [potentially] does not actually exist, it is only that which it is to become. In so far as the self does not become itself, it is not its own self; but not to be one's own self is despair.¹⁵

An analogy may make clearer the differences between Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. For Nietzsche the process of becoming oneself is very much like the process of an acorn becoming an oak. The acorn has the potential to become the oak if it is allowed to develop. For Kierkegaard the process of becoming oneself is more like the uniting of sperm and egg. On its own neither the sperm nor the egg has the potential to develop into a baby. Each does have the possibility for being united with the other and then developing. Kierkegaard sees that man has the possibility of being related to God and so of becoming himself. More will be said on this idea in relation to the notions of immanence and transcendence. The important thing to note here is that Kierkegaard does not regard the development of one's powers as central to the process of becoming oneself.

As a further amplification of the ideas that a strong will is necessary for a strong concept of self and that becoming one's self is not an automatic process, Kierkegaard has the following comment: "No, whatever it

¹⁵Ibid., p. 163. Kierkegaard is speaking here of the self that is grounded transparently in God, the true self.

may be that a man as a matter of course comes to, and whatever it may be that comes to a man as a matter of course--one thing it is not, namely, faith and wisdom."¹⁶ Faith is the way a man is related to God and so is the way he becomes himself. This does not come as a matter of course, by allowing one's capacities to develop. If a man came to faith and wisdom as a matter of course, then amor fati, not willing anything to be different, would surely be the way to faith. However to attain faith and wisdom in fact a man must will that something be different, namely that he move from despair to hope.

Kierkegaard analyzes the person who thinks that he becomes himself by allowing his capacities to develop.

Every human existence which is not conscious of itself as spirit, or conscious of itself before God as spirit, every human existence which is not thus grounded transparently in God but obscurely reposes or terminates in some abstract universality (state, nation, etc.) or in obscurity about itself takes its faculties merely as active powers, without in a deeper sense being conscious whence it has them, which regards itself as an inexplicable something which is to be understood from without--every such existence, whatever it accomplishes, though it be the most amazing exploit, whatever it explains, though it were the whole of existence, however intensely it enjoys life aesthetically--every such existence is after all despair.¹⁷

In this passage Kierkegaard states that a person who is

¹⁶Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, p. 192.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 179. See also page 189 of the same work in which Kierkegaard mentions how some people identify their self with their abilities or talents.

not conscious of himself as existing before God is obscure about the nature of his self. Such a person mistakenly looks at the active powers which he can develop, rather than being aware that the important thing is to acknowledge that these powers have been given to him by a greater Power. A person who does not have true consciousness may show great power, through his actions, the greatness of his intellect, or the intensity of his experiences, but such a person is here living in despair. One is reminded here of the biblical question, "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world, but loses his own soul." This is exactly what is at issue here. A person who is concerned with developing his powers and with achieving greatness in his life actually loses his true self, though he claims to be acting in self-interest. In fact it is because of his being motivated by self-interest, that the self becomes obscure.

Power and despair

Let us look more closely at the various ways power is related to despair. One form of despair Kierkegaard describes as going astray into possibility. To become a self one must realize that one is a definite individual before God. By always wishing for or fearing some possibility a person is unable to become such a definite individual. One does not wish to accept what one is as a definite and limited ontological self who may be uniquely

related to God as intentional self, but rather one looks always for some new possibility. Man is a synthesis of possibility and necessity.

Nor is it merely due to lack of strength when the soul goes astray in possibility--at least this is not to be understood as people commonly understand it. What really is lacking is the power to obey, to submit to the necessary in oneself, to what may be called one's limit.¹⁸

Here we see again that becoming oneself is not in one's power, in the ordinary sense. It is not lack of strength or self-control which causes this despair.

Kierkegaard talks about the power to obey or to submit. Ordinarily this would seem like a contradiction in terms. The fact that Kierkegaard uses them indicates that there is another sense in which one may speak of strength or power. One might call this strength of personality, noting that a personality is related to the realm of value. When we think of value response and remember that it requires a strong will then the notion of the power to obey does not seem so strange.

Nietzsche speaks of obedience in a different way. "But wherever I found the living, there I heard also the speech on obedience. Whatever lives obeys."¹⁹ It might

¹⁸Ibid., p. 169. One's limit is one's nature or essence which is only understood in relation to God. This is the ontological self and as such it is necessary, but this necessity is not the same as the necessity of fate, it does not determine the future. It is here that possibility becomes part of the self.

¹⁹Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, p. 226.

seem that on the surface Nietzsche agrees with Kierkegaard. The important thing to note is that Nietzsche makes no distinction between the "obedience" which is natural to all living things, an instinctual obedience, and the obedience which is uniquely human, a free act motivated by value. For Nietzsche one's nature develops inexorably toward the fulfillment of its potential. For Kierkegaard man has the power to obey, to accept his limits, and also the possibility of being related to God, of transcending himself.

Kierkegaard spoke of the power to submit to the necessary in oneself, to one's limits. However this is not just an obedience to something within oneself, for it is because man is seen in relation to the Infinite, that he must recognize his own limits. Recognition of one's own finitude must also be a recognition and acknowledgement of the Infinite.

For the self is a synthesis in which the finite is the limiting factor, and the infinite is the expanding factor. Infinitude's despair is therefore the fantastical, the limitless. The self is in sound health and free from despair only when precisely by having been in despair, it is grounded transparently in God.²⁰

One can be in despair by being too narrow or limited, or by thinking oneself to be limitless. A desire for power seems to at least tend toward the idea of being unlimited

²⁰Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, p. 163.

and this is especially so in Nietzsche's Overman.²¹ Here Kierkegaard speaks to Nietzsche's ideal of the Overman by stating that such a person is in despair, not in sound health as a self. A self is in sound health only when it recognizes that it exists as an individual (limited) before God (Limitless).

It must be remembered that the self is a synthesis of the finite and the infinite. One must not only recognize that one is limited, but also that there is something of the infinite and the eternal in the self. Kierkegaard talks about what results when one tries to view this infinite aspect of the self apart from the Power in which one must be grounded to be free of despair.

