

Philosophical Fragments by Søren Kierkegaard

Preface

Propositio:

*The question is asked in ignorance,
by one who does not even know
what can have led him to ask it.*

The present offering is merely a piece, *proprio Marte, propriis auspiciis, proprio stipendio*. It does not make the slightest pretension to share in the philosophical movement of the day, or to fill any of the various roles customarily assigned in this connection: transitional, intermediary, final, preparatory, participating, collaborating, volunteer follower, hero, or at any rate relative hero, or at the very least absolute trumpeter. The offering is a piece and such it will remain, even if like Holberg's *magister* I were *volente Deo* to write a sequel in seventeen pieces, just as half-hour literature is half-hour literature even in folio quantities. Such as it is, however, the offering is commensurate with my talents, since I cannot excuse my failure to serve the System after the manner of the noble Roman, *merito magis quam ignavia*; I am an idler from love of ease, *ex animi sententia*, and for good and sufficient reasons. Nevertheless, I am unwilling to incur the reproach of, at all times an offense against the State, and especially so in a period of ferment; in ancient times it was made punishable by death. But suppose my intervention served merely to increase the prevailing confusion, thus making me guilty of a still greater crime, would it not have been better had I kept to my own concerns? It is not given to everyone to have his private tasks of meditation and reflection so happily coincident with the public interest that it becomes difficult to judge how far he serves merely himself and how far the public good. Consider the example of Archimedes, who sat unperturbed in the contemplation of his circles while Syracuse was being taken, and the beautiful words he spoke to the Roman soldier who slew him: *nolite perturbare circulos meos*. Let him who is not so fortunate look about him for another example. When Philip threatened to lay siege to the city of Corinth and all its inhabitants hastily bestirred themselves in defense, some polishing weapons, some gathering stones, some repairing the walls, Diogenes seeing all this hurriedly folded his mantle about him and began to roll his tub zealously back and forth through the streets. When he was asked why he did this he replied that he wished to be busy like all the rest, and rolled his tub lest he should be the only idler among so many industrious citizens. Such conduct is at any rate not sophistical, if Aristotle be right in describing sophistry as the art of making money. It is certainly not open to misunderstanding; it is quite inconceivable that

Diogenes should have been hailed as the saviour and benefactor of the city. And it seems equally impossible that anyone could hit upon the idea of ascribing to a piece like the present any sort of epoch-making significance, in my eyes the greatest calamity that could possibly befall it. Nor is it likely that anyone will hail its author as the systematic Salomon Goldkalb so long and eagerly awaited in our dear royal residential city of Copenhagen. This could happen only if the guilty person were by nature endowed with extraordinary stupidity, and presumably by shouting in antistrophic and antiphonal song every time someone persuaded him that now was the beginning of a new era and a new epoch, had howled his head so empty of its original *quantum satis* of common sense as to have attained a state of ineffable bliss in what might be called the howling madness of the higher lunacy, recognizable by such symptoms as convulsive shouting; a constant reiteration of the words "era," "epoch," "era and epoch," "epoch and era," "the System"; an irrational exaltation of the spirits as if each day were not merely a quadrennial leap-year day, but one of those extraordinary days that come only once in a thousand years; the concept all the while like an acrobatic clown in the current circus season, every moment performing these everlasting dog-tricks of flopping over and over, until it flops over the man himself. May a kind Heaven preserve me and my piece from such a fate! And may no noise-making busybody interfere to snatch me out of my carefree content as the author of a little piece, or prevent a kind and benevolent reader from examining it at his leisure, to see if it contains anything that he can use. May I escape the tragicomic predicament of being forced to laugh at my own misfortune, as must have been the case with the good people of Fredericia, when they awoke one morning to read in the newspaper an account of a fire in their town, in which it was described how "the drums beat the alarm, the fire-engines rushed through the streets" -- although the town of Fredericia boasts of only one fire-engine and not much more than one street; leaving it to be inferred that this one engine, instead of making for the scene of the fire, took time to execute important maneuvers and flanking movements up and down the street. However, my little piece is not very apt to suggest the beating of a drum, and its author is perhaps the last man in the world to sound the alarm.

But what is my personal opinion of the matters herein discussed? . . . I could wish that no one would ask me this question; for next to knowing whether I have any opinion or not, nothing could very well be of less importance to another than the knowledge of what that opinion might be. To have an opinion is both too much and too little for my uses. To have an opinion presupposes a sense of ease and security in life, such as is implied in having a wife and children; it is a privilege not to be enjoyed by one who must keep himself in readiness night and day, or is without assured means of support. Such is my situation in the realm of the spirit. I have disciplined myself and keep myself under discipline, in order that I may be able to execute a sort of nimble dancing in the service of Thought, so far as possible also to the honor of the God, and for my own satisfaction. For this reason I have had -to resign the domestic happiness, the civic respectability, the glad fellowship, the *communio bonorum*, which is implied in the possession of an opinion. -- Do I enjoy any reward? Have I permission, like the priest at the altar, to eat of the sacrifices? . . . That must remain my own affair. My master is good for it, as the bankers say, and good in quite a different sense from theirs. But if anyone were to be so polite as to assume that I have an opinion, and if he were to carry his gallantry to the extreme of adopting this

opinion because he believed it to be mine, I should have to be sorry for his politeness, in that it was bestowed upon so unworthy an object, and for his opinion, if he has no other opinion than mine. I stand ready to risk my own life, to play the game of thought with it in all earnest; but another's life I cannot jeopardize. This service is perhaps the only one I can render to Philosophy, I who have no learning to offer her, "scarcely enough for the course at one drachma, to say nothing of the great course at fifty drachmas" (*Cratylus*). I have only my life, and the instant a difficulty offers I put it in play. Then the dance goes merrily, for my partner is the thought of Death, and is indeed a nimble dancer; every human being, on the other hand, is too heavy for me. Therefore I pray, *per deos obsecro*: Let no one invite me, for I will not dance.

Chapter 1: A Project of Thought

A

How far does the Truth admit of being learned? With this question let us begin. It was a Socratic question, or became such in consequence of the parallel Socratic question with respect to virtue, since virtue was again determined as insight. (*Protagoras, Gorgias, Meno, Euthydemus.*) In so far as the Truth is conceived as something to be learned, its non-existence is evidently presupposed, so that in proposing to learn it one makes it the object of an inquiry. Here we are confronted with the difficulty to which Socrates calls attention in the *Meno* (80, near the end), and there characterizes as a "pugnacious proposition"; one cannot seek for what he knows, and it seems equally impossible for him to seek for what he does not know. For what a man knows he cannot seek, since he knows it; and what he does not know he cannot seek, since he does not even know for what to seek. Socrates thinks the difficulty through in the doctrine of Recollection, by which all learning and inquiry is interpreted as a kind of remembering; one who is ignorant needs only a reminder to help him come to himself in the consciousness of what he knows. Thus the Truth is not introduced into the individual from without, but was within him. This thought receives further development at the hands of Socrates, and it ultimately becomes the point of concentration for the pathos of the Greek consciousness, since it serves as a proof for the immortality of the soul; but with a backward reference, it is important to note, and hence as proof for the soul's preëxistence.¹

In the light of this idea it becomes apparent with what wonderful consistency Socrates remained true to himself, through his manner of life giving artistic expression to what he had understood. He entered into the role of midwife and sustained it throughout; not because his thought "had no positive content,"² but because he perceived that this relation is the highest that one human being can sustain to another. And in this surely Socrates was everlastingly right; for even if a divine point of departure is ever given, between man and man this is the true relationship, provided we reflect upon the absolute and refuse to daily with the accidental, from the heart renouncing the understanding of the half-truths which seem the delight of men and the secret of the System. Socrates was a midwife subjected to examination by the God; his work was in fulfillment of a divine mission

(Plato's *Apology*), though he seemed to men in general a most singular creature (Plato, *Theaetetus* 149); it was in accordance with a divine principle, as Socrates also understood it, that he was by the God forbidden to beget (Plato, *Theaetetus*, 150); for between man and man the maieutic relationship is the highest, and begetting belongs to the God alone.