In order to will in despair to be oneself there must be consciousness of the infinite self. This infinite self, however, is really only the abstractest form, the abstractest possibility of the self, and it is this self the man despairingly wills to be, detaching the self from every relation to the Power which posited it, or detaching it from the conception that there is such a Power in existence.²²

In this passage Kierkegaard shows that consciousness of the infinite self can have both positive and negative aspects. This consciousness is necessary to becoming a self, yet without relating the infinite self to the Power from which it comes one ends again in despair.²³ Only in

²¹Cf. Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, p. 305 and p. 331.

²²Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, p. 201.

²³Abstract possibility leads to despair because then nothing is possible, whereas with God alone are all things possible. Thus the infinite in the self can be concretized in the relation to God.

relation to God does this abstract possibility of a self become concretized in the definite individual.

Kierkegaard speaks directly about the desire of the despairing self to make itself into itself. One wants to feel the satisfaction of having mastery over oneself, to be able to control the process of becoming oneself. Overman seems to want just this experience of satisfaction at becoming himself through will to power. However, Kierkegaard reiterates that a self who wants to be its own master is really in despair and is like a king without a country. One who wants to be master of himself finds that there is really no self there. One becomes a self only by being related to a greater Power, not by exercising one's own power.²⁴

Kierkegaard would agree with Nietzsche's description of the Overman as one who plays with values from overflowing power. However he would not agree to this description as pertaining to the self.

If the despairing self is active, it really is related to itself only as experimenting with whatsoever it be that it undertakes, however great it may be, however astonishing, however persistently carried out. It acknowledges no power over it, hence in the last resort it lacks seriousness when the self bestows upon its experiments its utmost attention.²⁵

²⁴Cf. The Sickness Unto Death, p. 203. Again for Kierkegaard becoming oneself is the consequence of the right relation to God, not the reason for the relationship.

²⁵Ibid., p. 202.

Lack of seriousness is characteristic of play and this lack of seriousness about the self results from failure to acknowledge the Power in which the self is grounded. One hears again here the theme of gaining the world and losing one's soul. Also we find in the passage hints about the self's being related to itself. In despair the self cannot be properly related to itself because it is not properly related to the Power which constitutes it.

Kierkegaard has spoken of ways in which those who seek power over themselves are in despair. There is one further way in which despair and power are related.

The despairer understands that it is weakness to take the earthly so much to heart, that it is weakness to despair. But then instead of veering sharply away from despair to faith, humbling himself before God for his weakness he is more deeply absorbed in despair and despairs over his weakness.²⁶

The vicious circle in which the despairer finds himself gives some indication that intensification of consciousness, recognition of the weakness of despair is not enough for one to become oneself. One must recognize that one is an individual before God, with all this entails regarding one's finitude and weakness and God's Infinity and Power. The inability to admit a weakness is ultimately the same thing as a will to power.

Kierkegaard summarizes the forms of despair and shows how they can all be traced to one form, all in-

²⁶Ibid., p. 195.

volving an improper relationship to the Power which constitutes the self.

To despair over oneself, in despair to will to be rid of oneself, is the formula for all despair, and hence the second form of despair (in despair at willing to be oneself) can be followed back to the first (in despair at not willing to be oneself). . . . That self which he despairingly wills to be is a self which he is not (for to will to be that self which one truly is, is indeed the opposite of despair); what he really wills is to tear his self away from the Power which constituted it. . . . notwithstanding all the efforts of despair, that Power is the stronger, and it compells him to be the self he does not will to be.²⁷

There are several things which are important to note here. First of all, in all forms of despair one wants to get rid of one's true self, that self which exists as an individual before God. If one wills oneself to be something else than what it is, then one is in despair.

Willing to be one's true self is the opposite of despair--faith. Next there is the idea that the constituting Power is stronger than despair. This is a consequence of the fact that only with God are all things possible. Indeed to see that one is helpless to change something and to conclude that therefore change is impossible is itself a form of despair. Despair is impotent before the constituting Power in that in despair one cannot be one's true self, only in relation to God can one be his true self. The constituting Power compels one to be oneself in the sense that one cannot be rid of despair in any other way

²⁷Ibid., p. 153.

way than by being related to the constituting Power. As long as one is in despair, the greater Power demands its due response and proper relationship.

Nietzsche views the demands of the greater Power as being a demand that one give up one's self and become a slave. Nietzsche does not recognize the difference between the overpowering attraction which comes from a drive or urge and the sovereign appeal or call of a value which comes from its importance. Von Hildebrand describes this difference.

The call of an authentic value for an adequate response addresses itself to us in a sovereign but non-intrusive, sober way. It appeals to our free spiritual center. The attraction of the subjectively satisfying, on the contrary, lulls us into a state where we yield to instinct; it tends to dethrone our free spiritual center.²⁸

One cannot will to be oneself without being related to the Power which constitutes the self, but one's free response is necessary if one is to be properly related to that Power. Perhaps it is because Nietzsche sees everything in terms of what we have called the subjectively satisfying that he must see the relationship to God as a master-slave relationship.²⁹ In every description of the

²⁸ Von Hildebrand, Ethics, p. 38. Cf. also Von Hildebrand, Liturgy and Personality, p. 55, in which he speaks of one's person as being essential to theocentrism.

²⁹ Just as the World can become a tool (slave) for my satisfaction so I would have to become a slave (tool) for the other's satisfaction.

self when it is free from despair, Kierkegaard says that one wills to be oneself. "This then is the formula which describes the condition of the self when despair is completely eradicated: by relating itself to its own self and by willing to be itself the self is grounded transparently in the Power which posited it."³⁰ We have seen that one wills to be oneself only when one is not in despair and that one is grounded transparently in the positing Power when one recognizes that one is an individual before God. One is grounded transparently in God when one submits in faith, dependence and trust to His Power in an act of self-negation and obedience. What Kierkegaard means by the self's relating itself to its self will become clearer after we have looked more closely at the notions of transcendence and immanence in relation to the self.

³⁰ Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, p. 147.

V. TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE

This chapter will deal with the notions of immanence and transcendence. First we will look at definitions and general uses of the terms. Then we will see how these notions are related to the self. Von Hildebrand speaks of two components of personality, the natural endowment and the relationship to the world of values which a person has. Nietzsche and Kierkegaard's ideas on the self will be viewed in terms of these two components. Nietzsche has a view of man as immanent because he sees any relationship to something beyond man as weakening to him. Nietzsche uses the doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence as an authority for his ethical system, replacing God, the origin of Christian ethics. Yet this is not a real relationship to the Transcendent. For Kierkegaard the relationship to the Transcendent confirms the individuality of the self and is essential to it. The self is a relationship which relates to itself through its relationship to God.

Clarification of Terms

We have used the terms "immanence" and "transcendence" when speaking of the categories of importance and of the notions of power. Let us look more closely at what

these terms mean.

Both terms denote a relationship. Something which is immanent is within something. Something which is transcendent is beyond something else. Such terms are said to be relative. When looked at from one point of view something might appear to be transcendent, yet when looked at from another point of view the same thing may be considered immanent. For example we said that a drive is something immanent, it comes from within the person. When a person is concerned with satisfying a drive he is concerned with fulfilling a need within himself. The means which are used to fill this need may be transcendent, outside the person, e.g. food, drink, companionship. Yet this fact does not mean that in fulfilling a need a person is concerned with the transcendent, except in a very limited sense, of using a transcendent means or tool.

We may speak of different kinds of transcendence. First let us consider immanence and transcendence in a metaphysical sense. Here we are concerned with the metaphysical locus of an entity. In speaking of immanence and transcendence here we will always be speaking of two terms or entities. Immanence here means that one of the entities is within the other, e.g. my thoughts are immanent to me, although what they refer to is usually outside me. Transcendence means that one of the entities is outside of the other. We could say very simply that the tree

is transcendent to me, it is outside of me. With regard to the metaphysical status of entities we can also speak of transcendence in terms of a hierarchy of beings.

Animals transcend plants, man transcends animals and God transcends man. However, the verb "transcends" here does not refer to any act on the part of the entities but refers only to their metaphysical status.

Next we may speak of immanence and transcendence in the intentional sphere. To transcend oneself is to go outside oneself. Here we speak of transcendence as the act of an entity going outside of itself. This is always a personal act. It is this transcendence which characterizes the value response. There is no active parallel to "to transcend" which refers to immanence. We can only speak of immanence as remaining within oneself. In attaining that which is subjectively satisfying one may use a tool which is transcendent to him, but he is still concerned with satisfying the drive which is immanent.

When we consider formally or metaphysically the means used in attaining the subjectively satisfying, and the values to which we respond, we can see that both are transcendent. Metaphysically speaking both are outside of us. However, the act of satisfying a drive is characterized by immanence, by remaining within ourselves, whereas the value response is characterized by transcendence, by going beyond ourselves. The realm of value is

the realm of the important-in-itself. This realm is transcendent to any person and his subjective desires. In going beyond myself to a tool or means which is formally transcendent to me I miss the objective reality of the tool, I see it only in terms of my subjective need. In going beyond myself to a value which is also formally transcendent to me I grasp the objective importance of the value and give it its due response. One might say that one's virtue is immanent, for it is within one's self. Yet virtue, which comes from the right relation to value is characterized by transcendence. The value response is characterized by transcendence because that which motivates the response and the end for which it is given are transcendent. The satisfaction of a drive or urge is characterized by immanence because that which motivates the action and the end of the action are within the person.

As God is the Ultimate Value so He is the Ultimately Transcendent. God is not just transcendent to a particular thing or person but He is infinitely transcendent to all that is. To transcend oneself means to rise above or beyond one's limits or powers. This transcendence is possible for a person only when he is related to God, the Ultimately Transcendent.

Two Components of Personality

For the purpose of this paper we will look at immanence and transcendence in relation to becoming oneself.

We quote Von Hildebrand:

Two main components of personality must here be distinguished: in the first place, the fullness of the essential spiritual 'organ,' the faculty of loving and knowing, the power of will, the natural potential of the person, the intensity of life which flows in him--we might say his 'essential endowment,' as distinct from special talents; in the second place, the organic link with the world of values and of truth, the perception of them, the response to them, the living in truth, in tune with the objective logos, and the absence of all subjective deviations from the meaning of being.¹

This first component of personality, the natural potential, is the immanent part of a person. This is of course very important in becoming one's self, for it does include one's special talents and the vitality of his life. However without the second component, the relationship to the realm of the transcendent, one's personality remains incomplete. The first component of personality is concerned with man as spirit only in the ontological sense, while the second component refers to man as spirit, in the sense of his being consciously related to the transcendent, i.e. in the sense of intentional transcendence.

In another passage Von Hildebrand more clearly points out the correlations between these two components

¹Von Hildebrand, Liturgy and Personality, p. 17.

and the notions of immanence and transcendence. "The difference between an appetite or urge (the tendency for example, to develop a talent, to release spiritual energies) and a value response clearly reveals the essential immanence of the first and the transcendence of the second."² The realm of the immanent is very broad, including the satisfaction of drives and also the development of talents and the growth of the ontological endowments. The essential characteristics of the relationship to the transcendent are the characteristics of the value response. These are: (1) Value response has the character of self-abandonment, of ". . . conforming of ourselves to the logos of the value." Urges are not engendered by the object and its importance and so are blindly immanent. Urges are engendered by something within the person. (2) ". . . Value response possesses a completely new, intelligible meaningfulness; and especially as transcendence in an entirely new sense." The value response transcends the realm of the purely personal and takes one to what is objectively important-in-itself. (3) "Only in the value response do we find that such a response is objectively due the object."³ From these characteristics it is clear

²Von Hildebrand, Ethics, p. 220.

³Ibid., pp. 214-218. Cf. also Von Hildebrand, Liturgy and Personality, p. 47 in which he speaks of the theocentric man as opposed to the egocentric man who is incapable of the self-abandon necessary to the value response.

that when one is concerned with what is important for the self, no matter how broadly, one is still within the realm of the immanent.