From the standpoint of the Socratic thought every point of departure in time is *eo ipso* accidental, an occasion, a vanishing moment. The teacher himself is no more than this; and if he offers himself and his instruction on any other basis, he does not give but takes away, and is not even the other's friend, much less his teacher. Herein lies the profundity of the Socratic thought, and the noble humanity he so thoroughly expressed, which refused to enter into a false and vain fellowship with clever heads, but felt an equal kinship with a tanner; whence he soon "came to the conclusion that the study of Physics was not man's proper business, and therefore began to philosophize about moral matters in the workshops and in the market-place" (Diogenes Laertius, II, v, 21), but philosophized with equal absoluteness everywhere. With slipshod thoughts, with higgling and haggling, maintaining a little here and conceding a little there, as if the individual might to a certain extent owe something to another, but then again to a certain extent not; with loose words that explain everything except what this "to a certain extent" means -- with such makeshifts it is not possible to² Such is the criticism commonly passed upon Socrates in our age, which boasts of its positivity much as if a polytheist were to speak with scorn of the negativity of a monotheist; for the polytheist has many gods, the monotheist only one. So our philosophers have many thoughts, all valid to a certain extent; Socrates had only one, which was absolute.

advance beyond Socrates, nor will one reach the concept of a Revelation, but merely remain within the sphere of idle chatter. In the Socratic view each individual is his own center, and the entire world centers in him, because his self-knowledge is a knowledge of God. It was thus Socrates understood himself, and thus he thought that everyone must understand himself, in the light of this understanding interpreting his relationship to each individual, with equal humility and with equal pride. He had the courage and self-possession to be sufficient unto himself, but also in his relations to his fellowmen to be merely an occasion, even when dealing with the meanest capacity. How rare is such magnanimity! How rare in a time like ours, when the parson is something more than the clerk, when almost every second person is an authority, while all these distinctions and all these many authorities are mediated in a common madness, a *commune naufragium*. For while no human being was ever truly an authority for another, or ever helped anyone by posing as such, or was ever able to take his client with him in truth, there is another sort of success that may by such methods be won; for it has never yet been known to fail that one fool, when he goes astray, takes several others with him.

With this understanding of what it means to learn the Truth, the fact that I have been instructed by Socrates or by Prodicus or by a servant-girl, can concern me only historically; or in so far as I am a Plato in sentimental enthusiasm, it may concern me poetically. But this enthusiasm, beautiful as it is, and such that I could wish both for myself and all others a share of this, which only a Stoic could frown upon; and though I may be lacking in the Socratic magnanimity and the Socratic self-denial to think its

nothingness -- this enthusiasm, so Socrates would say, is only an illusion, a want of clarity in a mind where earthly inequalities seethe almost voluptuously. Nor can it interest me otherwise than historically that Socrates' or Prodicus' doctrine was this or that; for the Truth in which I rest was within me, and came to light through myself, and not even Socrates could have given it to me, as little as the driver can pull the load for the horses, though he may help them by applying the lash.³ My relation to Socrates or Prodicus cannot concern me with respect to my eternal happiness, for this is given me retrogressively through my possession of the Truth, which I had from the beginning without knowing it. If I imagine myself meeting Socrates or Prodicus or the servant-girl in another life, then here again neither of them could be more to me than an occasion, which Socrates fearlessly expressed by saying that even in the lower world he proposed merely to ask questions; for the underlying principle of all questioning is that the one who is asked must have the Truth in himself, and be able to acquire it by himself. The temporal point of departure is nothing; for as soon as I discover that I have known the Truth from eternity without being aware of it, the same instant this moment of occasion is hidden in the Eternal, and so incorporated with it that I cannot even find it so to speak, even if I sought it; because in my eternal consciousness there is neither here nor there, but only an *ubique et nusquam*.

B

Now if things are to be otherwise, the Moment in time must have a decisive significance, so that I will never be able to forget it either in time or eternity; because the Eternal, which hitherto did not exist, came into existence in this moment. Under this presupposition let us now proceed to consider the consequences for the problem of how far it is possible to acquire a knowledge of the Truth.

A. The Antecedent State

We begin with the Socratic difficulty about seeking the Truth, which seems equally impossible whether we have it or do not have it. The Socratic thought really abolishes this disjunction, since it appears that at bottom every human being is in possession of the Truth. This was Socrates' explanation; we have seen what follows from it with respect to the moment. Now if the latter is to have decisive significance, the seeker must be destitute of the Truth up to the very moment of his learning it; he cannot even have possessed it in the form of ignorance, for in that case the moment becomes merely occasional. What is more, he cannot even be described as a seeker; for such is the expression we must give to the difficulty if we do not wish to explain it Socratically. He must therefore be characterized as beyond the pale of the Truth, not approaching it like a proselyte, but departing from it; or as being in Error. He is then in a state of Error. But how is he now to be reminded, or what will it profit him to be reminded of what he has not known, and consequently cannot recall?

B. The Teacher

If the Teacher serves as an occasion by means of which the learner is reminded, he cannot help the learner to recall that he really knows the Truth; for the learner is in a state of Error. What the Teacher can give him occasion to remember is, that he is in Error. But in this consciousness the learner is excluded from the Truth even more decisively than before, when he lived in ignorance of his Error. In this manner the Teacher thrusts the learner away from him, precisely by serving as a reminder; only that the learner, in thus being thrust back upon himself, does not discover that he knew the Truth already, but discovers his Error; with respect to which act of consciousness the Socratic principle holds, that the Teacher is merely an occasion whoever he may be, even if he is a God. For my own Error is something I can discover only by myself, since it is only when I have discovered it that it is discovered, even if the whole world knew of it before. (Under the presupposition we have adopted concerning the moment, this remains the only analogy to the Socratic order of things.)

Now if the learner is to acquire the Truth, the Teacher must bring it to him; and not only so, but he must also give him the condition necessary for understanding it. For if the learner were in his own person the condition for understanding the Truth, he need only recall it. The condition for understanding the Truth is like the capacity to inquire for it: the condition contains the conditioned, and the question implies the answer. (Unless this is so, the moment must be understood in the Socratic sense.)

But one who gives the learner not only the Truth, but also the condition for understanding it, is more than teacher. All instruction depends upon the presence, in the last analysis, of the requisite condition; if this is lacking, no teacher can do anything. For otherwise he would find it necessary not only to transform the learner, but to recreate him before beginning to teach him. But this is something that no human being can do; if it is to be done, it must be done by the God himself.

In so far as the learner exists he is already created, and hence God must have endowed him with the condition for understanding the Truth. For otherwise his earlier existence must have been merely brutish, and the Teacher who gave him the Truth and with it the condition was the original creator of his human nature. But in so far as the moment is to have decisive significance (and unless we assume this we remain at the Socratic standpoint) the learner is destitute of this condition, and must therefore have been deprived of it. This deprivation cannot have been due to an act of the God (which would be a contradiction), nor to an accident (for it would be a contradiction to assume that the lower could overcome the higher); it must therefore be due to himself. If he could have lost the condition in such a way that the loss was not due to himself, and if he could remain in the state of deprivation without his own responsibility, it would follow that his earlier possession of the condition was accidental merely. But this is a contradiction, since the condition for understanding the Truth is an essential condition. Error is then not only outside the Truth, but polemic in its attitude toward it; which is expressed by saying that the learner has himself forfeited the condition, and is engaged in forfeiting it.

The Teacher is then the God himself, who in acting as an occasion prompts the learner to recall that he is in Error, and that by reason of his own guilt. But this state, the being in Error by reason of one's own guilt, what shall we call it? Let us call it *Sin*.

The Teacher, then, is the God, and he gives the learner the requisite condition and the Truth. What shall we call such a Teacher? -- for we are surely agreed that we have already far transcended the ordinary functions of a teacher. In so far as the learner is in Error, but in consequence of his own act (and in no other way can he possibly be in this state, as we have shown above), he might seem to be free; for to be what one is by one's own act is freedom. And yet he is in reality unfree and bound and exiled; for to be free from the Truth is to be exiled from the Truth, and to be exiled by one's own self is to be bound. But since he is bound by himself, may he not loose his bonds and set himself free? For whatever binds me, the same should be able to set me free when it wills; and since this power is here his own self, he should be able to liberate himself. But first at any rate he must will it. Suppose him now to be so profoundly impressed by what the Teacher gave him occasion to remember (and this must not be omitted from the reckoning); suppose that he wills his freedom. In that case, i.e., if by willing to be free he could by himself become free, the fact that he had been bound would become a state of the past, tracelessly vanishing in the moment of liberation; the moment would not be charged with decisive significance. He was not aware that he had bound himself, and now he had freed himself.⁴ Thus interpreted the moment receives no decisive significance, and yet this was the hypothesis we proposed to ourselves in the beginning. By the terms of our hypothesis, therefore, he will not be able to set himself free -- And so it is in very truth; for he forges the chains of his bondage with the strength of his freedom, since he exists in it without compulsion; and thus his bonds grow strong, and all his powers unite to make him the slave of sin. -- What now shall we call such a Teacher, one who restores the lost condition and gives the learner the Truth? Let us call him *Saviour*, for he saves the learner from his bondage and from himself; let us call him *Redeemer*, for he redeems the learner from the captivity into which he had plunged himself, and no captivity is so terrible and so impossible to break, as that in which the individual keeps himself. And still we have not said all that is necessary; for by his self-imposed bondage the learner has brought upon himself a burden of guilt, and when the Teacher gives him the condition and the Truth he constitutes himself an *Atonement*, taking away the wrath impending upon that of which the learner has made himself guilty.