While the relationship to the transcendent is not part of man's natural potential it is not an activity which is foreign to him. "It is indeed a deep characteristic of man to desire to be confronted with something beyond self-centeredness, which obligates us and affords us the possibility of transcending the limits of our subjective inclinations, tendencies, urges, and drives rooted exclusively in our nature."⁴ The transcendent confronts us, obligates us and allows us to go beyond the limits of our nature. By being related to the transcendent, man at the same time both acknowledges his finitude by acknowledging that a response is due to a greater Power, and also is related to the Infinite by going beyond his natural potential.

The capacity to transcend himself is one of man's deepest characteristics. . . . Man cannot be understood if we interpret all his activities as manifestations of an automatic striving for self-perfection. . . . It is not an immanent movement, unconscious or conscious which is man's typical mark.

. . . The nature of the value response in no way requires indifference toward our own objective good. . . . Later on we shall see that the value response and our deep, legitimate desire for true happiness, far from being antithetic are organically linked.⁵

⁴Von Hildebrand, Ethics, p. 37.

⁵Ibid., pp. 218-19.

This passage shows that becoming oneself is not just a striving for self-perfection, not an immanent movement such as the will to power. As Kierkegaard stated, the self must be related to the Power which constitutes it, in order to be its true self. Becoming the self is not the goal of the relationship to the constituting Power but the consequence of this relationship; also, one is related to God not only as Power but as the omnipotent Good or Value.

Nietzsche's View of Man as Immanent

We have seen several times that Nietzsche is concerned with the realms of the subjectively satisfying and so with the immanent. But let us look at these ideas more closely for some have claimed that Nietzsche is indeed involved with Transcendence.⁶ Nietzsche seems to acknowledge only one genuine component of personality and that is the natural potential which a man possesses. Nietzsche sees any relation to a greater Power or an objective value as a weakening of the personality.

We do not believe that a man will become another if he is not that other already; i.e. if he is not, as is often the case a multiplicity of persons, at least the embryo of persons. In this case one can bring a different role into the foreground and draw 'the former man' back--The aspect is changed not the essence--That someone ceases to perform certain actions is a mere fatum brutum that permits the most various interpreta-

⁶See below note 14.

tions. It is not always the case that the habit of a certain act is broken, the ultimate reason for it removed.⁷

This passage clearly shows that for Nietzsche one becomes oneself by developing what one already in some way is. He would deny the Christian idea of putting on the new man. We would agree that a change of actions does not necessarily indicate that one is a changed person. It is true that one's ontological essence or natural potential does not change, but for Nietzsche real change and becoming does not take place in the sphere of intentionality, in one's relation to the realm of value. This component of the personality which involves true becoming Nietzsche has denied. His only answer is that one must love one's fate. Because he does not acknowledge that with God all things are possible, he does not allow for the possibility of conversion and its power.

Nietzsche insists that the Overman is not an ideal of a higher kind of man. One suspects that this antithesis to ideals is because of the connotation of their being above man and requiring a certain relationship. Indeed "higher" implies transcendence, whereas "more" or "intensity" do not as such imply transcendence. The movement towards more power and the intensification of consciousness is still an immanent movement. Perhaps he

⁷Nietzsche, The Will to Power, p. 211.

would rather describe him as the ultimate natural man. Indeed he says, "Genius resides in instinct; goodness likewise. One acts perfectly only when one acts instinctively."⁸ This passage reiterates the ideas that for Nietzsche whatever greatness belongs to man is immanent and has nothing to do with man's relationship to the transcendent.

One of Nietzsche's main criticisms of Christianity was that it presented an ideal type of man and therefore did not allow for individuality.

A virtuous man is a lower species because he is not a 'person' but acquires his value by conforming to a pattern of man that is fixed once and for all. He does not possess his value apart: he can be compared, he has his equals, he must not be an individual--⁹

Nietzsche does not see that a virtuous man conforms to the objective nature of the value which demands a response, not to a pattern of man. Conforming to a pattern of man implies that what is important is how men compare with one another, rather than the difference between man and God. Nietzsche denies that man becomes himself only by being an individual before God, because he holds that being before God denies one's individuality. Being before God demands obedience which in Nietzsche's mind is a limitation of the immanent dynamism of the instincts and so a limitation of one's individual personality. He de-

⁸Ibid., p. 243. Cf. also Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, p. 261.

⁹Nietzsche, The Will to Power, p. 176.

sires not only to be apart from all other men but from God as well.

Religion for Kierkegaard was primarily individual, an essentially personal matter between one soul and God; the principle of Christianity is the importance of the individual, and 'with this category Christianity stands or falls.' His formula for becoming a Christian--inasmuch as we are not born Christians nor become Christians en masse--is to relate oneself personally, as an individual to God.¹⁰

Bonifazi's description of Kierkegaard shows that being a unique individual and being related to the transcendent are integrally connected. A Christian is not one who conforms to a pattern of men but one who has a personal relationship to God. When we speak of the value of a person, of his intrinsic importance, we are stating that apart from his relationship to any other man, or any purpose he might serve that each individual is worthy of respect. But this is not to say that this intrinsic importance requires that man be absolutely independent. Indeed it is because each man has the possibility of relating himself to the Power which constitutes him that he possesses value.

When Nietzsche speaks of the virtuous man he is speaking of a man who is related to values in a certain

¹⁰ Bonifazi, Christendom Attacked, p. 148. He is quoting Kierkegaard's, The Point of View, p. 136. Cf. also Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, p. 166, in which he speaks of the worldly view of man always being concerned about the differences between man.

way. We have seen that the relationship to values and the relationship to the transcendent are closely connected because God, the Ultimately Transcendent, is the Ultimate Value. For the Christian the relationship to God entails a certain relationship to values, but always one is related to God as an individual.

'There is only One who knows what He Himself is, that is God; and He knows what every man in himself is, for it is precisely by being before God that every man is.' This Christian view of man stands in contrast to Nietzsche's 'purely immanent anthropology' in which man himself is the creator of values: 'What is injurious to me is injurious in itself.'¹¹

This passage shows that a view of man that does not recognize that man is essentially an individual before God; that sees man as the creator of values, and which in fact views value only in terms of the subjectively satisfying is in fact a view of man as immanent. Nietzsche's Overman is transcendent only in relation to the mass of men. But the transcendence of the self is only present when one acknowledges the limits of one's finitude and when one is then related to the Infinite as Transcendent.

When man is related to the transcendent he is related to something outside of and beyond himself. It is this relationship to something beyond which allows a man to go beyond the limits of his self-centeredness. Nietzsche, however, sees any relationship to something

¹¹ Bonifazi, Christendom Attacked, p. 84, quoting Kierkegaard, Christian Discourses, p. 43, and then Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, p. 228.

beyond as limiting and weakening.

The nihilistic question 'for what?' is rooted in the old habit of supposing that the goal must be put up, given, demanded from outside by some superhuman authority. . . . One wants to get around the will, the willing of a goal, the risk of positing a goal for oneself; one wants to rid oneself of the responsibility (one would accept fatalism).¹²

This is a rather curious passage for Nietzsche seems to be saying that one is stronger and better if one wills a goal for oneself than if one accepts a goal from outside. Yet we have seen before that when Nietzsche spoke of himself he said that there was no willing or striving for anything in him and that his formula for greatness was amor fati. So perhaps Nietzsche's Overman is not the totally independent man of power which he seems to be.

Nietzsche understood Christianity as a complete outlook upon the world conceived as a whole; once 'it's leading concept, the belief in God, is wrenched from it, the whole is destroyed; nothing vital remains in our grasp.' But if Christian moral commands are of transcendental origin, and stand or fall with belief in God, Nietzsche required some authority to formulate his inverted canons of ethics, a requirement met by the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence. Our actions must be worthy to be repeated eternally.¹³

Nietzsche is correct in his understanding of Christianity as an outlook on the world as a whole, and in which the belief in God is absolutely necessary. Indeed for the Christian understanding the world as a whole is a conse-

¹²Nietzsche, The Will to Power, p. 16.

¹³Bonifazi, Christendom Attacked, p. 115, quoting Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols/Antichrist, p. 131.

quence of his faith in God. Christian moral commands are of transcendent origins. Love of one's neighbor flows from one's relationship as an individual to God. However, if it is then true that Nietzsche sees the need for an authority for his ethics, it does not follow that Nietzsche's view of man is less immanentistic. The doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence is intimately connected with the notion of amor fati and so although one may want one's actions to be worthy of being repeated again and again, these actions are still motivated by the subjectively satisfying. The Christian cannot accept this cyclical view of life for he does not desire that his actions be repeated but rather that he progress closer to his goal of relationship to God.¹⁴

¹⁴There are some, e.g. Karl Jaspers in "Kierkegaard and Nietzsche," in Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, ed. by Walter Kaufmann (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1956), p. 172, who do claim that the Eternal Return and Overman are transcendent in Nietzsche's philosophy. He admits that on the surface there seems to be no transcendence: "If one takes the symbols of Nietzsche's religion literally, there is no longer any transcendental content in their will toward immanence: aside from the eternal cycle of things, there is the will of power, the affirmation of Being, the pleasure which 'wills deep, deep eternity.'" If Jaspers wants to say that these things which appear immanent are actually transcendent it seems he must be using transcendent in a very narrow sense. In the Eternal Return one may transcend time perhaps, and the Overman may transcend the limits of the mass of men, but he is still basically immanent for he acknowledges no greater Power and is totally motivated by what is good for him, rather than responding to a transcendent value for its own sake.

Kierkegaard: Individuality and the Relation
to the Transcendent

We have already seen many times that in Kierkegaard's philosophy of man one becomes oneself only by being related to the Transcendent. Let us look more closely at how Kierkegaard views the relationship between individuality and this relationship to the Transcendent, for Nietzsche seems to think that acknowledging anything beyond man weakens the individual.

"In relation to God who is 'the origin and well spring of all individuality,' each man is solitary, absolutely independent; yet whoever has the courage and humility for this meeting with God--has individuality, he discovers the individual whom God has graciously permitted him to be, true individuality is the unique relationship to the Eternal."¹⁵ Important things to note here are that the relationship to God requires courage and humility, and that God is the origin of individuality. In the relationship to God one needs a certain kind of strength, courage, to meet the demands of the relationship and one also needs humility to acknowledge one's own weaknesses and so be freed from despair. God is the source of one's individuality and one discovers the self which has come

¹⁵Bonifazi, Christendom Attacked, p. 149, quoting Kierkegaard, The Works of Love, p. 220. Cf. Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, p. 142, in which he describes the Christian heroism as venturing wholly to be oneself, the individual, alone before God.

from God. For Nietzsche the Overman wants to be the creator of his own individuality. Nietzsche views individuality as implying that one must be different, apart from all men and acknowledge no greater power, else one becomes part of a mass. Kierkegaard too deplored the crowd and men who claimed to be Christians only because they belonged to a group, but he saw that the alternative, being an individual, could only come about through relating oneself to God and so to one's true self.¹⁶

Kierkegaard sees that it is because someone such as the Overman is totally immanent and self-centered that he cannot accept the relationship to God as necessary for his individuality. "The narrow-mindedness of the natural man cannot welcome for itself the extraordinary which God has intended for him, so he is offended . . ." at the accusation of weakness.¹⁷ The natural man who believes that all his greatness is within him waiting only to be developed cannot look beyond himself and acknowledge that the individuality offered by a greater Power is where his true greatness lies. The relationship to God is something out of the ordinary for each man must respond to the call of the supreme value on his own, he does not achieve this relationship as a matter of course, by development of his natural potential.

¹⁶ Cf. Søren Kierkegaard, "That Individual," in Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, pp. 92-99.

¹⁷ Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, p. 217.

Each man who wishes to establish a relationship to the Transcendent must willingly obey the call of the value for a due response. Only then will he become an individual.