Such a Teacher the learner will never be able to forget. For the moment he forgets him he sinks back again into himself, just as one who while in original possession of the condition forgot that God exists, and thereby sank into bondage. If they should happen to meet in another life, the Teacher would again be able to give the condition to anyone who had not yet received it; but to one who had once received the condition he would stand in a different relation. The condition was a trust, for which the recipient would always be required to render an account. But what shall we call such a Teacher? A teacher may determine whether the pupil makes progress or not, but he cannot judge him; for he ought to have Socratic insight enough to perceive that he cannot give him what is essential. This Teacher is thus not so much teacher as *Judge*. Even when the learner has most completely appropriated the condition, and most profoundly apprehended the Truth, he cannot forget

this Teacher, or let him vanish Socratically, although this is far more profound than illusory sentimentality or untimely pettiness of spirit. It is indeed the highest, unless that other be the Truth.

And now the moment. Such a moment has a peculiar character. It is brief and temporal indeed, like every moment; it is transient as all moments are; it is past, like every moment in the next moment. And yet it is decisive, and filled with the Eternal. Such a moment ought to have a distinctive name; let us call it the *Fullness of Time*.

C. The Disciple

When the disciple is in a state of Error (and otherwise we return to Socrates) but is none the less a human being, and now receives the condition and the Truth, he does not become a human being for the first time, since he was a man already. But he becomes another man; not in the frivolous sense of becoming another individual of the same quality as before, but in the sense of becoming a man of a different quality, or as we may call him: *a new creature*.

In so far as he was in Error he was constantly in the act of departing from the Truth. In consequence of receiving the condition in the moment the course of his life has been given an opposite direction, so that he is now turned about. Let us call this change *Conversion*, even though this word be one not hitherto used; but that is precisely a reason for choosing it, in order namely to avoid confusion, for it is as if expressly coined for the change we have in mind.

In so far as the learner was in Error by reason of his own guilt, this conversion cannot take place without being taken up in his consciousness, or without his becoming aware that his former state was a consequence of his guilt. With this consciousness he will then take leave of his former state. But what leave-taking is without a sense of sadness? The sadness in this case, however, is on account of his having so long remained in his former state. Let us call such grief *Repentance*; for what is repentance but a kind of leave-taking, looking backward indeed, but yet in such a way as precisely to quicken the steps toward that which lies before?

In so far as the learner was in Error, and now receives the Truth and with it the condition for understanding it, a change takes place within him like the change from non-being to being. But this transition from non-being to being is the transition we call birth. Now one who exists cannot be born; nevertheless, the disciple is born. Let us call this transition the *New Birth*, in consequence of which the disciple enters the world quite as at the first birth, an individual human being knowing nothing as yet about the world into which he is born, whether it is inhabited, whether there are other human beings in it besides himself; for while it is indeed possible to be baptized *en masse*, it is not possible to be born anew *en masse*. Just as one who has begotten himself by the aid of the Socratic midwifery now forgets everything else in the world, and in a deeper sense owes no man anything, so the disciple who is born anew owes nothing to any man, but everything to his divine Teacher.

And just as the former forgets the world in his discovery of himself, so the latter forgets himself in the discovery of his Teacher.

Hence if the *Moment* is to have decisive significance -- and if not we speak Socratically whatever we may say, even if through not even understanding ourselves we imagine that we have advanced far beyond that simple man of wisdom who divided judgment incorruptibly between the God and man and himself, a judge more just than Minos, Aeacus and Rhadamanthus -- if the *Moment* has decisive significance the breach is made, and man cannot return. He will take no pleasure in remembering what Recollection brings to his mind; still less will he be able in his own strength to bring the God anew over to his side.

But is the hypothesis here expounded thinkable? Let us not be in haste to reply; for not only one whose deliberation is unduly prolonged may fail to produce an answer, but also one who while he exhibits a marvelous promptitude in replying, does not show the desirable degree of slowness in considering the difficulty before explaining it. Before we reply, let us ask ourselves from whom we may expect an answer to our question. The being born, is this fact thinkable? Certainly, why not? But for whom is it thinkable, for one who is born, or for one who is not born? This latter supposition is an absurdity which could never have entered anyone's head; for one who is born could scarcely have conceived the notion. When one who has experienced birth thinks of himself as born, he conceives this transition from non-being to being. The same principle must also hold in the case of the new birth. Or is the difficulty increased by the fact that the non-being which precedes the new birth contains more being than the non-being which preceded the first birth? But who then may be expected to think the new birth? Surely the man who has himself been born anew, since it would of course be absurd to imagine that one not so born should think it. Would it not be the height of the ridiculous for such an individual to entertain this notion?

If a human being is originally in possession of the condition for understanding the Truth, he thinks that God exists in and with his own existence. But if he is in Error he must comprehend this fact in his thinking, and Recollection will not be able to help him further than to think just this, Whether he is to advance beyond this point the *Moment* must decide (although it was already active in giving him an insight into his Error). If he does not understand this we must refer him to Socrates, though through being obsessed with the idea that he has advanced far beyond this wise man he may cause him many a vexation, like those who were so incensed with Socrates for taking away from them one or another stupid notion() that they actually wanted to bite him (*Theaetetus*, 151). In the *Moment* man becomes conscious that he is born; for his antecedent state, to which he may not cling, was one of non-being. In the *Moment* man also becomes conscious of the new birth, for his antecedent state was one of non-being. Had his preceding state in either instance been one of being, the moment would not have received decisive significance for him, as has been shown above. While then the pathos of the Greek consciousness concentrates itself upon Recollection, the pathos of our project is concentrated upon the *Moment*. And what wonder, for is it not a most pathetic thing to come into existence from non-being?

There you have my project. But I think I hear someone say: "This is the most ridiculous of all projects; or rather, you are of all projectors of hypotheses the most ridiculous. For even when a man propounds something nonsensical, it may still remain true that it is he who has propounded it; but you behave like a lazzarone who takes money for exhibiting premises open to everybody's inspection; you are like the man who collected a fee for exhibiting a ram in the afternoon, which in the forenoon could be seen gratis, grazing in the open field." – "Perhaps it is so; I hide my head in shame. But assuming that I am as ridiculous as you say, let me try to make amends by proposing a new hypothesis. Everybody knows that gunpowder was invented centuries ago, and in so far it would be ridiculous of me to pretend to be the inventor; but would it be equally ridiculous of me to assume that somebody was the inventor? Now I am going to be so polite as to assume that you are the author of my project; greater politeness than this you can scarcely ask. Or if you deny this, will you also deny that someone is the author, that is to say, some human being? In that case I am as near to being the author as any other human being. So that your anger is not vented upon me because I appropriated something that belongs to another human being, but because I appropriated something of which no human being is the rightful owner; and hence your anger is by no means appeased when I deceitfully ascribe the authorship to you. Is it not strange that there should be something such in existence, in relation to which everyone who knows it knows also that he has not invented it, and that this "pass-me-by" neither stops nor can be stopped even if we ask all men in turn? This strange fact deeply impresses me, and casts over me a spell; for it constitutes a test of the hypothesis, and proves its truth. It would certainly be absurd to expect of a man that he should of his own accord discover that he did not exist. But this is precisely the transition of the new birth, from non-being to being. That he may come to understand it afterwards can make no difference; for because a man knows how to use gunpowder and can resolve it into its constituent elements, it does not follow that he has invented it. Be then angry with me and with whoever else pretends to the authorship of this thought; but that is no reason why you should be angry with the thought itself."

Notes:

¹ Taking the thought in its naked absoluteness, not reflecting upon possible variations in the soul's preexistent state, we find this Greek conception recurring in both an older and more recent speculation: an eternal creation; an eternal procession from the Father; an eternal coming into being of the Deity; an eternal self-sacrifice; a past resurrection; a past judgment. All these thoughts are essentially the Greek doctrine of Recollection, only that this is not always perceived, since they have been arrived at by way of an advance. If we split the thought up into a reckoning of the different states ascribed to the soul in its preexistence, the everlasting *prae's* of such an approximating mode of thought are like the everlasting *post's* of the corresponding forward approximations. The contradictions of existence are explained by positing a *prae* as needed (because of an earlier state the individual has come into his present otherwise inexplicable situation); or by positing a *post* as needed (on another planet the individual is to be placed in a more favorable situation, in view of which his present state is not inexplicable).

² Such is the criticism commonly passed upon Socrates in our age, which boasts of its positivity much as if a polytheist were to speak with scorn of the negativity of a monotheist; for the polytheist has many gods, the monotheist only one. So our philosophers have many thoughts, all valid to a certain extent; Socrates had only one, which was absolute.

³ There is a passage in the *Clitophon*, which I cite only as the testimony of a third party, since this dialogue is not believed to be genuine. Clitophon complains that the discourses of Socrates about virtue are merely inspirational (), and that as soon as he has sufficiently recommended virtue in general he leaves each one to himself. Clitophon thinks that this must find its explanation either in the fact that Socrates does not know more, or else that he is unwilling to communicate more.

⁴ Let us take plenty of time to consider the point, since there is no pressing need for haste. By proceeding slowly one may sometimes fail to reach the goal, but by indulging in undue haste one may sometimes be carried past it. Let us talk about this a little in the Greek manner. Suppose a child had been presented with a little sum of money, and could buy with it either a good book, for example, or a toy, both at the same price. If he buys the toy, can he then buy the book for the same money? Surely not, since the money is already spent. But perhaps he may go to the bookseller and ask him to make an exchange, letting him have the book in return for the toy. Will not the bookseller say: My dear child, your toy is not worth anything; it is true that when you still had the money you could have bought the book instead of the toy, but a toy is a peculiar kind of thing, for once it is bought it loses all value. Would not the child think that this was very strange? And so there was also a time when man could have bought either freedom or bondage at the same price, this price being the soul's free choice and commitment in the choice. He chose bondage; but if he now comes forward with a proposal for an exchange, would not the God reply: Undoubtedly there was a time when you could have bought whichever you pleased, but bondage is a very strange sort of thing; when it is bought it has absolutely no value, although the price paid for it was originally the same. Would not such an individual think this very strange? Again, suppose two opposing armies drawn up in the field, and that a knight arrives whom both armies invite to fight on their side; he makes his choice, is vanquished and taken prisoner. As prisoner he is brought before the victor, to whom he foolishly presumes to offer his services on the same terms as were extended to him before the battle. Would not the victor say to him: My friend, you are now my prisoner; there was indeed a time when you could have chosen differently, but now everything is changed. Was this not strange enough? Yet if it were not so, if the moment had no decisive significance, the child must at bottom have bought the book, merely imagining in his ignorance and misunderstanding that he had bought the toy; the captive knight must really have fought on the other side, the facts having been obscured by the fog, so that at bottom he had fought on the side of the leader whose prisoner he now imagined himself to be. -- "The vicious and the virtuous have not indeed power over their moral actions; but at first they had the power to become either the one or the other, just as one who throws a stone has power over it until he has thrown it, but not afterwards" (Aristotle). Otherwise throwing would be an illusion; the thrower would keep the stone in

his hand in spite of all his throwing; it would be like the "flying arrow" of the skeptics, which did not fly.

Chapter 2: The God as Teacher and Saviour: An Essay of the Imagination

Let us briefly consider Socrates, who was himself a teacher. He was born under such and such circumstances; he came under the formative influences of the people to which he belonged; and when upon reaching maturity he felt an inner impulse and call to this end, he began in his own way to teach others. Thus after having lived for some time as Socrates, circumstances seeming propitious, he emerged in the role of Socrates the teacher. He was himself influenced by circumstances, and reacted upon them in turn. In realizing his task he satisfied at one and the same time the demands of his own nature, and those that others might make upon him. So understood, and this was indeed the Socratic understanding, the teacher stands in a reciprocal relation, in that life and its circumstances constitute an occasion for him to become a teacher, while he in turn gives occasion for others to learn something. He thus embodies in his attitude an equal proportion of the autopathic and the sympathetic. Such also was the Socratic understanding, and hence he would accept neither praise nor honors nor money for his instruction, but passed judgment with the incorruptibility of a departed spirit. Rare contentment! Rare especially in a time like ours, when no purse seems large enough nor crown of glory sufficiently glittering to match the splendor of the instruction; but when also the world's gold and the world's glory are the precisely adequate compensation, the one being worth as much as the other. To be sure, our age is positive and understands what is positive; Socrates on the other hand was negative. It might be well to consider whether this lack of positiveness does not perhaps explain the narrowness of his principles, which were doubtless rooted in a zeal for what is universally human, and in a discipline of self marked by the same divine jealousy as his discipline of others, a zeal and discipline through which he loved the divine. As between man and man no higher relationship is possible; the disciple gives occasion for the teacher to understand himself, and the teacher gives occasion for the disciple to understand himself. When the teacher dies he leaves behind him no claim upon the soul of the disciple, just as the disciple can assert no claim that the teacher owes him anything. And if I were a Plato in sentimental enthusiasm, and if my heart beat as violently as Alcibiades' or more violently than that of the Corybantic mystic while listening to the words of Socrates; if the passion of my admiration knew no rest until I had clasped the wondrous master in my arms -- Socrates would but smile at me and say: "My friend, how deceitful a lover you are! You wish to idolize me on account of my wisdom, and then to take your place as the friend who best understands me, from whose admiring embrace I shall never be able to tear myself free -- is it not true that you are a seducer?" And if I still refused to understand him, he would no doubt bring me to despair by the coldness of his irony, as he unfolded to me that he owed me as much as I owed him. Rare integrity, deceiving no one, not even one who would deem it his highest happiness to be deceived! How rare in our age, when all have

transcended Socrates -- in self-appreciation, in estimate of benefits conferred upon their pupils, in sentimentality of intercourse, in voluptuous enjoyment of admiration's warm embrace! Rare faithfulness, seducing no one, not even him who exercises all the arts of seduction in order to be seduced!

But the God needs no disciple to help him understand himself, nor can he be so determined by any occasion that there is as much significance in the occasion as in the resolve. What then could move him to make his appearance? He must indeed move himself, and continue to exemplify what Aristotle says of him: .. But if he moves himself it follows that he is not moved by some need, as if he could not endure the strain of silence, but had to break out in speech. But if he moves himself, and is not moved by need, what else can move him but love? For love finds its satisfaction within and not without. His resolve, which stands in no equal reciprocal relation to the occasion, must be from eternity, though when realized in time it constitutes precisely the *Moment*; for when the occasion and the occasioned correspond, and are as commensurable as the answer of the desert with the cry that evokes it, the Moment does not appear, but is lost in the eternity of Recollection. The Moment makes its appearance when an eternal resolve comes into relation with an incommensurable occasion. Unless this is realized I we shall be thrown back on Socrates, and shall then have neither the God as Teacher, nor an Eternal Purpose, nor the Moment.

Moved by love, the God is thus eternally resolved to reveal himself. But as love is the motive so love must also be the end; for it would be a contradiction for the God to have a motive and an end which did not correspond. His love is a love of the learner, and his aim is to win him. For it is only in love that the unequal can be made equal, and it is only in equality or unity that an understanding can be effected, and without a perfect understanding the Teacher is not the God, unless the obstacle comes wholly from the side of the learner, in his refusing to realize that which had been made possible for him.

But this love is through and through unhappy, for how great is the difference between them! It may seem a small matter for the God to make himself understood, but this is not so easy of accomplishment if he is to refrain from annihilating the unlikeness that exists between them.

Let us not jump too quickly to a conclusion at this point; if it seems to some that we waste our time while we might be coming to a decision, we take comfort in the thought that it does not follow that we shall have only our trouble for our pains. Much is heard in the world about unhappy love, and we all know what this means: the lovers are prevented from realizing their union, the causes being many and various. There is another kind of unhappy love, the theme of our present discourse, for which there is no perfect earthly parallel, though by dint of speaking foolishly a little while we may make shift to conceive it through an earthly figure. The unhappiness of this love does not come from the inability of the lovers to realize their union, but from their inability to understand one another. This grief is infinitely more profound than that of which men commonly speak, since it strikes at the very heart of love, and wounds for an eternity; not like that other misfortune which touches only the temporal and the external, and which for the

magnanimous is as a sort of jest over the inability of the lovers to realize their union here in time. This infinitely deeper grief is essentially the prerogative of the superior, since only he likewise understands the misunderstanding; in reality it belongs to the God alone, and no human relationship can afford a valid analogy. Nevertheless, we shall here suggest such an analogy, in order to quicken the mind to an apprehension of the divine.

Suppose there was a king who loved a humble maiden. But the reader has perhaps already lost his patience, seeing that our beginning sounds like a fairy tale, and is not in the least systematic. So the very learned Polos found it tiresome that Socrates always talked about meat and drink and doctors, and similar unworthy trifles, which Polos deemed beneath him (*Gorgias*). But did not the Socratic manner of speech have at least one advantage, in that he himself and all others were from childhood equipped with the necessary prerequisites for understanding it? And would it not be desirable if I could confine the terms of my argument to meat and drink, and did not need to bring in kings, whose thoughts are not always like those of other men, if they are indeed kingly. But perhaps I may be pardoned the extravagance, seeing that I am only a poet, proceeding now to unfold the carpet of my discourse (recalling the beautiful saying of Themistocles), lest its workmanship be concealed by the compactness of its folding.