The important thing is to choose with energy and seriousness, for then the personality shows its relationship with the eternal, the experience of choosing 'imparts to a man's nature a solemnity, a quiet dignity;' bringing him face to face with 'the eternal Power itself' it enobles his personality for an eternity. He becomes himself; his consciousness is unified, his personality integrated, and he is himself.¹⁸

One must choose the new direction of being related to God, one cannot just accept one's fate and allow one's natural potential to develop if one is to become oneself. It is obvious that the choice which is essential to becoming oneself is not the same as choosing what is subjectively satisfying. As Kierkegaard has stated, one's endeavors are only marked by seriousness when the self acknowledges a great Power which constitutes it. The relationship to this Power which results in the integration of one's personality is what Kierkegaard is speaking of when he refers to the self relating itself to itself. The absolutely necessary relationship to the Transcendent Power should not be lost sight of in the midst of Kierkegaard's extensive writing on individuality, subjectivity and choice.¹⁹

¹⁸ Bonifazi, Christendom Attacked, p. 117, quoting Kierkegaard, Either/Or, pp. 226, 149, 147.

¹⁹Many who have tried to claim Kierkegaard as the father of existentialism seem to ignore this central place of the Transcendent in Kierkegaard's philosophy. When Kierkegaard says, "truth is subjectivity" he is emphasizing the fact that one must be related to God as a subject, an individual, and not just as a thinker. One must relate one's whole being, not just one's thought, to God in order to become oneself. Kierkegaard's discussion of this point in Concluding Unscientific Postscript, trans. by David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 169-224, makes several distinctions about subjectivity, objectivity and the existing individual. Throughout the discussion of inwardness and passion the point remains: "Essentially it is the God-relationship that makes a man a man . . ." (p. 219) Kierkegaard is not speaking of subjectivity in the sense in which it is often used to denote someone who has no relation to anything outside of himself and chooses only what is good for him.

Kierkegaard states, "Only ethical and ethico-religious knowledge has an essential relationship to the existence of the knower." (p. 177) This is so because through such knowledge one comes to relationship to God. So it must follow that truth is not attained through objectively thinking about God but only through the commitment of the whole person as subject. Kierkegaard emphasizes the existing subject but always with an eye to the subject's relationship to God. He also reiterates here (p. 179, footnote) that one comes to this relationship by going through despair to faith.

VI. OVERMAN VS. THE INDIVIDUAL BEFORE GOD

In this chapter we will reconsider Nietzsche's and Kierkegaard's views on the self. For Nietzsche a man becomes himself not by transcendence, by relating himself to another, but rather by seeking his own greatness. Egoism is central to Nietzsche's philosophy. Nietzsche presents Overman as the creator of values. In this way he denies that component of man's personality which is his relationship to the world of values. He is guilty of Satanic pride in desiring metaphysical lordship over the process of becoming himself.

Kierkegaard describes the Self as a relationship. Only by being related to God in faith is a person free from despair and thus wholly himself. For Kierkegaard man does not become a self by seeking to do so. Only by losing oneself and seeking God, by acknowledging God as the Power which constitutes the self does the self become truly itself.

Now that we have looked at Nietzsche and Kierkegaard in relation to the categories of importance, to their notions of power and to the concepts of immanence and transcendence we return to their notions of the self. We have seen that for Nietzsche his vision of what man could be is

the Overman. Kierkegaard sees man's greatness as the Individual who is in the right relation to God. Let us examine again the great differences between these two views of the self and how these views follow from their respective attitudes to power and transcendence.

In criticizing Christianity Nietzsche states:

. . . religion is the product of a doubt concerning the unity of the person, an alteration of the personality: insofar as everything great and strong in man has been conceived as superhuman and external, man has belittled himself--he has separated the two sides of himself, one very paltry and weak, one very strong and astonishing, into two spheres and called the former 'man,' the latter 'God.'¹

We see here again the themes that man does not acknowledge a transcendent value but rather posits a realm of the beyond because he does not realize his own power. Nietzsche does not recognize the two factors of personality, one's natural potential and one's relation to the realm of values. He thinks that one must look at man from the point of view of developing his immanent potential and that anything beyond this self-centeredness involves the breaking down of the unity of personality. However, Kierkegaard has shown that one's personality is integrated only when one freely acknowledges one's metaphysical situation as an individual before God. This is not a belittling of man but rather a realistic recognition of one's limitations and finitude, while remembering that

¹Nietzsche, The Will to Power, pp. 86-87.

man has always the possibility of relating to the eternal.

Nietzsche's Overman judges the worth of all things by whether or not they are useful to him. More specifically a thing has importance if it enhances his power. Nietzsche looks at the realm of moral laws and values also in this light. Consider this quote from Bonifazi: "Their [moral laws'] worth is to be judged by the degree to which they promote life. But Life is the Will to Power, therefore every code of behaviour is a tool in the struggle for power; it is a device whereby some type of man seeks to secure himself and to subordinate his rivals."² This description shows that even if Nietzsche were correct in stating that life is will to power he would still err in judging the worth of moral laws by how well they serve life, rather than seeing that they are important in themselves.³

²Bonifazi, Christendom Attacked, p. 108.

³On page 84 of Christendom Attacked Bonifazi states, "Kierkegaard affirms and Nietzsche denies God in the interest of a more abundant life." He claims they are both Romantics and so primarily concerned with self-fulfillment. Those who look at them both only as existentialists might say the same thing. Bonifazi has missed the point that although it is true that man's relationship to God enables him to become himself, becoming himself is not what motivates Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard affirms God not because He serves life or any other interest but because He is the Ultimate Value and he must affirm Him. If God is equated with Life, as is often done in Scripture then one could accept Bonifazi's statement without doing damage to the Christian viewpoint of Kierkegaard's writing. However one could not then say that he was motivated by the same thing as Nietzsche. If Kierkegaard is motivated by Life (God) he is in the realm of values; if Nietzsche is motivated by Life (will to power) he is in the realm of the subjectively satisfying.

Nietzsche does not wish to acknowledge a realm of value apart from the subjectively satisfying; nor does he acknowledge that one becomes oneself by relating to another, to a greater Power. Zarathustra says, "'You had not yet sought yourselves; and you found me. Thus do all believers; therefore all faith amounts to so little. Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves, and only when you have all denied me will I return to you.'" ⁴ Nietzsche's formula for becoming oneself is the opposite of Christianity in which one loses oneself to find Christ and so gain his soul.