Suppose then a king who loved a humble maiden. The heart of the king was not polluted by the wisdom that is loudly enough proclaimed; he knew nothing of the difficulties that the understanding discovers in order to ensnare the heart, which keep the poets so busy, and make their magic formulas necessary. It was easy to realize his purpose. Every statesman feared his wrath and dared not breathe a word of displeasure; every foreign state trembled before his power, and dared not omit sending ambassadors with congratulations for the nuptials; no courtier groveling in the dust dared wound him, lest his own head be crushed. Then let the harp be tuned, let the songs of the poets begin to sound, and let all be festive while love celebrates its triumph. For love is exultant when it unites equals, but it is triumphant when it makes that which was unequal equal in love. -- Then there awoke in the heart of the king an anxious thought; who but a king who thinks kingly thoughts would have dreamed of it! He spoke to no one about his anxiety; for if he had, each courtier would doubtless have said: "Your majesty is about to confer a favor upon the maiden, for which she can never be sufficiently grateful her whole life long." This speech would have moved the king to wrath, so that he would have commanded the execution of the courtier for high treason against the beloved, and thus he would in still another way have found his grief increased. So he wrestled with his troubled thoughts alone. Would she be happy in the life at his side? Would she be able to summon confidence enough never to remember what the king wished only to forget, that he was king and she had been a humble maiden? For if this memory were to waken in her soul, and like a favored lover sometimes steal her thoughts away from the king, luring her reflections into the seclusion of a secret grief; or if this memory sometimes passed through her soul like the shadow of death over the grave: where would then be the glory of their love? Then she would have been happier had she remained in her obscurity, loved by an equal, content in her humble cottage; but confident in her love, and cheerful early and late. What a rich abundance of grief is here laid bare, like ripened grain bent under the weight of its fruitfulness, merely waiting the time of the harvest, when the thought of

the king will thresh out all its seed of sorrow! For even if the maiden would be content to become as nothing, this could not satisfy the king, precisely because he loved her, and because it was harder for him to be her benefactor than to lose her. And suppose she could not even understand him? For while we are thus speaking foolishly of human relationships, we may suppose a difference of mind between them such as to render an understanding impossible. What a depth of grief slumbers not in this unhappy love, who dares to rouse it! However, no human being is destined to suffer such grief; him we may refer to Socrates, or to that which in a still more beautiful sense can make the unequal equal.

But if the *Moment* is to have decisive significance (and if not we return to Socrates even if we think to advance beyond him), the learner is in Error, and that by reason of his own guilt. And yet he is the object of the God's love, and the God desires to teach him, and is concerned to bring him to equality with himself. If this equality cannot be established, the God's love becomes unhappy and his teaching meaningless, since they cannot understand one another. Men sometimes think that this might be a matter of indifference to the God, since he does not stand in need of the learner. But in this we forget -- or rather alas! we prove how far we are from understanding him; we forget that the God loves the learner. And just as that kingly grief of which we have spoken can be found only in a kingly soul, and is not even named in the language of the multitude of men, so the entire human language is so selfish that it refuses even to suspect the existence of such a grief. But for that reason the God has reserved it to himself, this unfathomable grief: to know that he may repel the learner, that he does not need him, that the learner has brought destruction upon himself by his own guilt, that he can leave the learner to his fate; to know also how well-nigh impossible it is to keep the learner's courage and confidence alive, without which the purposed understanding and equality will fail, and the love become unhappy. The man who cannot feel at least some faint intimation of this grief is a paltry soul of base coinage, bearing neither the image of Caesar nor the image of God.

Our problem is now before us, and we invite the poet, unless he is already engaged elsewhere, or belongs to the number of those who must be driven out from the house of mourning, together with the flute-players and the other noise-makers, before gladness can enter in. The poet's task will be to find a solution, some point of union, where love's understanding may be realized in truth, the God's anxiety be set at rest, his sorrow banished. For the divine love is that unfathomable love which cannot rest content with that which the beloved might in his folly prize as happiness.

A

The union might be brought about by an elevation of the learner. The God would then take him up unto himself, transfigure him, fill his cup with millennial joys (for a thousand years are as one day in his sight), and let the learner forget the misunderstanding in tumultuous joy. Alas, the learner might perhaps be greatly inclined to prize such happiness as this. How wonderful suddenly to find his fortune made, like the humble maiden, because the eye of the God happened to rest upon him! And how wonderful also to be his helper in taking all this in vain, deceived by his own heart! Even the noble king

could perceive the difficulty of such a method, for he was not without insight into the human heart, and understood that the maiden was at bottom deceived; and no one is so terribly deceived as he who does not himself suspect it, but is as if enchanted by a change in the outward habiliments of his existence.

The union might be brought about by the God's showing himself to the learner and receiving his worship, causing him to forget himself over the divine apparition. Thus the king might have shown himself to the humble maiden in all the pomp of his power, causing the sun of his presence to rise over her cottage, shedding a glory over the scene, and making her forget herself in worshipful admiration. Alas, and this might have satisfied the maiden, but it could not satisfy the king, who desired not his own glorification but hers. It was this that made his grief so hard to bear, his grief that she could not understand him; but it would have been still harder for him to deceive her. And merely to give his love for her an imperfect expression was in his eyes a deception, even though no one understood him and reproaches sought to mortify his soul.

Not in this manner then can their love be made happy, except perhaps in appearance, namely the learner's and the maiden's, but not the Teacher's and the king's, whom no delusion can satisfy. Thus the God takes pleasure in arraying the lily in a garb more glorious than that of Solomon; but if there could be any thought of an understanding here, would it not be a sorry delusion of the lily's, if when it looked upon its fine raiment it thought that it was on account of the raiment that the God loved it? Instead of standing dauntless in the field, sporting with the wind, carefree as the gust that blows, would it not under the influence of such a thought languish and droop, not daring to lift up its head? It was the God's solicitude to prevent this, for the lily's shoot is tender and easily broken. But if the *Moment* is to have decisive significance, how unspeakable will be the God's anxiety! There once lived a people who had a profound understanding of the divine; this people thought that no man could see the God and live. -- Who grasps this contradiction of sorrow: not to reveal oneself is the death of love, to reveal oneself is the death of the beloved! The minds of men so often yearn for might and power, and their thoughts are constantly being drawn to such things, as if by their attainment all mysteries would be resolved. Hence they do not even dream that there is sorrow in heaven as well as joy, the deep grief of having to deny the learner what he yearns for with all his heart, of having to deny him precisely because he is the beloved.

B

The union must therefore be brought about in some other way. Let us here again recall Socrates, for what was the Socratic ignorance if not an expression for his love of the learner, and for his sense of equality with him? But this equality was also the truth, as we have already seen. But if the *Moment* is to have decisive significance (--), this is not the truth, for the learner will owe everything to the Teacher. In the Socratic conception the teacher's love would be merely that of a deceiver if he permitted the disciple to rest in the belief that he really owed him anything, instead of fulfilling the function of the teacher to help the learner become sufficient to himself. But when the God becomes a Teacher, his love cannot be merely seconding and assisting, but is creative, giving a new being to the

learner, or as we have called him, the man born anew; by which designation we signify the transition from non-being to being. The truth then is that the learner owes the Teacher everything. But this is what makes it so difficult to effect an understanding: that the learner becomes as nothing and yet is not destroyed; that he comes to owe everything to the Teacher and yet retains his confidence; that he understands the Truth and yet that the Truth makes him free; that he apprehends the guilt of his Error and yet that his confidence rises victorious in the Truth. Between man and man the Socratic midwifery is the highest relation, and begetting is reserved for the God, whose love is *creative*, but not merely in the sense which Socrates so beautifully expounds on a certain festal occasion. This latter kind of begetting does not signify the relation between a teacher and his disciple, but that between an autodidact and the beautiful. In turning away from the scattered beauties of particular things to contemplate beauty in and for itself, the autodidact begets many beautiful and glorious discourses and thoughts, (*Symposium*, 210 D). In so doing he begets and brings forth that which he has long borne within him in the seed (209 E). He has the requisite condition in himself, and the bringing forth or birth is merely a manifestation of what was already present; whence here again, in this begetting, the moment vanishes instantly in the eternal consciousness of Recollection. And he who is begotten by a progressive dying away from self, of him it becomes increasingly clear that he can less and less be said to be begotten, since he only becomes more and more clearly reminded of his existence. And when in turn he begets expressions of the beautiful, he does not so much beget them, as he allows the beautiful within him to beget these expressions from itself.

Since we found that the union could not be brought about by an elevation it must be attempted by a descent. Let the learner be x . In this x we must include the lowliest; for if even Socrates refused to establish a false fellowship with the clever, how can we suppose that the God would make a distinction! In order that the union may be brought about, the God must therefore become the equal of such a one, and so he will appear in the likeness of the humblest. But the humblest is one who must serve others, and the God will therefore appear in the form of a *servant*. But this servant-form is no mere outer garment, like the king's beggar-cloak, which therefore flutters loosely about him and betrays the king; it is not like the filmy summer-cloak of Socrates, which though woven of nothing yet both conceals and reveals. It is his true form and figure. For this is the unfathomable nature of love, that it desires equality with the beloved, not in jest merely, but in earnest and truth. And it is the omnipotence of the love which is so resolved that it is able to accomplish its purpose, which neither Socrates nor the king could do, whence their assumed figures constituted after all a kind of deceit.

Behold where he stands -- the God! Where? There; do you not see him? He is the God; and yet he has not a resting-place for his head, and he dares not lean on any man lest he cause him to be offended. He is the God; and yet he picks his steps more carefully than if angels guided them, not to prevent his foot from stumbling against a stone, but lest he trample human beings in the dust, in that they are offended in him. He is the God; and yet his eye rests upon mankind with deep concern, for the tender shoots of an individual life may be crushed as easily as a blade of grass. How wonderful a life, all sorrow and all love: to yearn to express the equality of love, and yet to be misunderstood; to apprehend

the danger that all men may be destroyed, and yet only so to be able really to save a single soul; his own life filled with sorrow, while each 7 hour of the day is taken up with the troubles of the learner who confides in him! This is the God as he stands upon the earth, like unto the humblest by the power of his omnipotent love. He knows that the learner is in Error -- what if he should misunderstand, and droop, and lose his confidence! To sustain the heavens and the earth by the fiat of his omnipotent word, so that if this word were withdrawn for the fraction of a second the universe would be plunged into chaos -- how light a task compared with bearing the burden that mankind may take offense, when one has been constrained by love to become its saviour!

But the servant-form is no mere outer garment, and therefore the God must suffer all things, endure all things, make experience of all things. He must suffer hunger in the desert, he must thirst in the time of his agony, he must be forsaken in death, absolutely like the humblest -- behold the man His suffering is not that of his death, but this entire life is a story of suffering; and it is love that suffers, the love which gives all is itself in want. What wonderful self-denial! for though the learner be one of the lowliest, he nevertheless asks him anxiously: Do you now really love me? For he knows where the danger threatens, and yet he also knows that every easier way would involve a deception, even though the learner might not understand it.

Every other form of revelation would be a deception in the eyes of love; for either the learner would first have to be changed, and the fact concealed from him that this was necessary (but love does not alter the beloved, it alters itself); or there would be permitted to prevail a frivolous ignorance of the fact that the entire relationship was a delusion. (This was the error of paganism.) Every other form of revelation would be a deception from the standpoint of the divine love. And if my eyes were more filled with tears than those of a repentant woman, and if each tear were more precious than a pardoned woman's many tears; if I could find a place more humble than the place at his feet, and if I could sit there more humbly than a woman whose heart's sole choice was this one thing needful; if I loved him more sincerely than the most loyal of his servants, eager to shed the last drop of his life-blood in his service; if I had found greater favor in his eyes than the purest among women -- nevertheless, if I asked him to alter his purpose, to reveal himself differently, to be more lenient with himself, he would doubtless look at me and say: Man, what have I to do with thee? Get thee hence, for thou art Satan, though thou knowest it not! Or if he once or twice stretched forth his hand in command, and it happened, and I then meant to understand him better or love him more, I would doubtless see him weep also over me, and hear him say: To think that you could prove so faithless, and so wound my love! Is it then only the omnipotent wonder-worker that you love, and not him who humbled himself to become your equal?

But the servant-form is no mere outer garment; hence he must yield his spirit in death and again leave the earth. And if my grief were deeper than the sorrow of a mother when her heart is pierced by the sword, and if my danger were more terrible than the danger of a believer when his faith fails him, and if my misery were more pitiful than his who crucifies his hope and has nothing left but the cross -- nevertheless, if I begged him to save his life and stay upon the earth, it would only be to see him sorrowful unto death,

and stricken with grief also for my sake, because this suffering was for my profit, and now I had added to his sorrow the burden that I could not understand him. O bitter cup! More bitter than wormwood is the bitterness of death for a mortal, how bitter then for an immortal! O bitter refreshment, more bitter than aloes, to be refreshed by the misunderstanding of the beloved! O solace in affliction to suffer as one who is guilty, what solace then to suffer as one who is innocent!

Such will be our poet's picture. For how could it enter his mind that the God would reveal himself in this way in order to bring men to the most crucial and terrible decision; how could he find it in his heart to play frivolously with the God's sorrow, falsely poetizing his love away to poetize his wrath in!

And now the learner, has he no lot or part in this story of suffering, even though his lot cannot be that of the Teacher? Aye, it cannot be otherwise. And the cause of all this suffering is love, precisely because the God is not jealous for himself, but desires in love to be the equal of the humblest. When the seed of the oak is planted in earthen vessels, they break asunder; when new wine is poured in old leathern bottles, they burst; what must happen when the God implants himself in human weakness, unless man becomes a new vessel and a new creature! But this becoming, what labors will attend the change, how convulsed with birth-pangs! And the understanding -- how precarious, and how close each moment to misunderstanding, when the anguish of guilt seeks to disturb the peace of love! And how rapt in fear; for it is indeed less terrible to fall to the ground when the mountains tremble at the voice of the God, than to sit at table with him as an equal; and yet it is the God's concern precisely to have it so.

* *

Now if someone were to say: "This poem of yours is the most wretched piece of plagiarism ever perpetrated, for it is neither more nor less than what every child knows," I suppose I must blush with shame to hear myself called a liar. But why the most wretched? Every poet who steals, steals from some other poet, and in so far we are all equally wretched; indeed, my own theft is perhaps less harmful, since it is more readily discovered. If I were to be so polite as to ascribe the authorship to you who now condemn me, you would perhaps again be angry. Is there then no poet, although there is a poem? This would surely be strange, as strange as flute-playing without a flute-player. Or is this poem perhaps like a proverb, for which no author can be assigned, because it is as if it owed its existence to humanity at large; was this perhaps the reason you called my theft the most wretched, because I did not steal from any individual man but robbed the human race, and arrogantly, although I am only an individual man, aye, even a wretched thief, pretended to be mankind? If this then is the case, and I went about to all men in turn, and all knew the poem, but each one also knew that he was not the author of it, can I then conclude: mankind must be the author? Would not this be a strange conclusion? For if mankind were the author of this poem, this would have to be expressed by considering every individual equally close to the authorship. Does it not seem to you that this is a difficult case in which we have become involved, though the whole matter appeared to be so easily disposed of in the beginning, by your short and angry word about its being the

most wretched plagiarism, and my shame in having to hear it? So then perhaps it is no poem, or at any rate not one for which any human being is responsible, nor yet mankind; ah, now I understand you, it was for this reason you called my procedure the most wretched act of plagiarism, because I did not steal from any individual, nor from the race, but from the God or, as it were, stole the God away, and though I am only an individual man, aye, even a wretched thief, blasphemously pretended to be the God. Now I understand you fully, dear friend, and recognize the justice of your resentment. But then my soul is filled with new wonder, even more, with the spirit of worship; for it would surely have been strange had this poem been a human production. It is not impossible that it might occur to man to imagine himself the equal of the God, or to imagine the God the equal of man, but not to imagine that the God would make himself into the likeness of man; for if the God gave no sign, how could it enter into the mind of man that the blessed God should need him? This would be a most stupid thought, or rather, so stupid a thought could never have entered into his mind; though when the God has seen fit to entrust him with it he exclaims in worship: This thought did not arise in my own heart! and finds it a most miraculously beautiful thought. And is it not altogether miraculous, and does not this word come as a happy omen to my lips; for as I have just said, and as you yourself involuntarily exclaim, we stand here before the *Miracle*. And as we both now stand before this miracle, whose solemn silence cannot be perturbed by human wrangling over mine and thine, whose awe-inspiring speech infinitely subdues all human strife about mine and thine, forgive me, I pray, the strange delusion that I was the author of this poem. It was a delusion, and the poem is so different from every human poem as not to be a poem at all, but the *Miracle*.

Chapter 3: The Absolute Paradox: A Metaphysical Crotchet

In spite of the fact that Socrates studied with all diligence to acquire a knowledge of human nature and to understand himself, and in spite of the fame accorded him through the centuries as one who beyond all other men had an insight into the human heart, he has himself admitted that the reason for his shrinking from reflection upon the nature of such beings as Pegasus and the Gorgons was that he, the life-long student of human nature, had not yet been able to make up his mind whether he was a stranger monster than Typhon, or a creature of a gentler and simpler sort, partaking of something divine (*Phaedrus*, 229 E). This seems to be a paradox. However, one should not think slightly of the paradoxical; for the paradox is the source of the thinker's passion, and the thinker without a paradox is like a lover without feeling: a paltry mediocrity. But the highest pitch of every passion is always to will its own downfall; and so it is also the supreme passion of the Reason to seek a collision, though this collision must in one way or another prove its undoing. The supreme paradox of all thought is the attempt to discover something that thought cannot think. This passion is at bottom present in all thinking, even in the thinking of the individual, in so far as in thinking he participates in something transcending himself. But habit dulls our sensibilities, and prevents us from

perceiving it. So for example the scientists tell us that our walking is a constant falling. But a sedate and proper gentleman who walks to his office in the morning and back again at noon, probably thinks this to be an exaggeration, for his progress is clearly a case of mediation; how should it occur to him that he is constantly falling when he religiously follows his nose!