Egoism

For Nietzsche man is motivated by the desire to become himself, for Kierkegaard man ought to be motivated by the desire for union with God. For Nietzsche the end is immanent, for Kierkegaard it is transcendent. "In contrast to man, the Superman is an end in himself, for egoism is of the essence of a noble soul, by which Nietzsche meant that 'other beings must naturally be in subjection, and have to sacrifice themselves' to the Superman who would regard this as 'something that may have its basis in the primary law of things,' as 'justice itself.'" ⁵

⁴Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, p. 220, in which he is quoting from Thus Spoke Zarathustra, First Part, last chapter.

⁵Bonifazi, Christendom Attacked, p. 147, quoting Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, p. 122. Cf. also Nietzsche, The Will to Power, pp. 141-42.

Here we have an indication that Nietzsche is aware of the power of the realm of value and that he would like to use this power for his own purposes rather than giving to values their due response. Nietzsche immanentizes the transcendent value. He retains some of the formal traits of value (e.g. its power, its demanding and calling for a due response from man) and applies them to the Overman who can now demand sacrifice of others. This is the transvaluation of values. Selfishness and egoism are of prime importance for Nietzsche for a man's greatness is in his instincts. For Kierkegaard the self is more than the ego and one must be more concerned with responding to values than with satisfying ego demands if one is to become one-self.

Nietzsche thinks that the Overman should embody the qualities which Christianity negates and that primarily he must become the giver of his own values.

What values are negated by it? [the Christian ideal] What does its counterideal comprise?--Pride, pathos of distance, great responsibility, exuberance, splendid animality, the instincts that delight in war and conquest; the deification of passion, of revenge, of cunning, of anger, of voluptuousness, of adventure, of knowledge--; the noble ideal is negated: the beauty, wisdom, power, splendor and dangerousness of the type 'man': the man who fixes goals, the 'man of the future' . . .⁶

Here again we see that Nietzsche equates the nobility of man with the development of his immanent potential, the

⁶Nietzsche, The Will to Power, p. 129.

satisfaction of all ego-centered drives, and the fulfillment of his will to power. Passion, revenge, cunning and anger all have the character of reflexivity rather than of transcendence. Because Nietzsche is concerned with the development of a powerful "type" of man, independent and totally responsible for his own greatness, he thinks that Christianity is also concerned with the development of a "type" of man and does not see that a Christian is an individual before God, who is not concerned with how he compares with other men.

Overman's Pride as the Creator of Values

We began this paper by examining the differences between value and the subjectively satisfying. The ways Nietzsche and Kierkegaard view these differences are central to their views of man. The only way Nietzsche wants to be "related" to the realm of value is by creating that realm himself. He views this as superhuman, but perhaps we might call it inhuman. By denying man's metaphysical position of relatedness to the realm of value one is denying half of his personality and limiting man to the possibilities of his fate. Nietzsche thinks that if man is the creator of his own values he enhances his own power and greatness. ". . . He [Zarathustra] does not conceal the fact that his type of man, a relatively superhuman type, is superhuman precisely in its relation to the good --that the good and the just would call his overman

devil."⁷ If man is the creator of his own "values" he is unable to transcend his own natural potential and so rather than being superhuman he really possesses only half of his true human self. Man is neither God nor devil, but is an individual with limitations and so his unique possibility of being related to the eternal.

Von Hildebrand has a good description of the man who wants to be totally responsible for creating himself, the man who has a desire for "metaphysical lordship."

The man who has fallen prey to this satanic pride is blind to the real nature of values, to their intrinsic beauty and dignity; but, unlike the concupiscent man, who in his complete bluntness ignores values, he grasps their metaphysical power. Certainly he misunderstands the nature of this metaphysical power, otherwise he could not attempt to dissociate it from values. . . . This type of man is further characterized by metaphysical haughtiness. He abhors all submission, all obedience.⁸

We have seen that this pride is characteristic of Nietzsche's philosophy of the Overman. The Overman wishes to appropriate the power of values to his own purposes. He feels that the free obedience which is characteristic of human value response and so of the human self, is a sign of weakness. He chooses to "obey" and "love" his fate thus imprisoning himself in his own immanence rather than allowing for the possibility of transcendence, and so of the true power of the human personality, the

⁷Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, p. 331.

⁸Von Hildebrand, Ethics, pp. 442-43. Cf. Nietzsche, The Will to Power, p. 136, where he speaks of "an extreme pride" which is in order for man.

individual before God.

Kierkegaard's Self as a Relation

For Kierkegaard man becomes himself only when he is related to the transcendent God through faith. Each individual must make the choice between faith and despair. Kierkegaard's description of the self is rather complicated but now that we have seen his notions of power, despair and transcendence we may be able to understand it more clearly.

The self is a relation which relates itself to its own self, or it is that in the relation [which accounts for it] that the relation 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. Man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short it is a synthesis. A synthesis is a relation between two factors. So regarded, man is not yet a self.⁹

When Kierkegaard says "the self is not the relation but [consists in the fact] that the relation relates itself to its own self" he is referring to the fact that the self is always in a process of becoming. The self is not just natural potential waiting to be developed. The fact that the self relates itself to itself indicates that the self takes an active part in becoming itself.

Man has two relations to God. First there is the metaphysical relation. Man's being depends on God, whe-

⁹Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, p. 146. Brackets are the editor's.

ther he is in faith or despair he is metaphysically related to God by this dependence. In addition to this metaphysical relation man is obliged to respond to God, to relate consciously to Him. Even if this intentional conscious relation of obedience is absent the metaphysical relation is still present. When man consciously responds to God he relates the metaphysical relation to God and thus he becomes transparently grounded in God. The self's relation to the world of value is something active, it is not just a matter of course. Here the self is integrated, becomes whole.

When Von Hildebrand speaks of the two factors in the development of personality he is speaking of the same thing as Kierkegaard when he speaks of man as a synthesis between two factors. The temporal, the finite, the necessary are part of man's natural potential. Man also has the possibility of relating to the eternal and the infinite through his free response to the demands of Value. As temporal man's life is seen as a ceaseless striving with no end or satiation in sight, but the eternal factor is the eternal now of the fullness of God's presence. The finite part of the synthesis is the limitation of man's metaphysical relation to God. Man cannot break the finitude on his own and become himself. This is the despair of willing to become oneself without God. The infinite in man is present when he goes beyond his metaphysical limits by relating consciously to God through

faith. Man's metaphysical essence is necessary but this essence can be liberated by transcending the metaphysical limits of the self by responding to God. Until man has actually made this choice to be related to the Transcendent Power and so acknowledged the most essential aspect of his being he is not yet a self.