But in order to make a beginning, let us now assume a daring proposition; let us assume that we know what man is.¹ Here we have that criterion of the Truth, which in the whole course of Greek philosophy was either *sought*, or *doubted*, or *postulated*, or *made fruitful*. Is it not remarkable that the Greeks should have borne us this testimony? And is it not an epitome, as it were, of the significance of Greek culture, an epigram of its own writing, with which it is also better served than with the frequently voluminous disquisitions sometimes devoted to it? Thus the proposition is well worth positing, and also for another reason, since we have already explained it in the two preceding chapters; while anyone who attempts to explain Socrates differently may well beware lest he fall into the snare of the earlier or later Greek skepticism. For unless we hold fast to the Socratic doctrine of Recollection, and to his principle that every individual man is Man, Sextus Empiricus stands ready to make the transition involved in "teaching" not only difficult but impossible; and Protagoras will begin where Sextus Empiricus leaves off, maintaining that man is the measure of all things, in the sense that the individual man is the measure for others, but by no means in the Socratic sense that each man is his own measure, neither more nor less.

So then we know what man is, and this wisdom, which I shall be the last to hold in light esteem, may progressively become richer and more significant, and with it also the Truth. But now the Reason stands still, just as Socrates did; for the paradoxical passion of the Reason is aroused and seeks a collision; without rightly understanding itself, it is bent upon its own downfall. This is like what happens in Connection with the paradox of love. Man lives undisturbed a self-centered life, until there awakens within him the paradox of self-love, in the form of love for another, the object of his longing. (Self-love lies as the ground of all love or is the ground in which all love perishes; there-fore if we conceive a religion of love, this religion need make but one assumption, as epigrammatic as true, and take its actuality for granted, namely, the condition that man loves himself, in order to command him to love his neighbor as himself.) The lover is so completely transformed by the paradox of love that he scarcely recognizes himself; so say the poets, who are the spokesmen of love, and so say also the lovers themselves, since they permit the poets merely to take the words from their lips, but not the passion from their hearts. In like manner the paradoxical passion of the Reason, while as yet a mere presentiment, retroactively affects man and his self-knowledge, so that he who thought to know himself is no longer certain whether he is a more strangely composite animal than Typhon, or if perchance his nature contains a gentler and diviner part. (*o* , , . *Phaedrus*, 230 A)

But what is this unknown something with which the Reason collides when inspired by its paradoxical passion, with the result of unsettling even man's knowledge of himself? It is the Unknown. It is not a human being, in so far as we know what man is; nor is it any other known thing. So let us call this unknown something: *the God*. It is nothing more

than a name we assign to it. The idea of demonstrating that this unknown something (the God) exists, could scarcely suggest itself to the Reason. For if the God does not exist it would of course be impossible to prove it; and if he does exist it would be folly to attempt it. For at the very outset, in beginning my proof, I would have presupposed it, not as doubtful but as certain (a presupposition is never doubtful, for the very reason that it is a presupposition), since otherwise I would not begin, readily understanding that the whole would be impossible if he did not exist. But if when I speak of proving the God's existence I mean that I propose to prove that the Unknown, which exists, is the God, then I express myself unfortunately. For in that case I do not prove anything, least of all an existence, but merely develop the content of a conception. Generally speaking, it is a difficult matter to prove that anything exists; and what is still worse for the intrepid souls who undertake the venture, the difficulty is such that fame scarcely awaits those who concern themselves with it. The entire demonstration always turns into something very different and becomes an additional development of the consequences that flow from my having assumed that the object in question exists. Thus I always reason from existence, not toward existence, whether I move in the sphere of palpable sensible fact or in the realm of thought. I do not for example prove that a stone exists, but that some existing thing is a stone. The procedure in a court of justice does not prove that a criminal exists, but that the accused, whose existence is given, is a criminal. Whether we call existence an *accessorium* or the eternal *prius*, it is never subject to demonstration. Let us take ample time for consideration. We have no such reason for haste as have those who from concern for themselves or for the God or for some other thing, must make haste to get existence demonstrated. Under such circumstances there may indeed be need for haste, especially if the prover sincerely seeks to appreciate the danger that he himself, or the thing in question, may be non-existent unless the proof is finished and does not surreptitiously entertain the thought that it exists whether he succeeds in proving it or not.

If it were proposed to prove Napoleon's existence from Napoleon's deeds, would it not be a most curious proceeding? His existence does indeed explain his deeds, but the deeds do not prove *his* existence, unless I have already understood the word "his" so as thereby to have assumed his existence. But Napoleon is only an individual, and in so far there exists no absolute relationship between him and his deeds; some other person might have performed the same deeds. Perhaps this is the reason why I cannot pass from the deeds to existence. If I call these deeds the deeds of Napoleon the proof becomes superfluous, since I have already named him; if I ignore this, I can never prove from the deeds that they are Napoleon's, but only in a purely ideal manner that such deeds are the deeds of a great general, and so forth. But between the God and his works there is an absolute relationship; God is not a name but a concept. Is this perhaps the reason that his *essentia involvit existentiam*?² The works of God are such that only the God can perform them. Just so, but where then are the works of the God? The works from which I would deduce his existence are not directly and immediately given. The wisdom in nature, the goodness, the wisdom in the governance of the world -- are all these manifest, perhaps, upon the very face of things? Are we not here confronted with the most terrible temptations to doubt, and is it not impossible finally to dispose of all these doubts? But from such an order of things I will surely not attempt to prove God's existence; and even if I began I would never finish, and would in addition have to live constantly in suspense,

lest something so terrible should suddenly happen that my bit of proof would be demolished. From what works then do I propose to derive the proof? From the works as apprehended through an ideal interpretation, i.e., such as they do not immediately reveal themselves. But in that case it is not from the works that I make the proof; I merely develop the ideality I have presupposed, and because of my confidence in *this* I make so bold as to defy all objections, even those that have not yet been made. In beginning my proof I presuppose the ideal interpretation, and also that I will be successful in carrying it through; but what else is this but to presuppose that the God exists, so that I really begin by virtue of confidence in him?

And how does the God's existence emerge from the proof? Does it follow straightway, without any breach of continuity? Or have we not here an analogy to the behavior of the little Cartesian dolls? As soon as I let go of the doll it stands on its head. As soon as I let it go -- I must therefore let it go. So also with the proof. As long as I keep my hold on the proof, i.e., continue to demonstrate, the existence does not come out, if for no other reason than that I am engaged in proving it; but when I let the proof go, the existence is there. But this act of letting go is surely also something; it is indeed a contribution of mine. Must not this also be taken into the account, this little moment, brief as it may be -- it need not be long, for it is a *leap*. However brief this moment, if only an instantaneous now, this "now" must be included in the reckoning. If anyone wishes to have it ignored, I will use it to tell a little anecdote, in order to show that it nevertheless does exist.

Chrysippus was experimenting with a sorties to see if he could not bring about a break in its quality, either progressively or retrogressively. But Carneades could not get it in his head when the new quality actually emerged. Then Chrysippus told him to try making a little pause in the reckoning, and so -- so it would be easier to understand. Carneades replied: With the greatest pleasure, please do not hesitate on my account; you may not only pause, but even lie down to sleep, and it will help you just as little; for when you awake we will begin again where you left *off*. Just so; it boots as little to try to get rid of something by sleeping as to try to come into the possession of something in the same manner.

Whoever therefore attempts to demonstrate the existence of God (except in the sense of clarifying the concept, and without the *reservatio finalis* noted above, that the existence emerges from the demonstration by a leap) proves in lieu thereof something else, something which at times perhaps does not need a proof, and in any case needs none better; for the fool says in his heart that there is no God, but whoever says in his heart or to men: Wait just a little and I will prove it -- what a rare man of wisdom is he!³ If in the moment of beginning his proof it is not absolutely undetermined whether the God exists or not, he does not prove it; and if it is thus undetermined in the beginning he will never come to begin, partly from fear of failure, since the God perhaps does not exist, and partly because he has nothing with which to begin. -- A project of this kind would scarcely have been undertaken by the ancients. Socrates at least, who is credited with having put forth the physico-teleological proof for God's existence, did not go about it in any such manner. He always presupposes the God's existence, and under this presupposition seeks to interpenetrate nature with the idea of purpose. Had he been asked why he pursued this method, he would doubtless have explained that he lacked the

courage to venture out upon so perilous a voyage of discovery without having made sure of the God's existence behind him. At the word of the God he casts his net as if to catch the idea of purpose; for nature herself finds many means of frightening the inquirer, and distracts him by many a digression.

The paradoxical passion of the Reason thus comes repeatedly into collision with this Unknown, which does indeed exist, but is unknown, and in so far does not exist. The Reason cannot advance beyond this point, and yet it cannot refrain in its paradoxicalness from arriving at this limit and occupying itself therewith. It will not serve to dismiss its relation to it simply by asserting that the Unknown does not exist, since this itself involves a relationship. But what then is the Unknown, since the designation of it as the God merely signifies for us that it is unknown? To say that it is the Unknown because it cannot be known, and even if it were capable of being known, it could not be expressed, does not satisfy the demands of passion, though it correctly interprets the Unknown as a limit; but a limit is precisely a torment for passion, though it also serves as an incitement. And yet the Reason can come no further, whether it risks an issue *via negationis* or *via eminentia*.