If this relation which relates itself to its own self is constituted by another, the relation [the self] doubtless is the third term, but this relation (the third term) is in turn a relation relating itself to that which constituted the whole relation.

Such a derived, constituted relation is the human self, a relation which relates itself to its own self, and in relating itself to its own self relates itself to another.¹⁰

The self is not only related to itself, but primarily is related to the Power which constituted the relationship which is the self. The human self is a derived, constituted relation. This reiterates the metaphysical condition of man as the individual before God. This passage shows that man is not just immanently turned in upon himself in intentionally relating himself to himself, but he is consciously related to the transcendent Power which constitutes him. At first it sounds like Kierkegaard is saying that only by being concerned with itself does the self relate to another, but we can see from a further statement that one must first acknowledge the constituting power in order for one to become oneself. "This formula [i.e. that the self is constituted by another] is

¹⁰Ibid.

the expression for the total dependence of the relation (the self namely), the expression for the fact that the self cannot of itself attain and remain in equilibrium and rest by itself, but only by relating itself to that Power which constituted the whole relation."¹¹

Man is completely dependent on the Power which constitutes him in order to become himself. But this fact does not deny the free nature of man's relation to the realm of value. Kierkegaard points this out when speaking of despair.

No, this thing of despairing is inherent in man himself; but if he were not a synthesis, he could not despair, neither could he despair if the synthesis were not originally from God's hand in the right relationship.

Whence then comes despair? From the relation wherein the synthesis relates itself to itself, in that God who made man a relationship lets this go as it were out of His hand, that is in the fact that the relation relates itself to itself.¹²

Man despairs if he does not consciously relate to God as he is destined to. Without God the self is a reflexive, non-transcending relation and so not a true self. If man were not a synthesis, a relation between two factors, he could not despair. It is the tension between knowing what one is and what one might become, between giving in to the wishes of the subjectively satisfying and responding to the demands of value, which causes one to despair.

¹¹Ibid., p. 147. Brackets are the editor's.

¹²Ibid., p. 149.

For Nietzsche man does not despair, there is no tension, he only allows his natural potential to develop and loves his fate. Because God allows man to despair, allows him to relate himself to himself, take part in his own becoming, man is free though he is always grounded in the greater constituting Power.

This tension of despair is related to the leap of faith, which for Kierkegaard is the only alternative to despair. One cannot overcome despair by one's own efforts but one can be open to faith and believe that with God all things are possible.

Faith is a leap behind the action of which lies power generated in the tensions of inner struggle. . . . Bondage to finitude contrasts with the yearning for infinity; the insistent voice which calls for absolute obedience to the Absolute assails the demands of all relative moral τέλη; longing for redemption strives against subjection to sin's power.¹³

Faith is the condition of the self when despair is gone, when the factors are integrated, one is whole and truly oneself. "This then is the formula which describes the condition of the self when despair is completely eradicated: by relating itself to its own self and by willing to be itself the self is grounded transparently in the Power which posited it."¹⁴

¹³Bonifazi, Christendom Attacked, p. 130.

¹⁴Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, p. 147.

VII. CONCLUSION

This paper has presented two different philosophies of man. These philosophies were viewed in terms of the categories of importance, and their role in motivation. For Nietzsche man is motivated by his desire to attain what is useful to him, by his will to power. For Kierkegaard the real self is motivated by his desire to be properly related to God.

A man is motivated by will to power because he feels a lack in himself and desires to fill this emptiness. He wishes to enhance his power, to become something more, something greater than what he is. This desire to be greater is characterized by pride; one wants to be totally in control of enhancing one's greatness. Yet will to power like all drives is insatiable, one can never satisfy the desire for power. As an individual one cannot fulfill the will to power and so one sacrifices oneself to the greater impersonal power of fate, and amor fati becomes the formula for human greatness, though paradoxically it implies human weakness.

For Kierkegaard man is most himself when he turns from the realm of the subjectively satisfying to the realm of value; when his goal is not immanent but transcendent;

and when he is no longer concerned with enhancing his own power and is concerned with acknowledging the greater Power on whom he depends. In his metaphysical relation to God man is not yet a self. Only when he is intentionally related to God in obedience and faith and thus transparently grounded in God is he truly himself. He has gone beyond his human limitations to the Infinite through his response to God. Nietzsche sees man's intentional relation to God as a sign of weakness and so he is left imprisoned within the necessity of his fate, his metaphysical essence.

Nietzsche's Overman is presented as the man of the future, a superhuman goal, the epitome of the man of instincts. Kierkegaard's Individual before God, the man of faith, is also an ideal. Kierkegaard speaks of himself as being in despair rather than faith. Because it is a totally personal matter between oneself and God one cannot judge whether another actually has faith; indeed, it is difficult to determine regarding oneself. Since man is destined and obliged to relate consciously to God it is Kierkegaard's ideal of faith which is truly possible for man. Nietzsche's ideal of the Overman, a superhuman ideal, actually makes it impossible for a man to transcend the limitations of his metaphysical essence. Thus a man is cut off from the Infinite and the Eternal and remains "human, all-too human."

If man is motivated solely by will to power as Nietzsche claims, the self is something which is totally reflexive. It is always seeking to satisfy its immanent drives and urges and there is no relationship to anything beyond. The person is totally self-centered and the consequence of this is that he really has no self in the true sense of the word. He has only a metaphysical self.

Nietzsche presents the Overman as the creator of values and the master of himself. He does not wish to acknowledge the limits of man's finitude and his dependence on something greater. Without limits there is no individuality. Nietzsche's Overman then, rather than being the ultimate individual, actually becomes only the impersonal necessity of fate.

(Kierkegaard is the true proponent of individuality. Yet this is not individuality for its own sake, nor an individuality which is totally independent, rather it is the true individuality, the true selfhood which emerges from a right relationship to God.)

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