What then is the Unknown? It is the limit to which the Reason repeatedly comes, and in so far, substituting a static form of conception for the dynamic, it is the different, the absolutely different. But because it is absolutely different, there is no mark by which it could be distinguished. When qualified as absolutely different it seems on the verge of disclosure, but this is not the case; for the Reason cannot even conceive an absolute unlikeness. The Reason cannot negate itself absolutely, but uses itself for the purpose, and thus conceives only such an unlikeness within itself as it can conceive by means of itself; it cannot absolutely transcend itself, and hence conceives only such a superiority over itself as it can conceive by means of itself. Unless the Unknown (the God) remains a mere limiting conception, the single idea of difference will be thrown into a state of confusion, and become many ideas of many differences. The Unknown is then in a condition of dispersion (), and the Reason may choose at pleasure from what is at hand and the imagination may suggest (the monstrous, the ludicrous, etc.).

But it is impossible to hold fast to a difference of this nature. Every time this is done it is essentially an arbitrary act, and deepest down in the heart of piety lurks the mad caprice which knows that it has itself produced the God. If no specific determination of difference can be held fast, because there is no distinguishing mark, like and unlike finally become identified with one another, thus sharing the fate of all such dialectical opposites. The unlikeness clings to the Reason and confounds it, so that the Reason no longer knows itself and quite consistently confuses itself with the unlikeness. On this point paganism has been sufficiently prolific in fantastic inventions. As for the last named supposition, the self-irony of the Reason, I shall attempt to delineate it merely by a stroke or two, without raising any question of its being historical. There exists an individual whose appearance is precisely like that of other men; he grows up to manhood like others, he marries, he has an occupation by which he earns his livelihood, and he makes provision for the future as befits a man. For though it may be beautiful to live like the birds of the air, it is not lawful, and may lead to the sorriest of consequences: either

starvation if one has enough persistence, or dependence on the bounty of others. This man is also the God. How do I know? I cannot know it, for in order to know it I would have to know the God, and the nature of the difference between the God and man; and this I cannot know, because the Reason has reduced it to likeness with that from which it was unlike. Thus the God becomes the most terrible of deceivers, because the Reason has deceived itself. The Reason has brought the God as near as possible, and yet he is as far away as ever.

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Now perhaps someone will say: "You are certainly a crotcheteer, as I know very well. But you surely do not believe that I would pay any attention to such a crotchet, so strange or so ridiculous that it has doubtless never occurred to anyone, and above all so absurd that I must exclude from my consciousness everything that I have in it in order to hit upon it." -- And so indeed you must. But do you think yourself warranted in retaining all the presuppositions you have in your consciousness, while pretending to think about your consciousness without presuppositions? Will you deny the consistency of our exposition: that the Reason, in attempting to determine the Unknown as the unlike, at last goes astray, and confounds the unlike with the like? From this there would seem to follow the further consequence, that if man is to receive any true knowledge about the Unknown (the God) he must be made to know that it is unlike him, absolutely unlike him. This knowledge the Reason cannot possibly obtain of itself; we have already seen that this would be a self-contradiction. It will therefore have to obtain this knowledge from the God. But even if it obtains such knowledge it cannot understand it, and thus is quite unable to possess such knowledge. For how should the Reason be able to understand what is absolutely different from itself? If this is not immediately evident, it will become clearer in the light of the consequences; for if the God is absolutely unlike man, then man is absolutely unlike the God; but how could the Reason be expected to understand this? Here we seem to be confronted with a paradox. Merely to obtain the knowledge that the God is unlike him, man needs the help of the God; and now he learns that the God is absolutely different from himself. But if the God and man are absolutely different, this cannot be accounted for on the basis of what man derives from the God, for in so far they are akin. Their unlikeness must therefore be explained by what man derives from himself, or by what he has brought upon his own head. But what can this unlikeness be? Aye, what can it be but sin; since the unlikeness, the absolute unlikeness, is something that man has brought upon himself. We have expressed this in the preceding by saying that man was in Error, and had brought this upon his head 'by his own guilt; and we came to the conclusion, partly in jest and yet also in earnest, that it was too much to expect of man that he should find this out for himself. Now we have again arrived at the same conclusion. The connoisseur in self-knowledge was perplexed over himself to the point of bewilderment when he came to grapple in thought with the unlike; he scarcely knew any longer whether he was a stranger monster than Typhon, or if his nature partook of something divine. What then did he lack? The consciousness of sin, which he indeed could no more teach to another than another could teach it to him, but only the God -- if the God consents to become a Teacher. But this was his purpose, as we have imagined it. In order to be man's Teacher, the God proposed to make himself like the individual man,

so that he might understand him fully. Thus our paradox is rendered still more appalling, or the same paradox has the double aspect which proclaims it as the Absolute Paradox; negatively by revealing the absolute unlikeness of sin, positively by proposing to do away with the absolute unlikeness in absolute likeness.

But can such a paradox be conceived? Let us not be over-hasty in replying; and since we strive merely to find the answer to a question, and not as those who run a race, **it** may be well to remember that success is to the accurate rather than to the swift. The Reason will doubtless find it impossible to conceive it, could not of itself have discovered it, and when it hears it announced will not be able to understand it, sensing merely that its downfall is threatened. In so far the Reason will have much to urge against it; and yet we have on the other hand seen that the Reason, in its paradoxical passion, precisely desires its own downfall. But this is what the Paradox also desires, and thus they are at bottom linked in understanding; but this understanding is present only in the moment of passion. Consider the analogy presented by love, though it is not a perfect one. Self-love lies as the ground of love; but the paradoxical passion of self-love when at its highest pitch wills precisely its own downfall. This is also what love desires, so that these two are linked in mutual understanding in the passion of the moment, and this passion is love. Why should not the lover find this conceivable? But he who in self-love shrinks from the touch of love can neither understand it nor summon the courage to venture it, since it means his downfall. Such is then the passion of love; self-love is indeed submerged but not annihilated; it is taken captive and become love's *spolia opima*, but may again come to life, and this is love's temptation. So also with the Paradox in its relation to the Reason, only that the passion in this case has another name; or rather, we must seek to find a name for it.

APPENDIX

The Paradox and the Offended Consciousness

(An Acoustic Illusion)

If the Paradox and the Reason come together in a mutual understanding of their unlikeness their encounter will be happy, like love's understanding, happy in the passion to which we have not yet assigned a name, and will postpone naming until later. If the encounter is not in understanding the relationship becomes unhappy, and this unhappy love of the Reason if I may so call it (which it should be noted is analogous only to that particular form of unhappy love which has its root in misunderstood self-love; no further stretching of the analogy is possible, since accident can play no role in this realm), may be characterized more specifically as *Offense*.

All offense is in its deepest root passive.⁴ In this respect it is like that form of unhappy love to which we have just alluded. Even when such a self-love (and does it not already seem contradictory that love of self should be passive?) announces itself in deeds of

audacious daring, in astounding achievements, it is passive and wounded. It is the pain of its wound which gives it this illusory strength, expressing itself in what looks like self-activity and may easily deceive, since self-love is especially bent on concealing its passivity. Even when it tramples on the object of affection, even when it painfully schools itself to a hardened indifference and tortures itself to show this indifference, even then, even when it abandons itself to a frivolous triumph over its success (this form is the most deceptive of all), even then it is passive. Such is also the case with the offended consciousness. Whatever be its mode of expression, even when it exultantly celebrates the triumph of its unspirituality, it is always passive. Whether the offended individual sits broken-hearted, staring almost like a beggar at the Paradox, paralyzed by his suffering, or he sheathes himself in the armor of derision, pointing the arrows of his wit as if from a distance -- he is still passive and near at hand. Whether offense came and robbed the offended individual of his last bit of comfort and joy, or made him strong -- the offended consciousness is nevertheless passive. It has wrestled with the stronger, and its show of strength is like the peculiar agility induced in the bodily sphere by a broken back.

However, it is quite possible to distinguish between an active and a passive form of the offended consciousness, if we take care to remember that the passive form is so far active as not to permit itself wholly to be annihilated (for offense is always an act, never an event); and that the active form is always so weak that it cannot free itself from the cross to which it is nailed, or tear the arrow from out its wound.⁵

But precisely because offense is thus passive, the discovery, if it be allowable to speak thus, does not derive from the Reason, but from the Paradox; for as the Truth is *index sui et falsi*, the Paradox is this also, and the offended consciousness does not understand itself⁶ but is understood by the Paradox. While therefore the expressions in which offense proclaims itself, of whatever kind they may be, sound as if they came from elsewhere, even from the opposite direction, they are nevertheless echoings of the Paradox. This is what is called an acoustic illusion. But if the Paradox is *index* and *judex sui et falsi*, the offended consciousness can be taken as an indirect proof of the validity of the Paradox; offense is the mistaken reckoning, the invalid consequence, with which the Paradox repels and thrusts aside. The offended individual does not speak from his own resources, but borrows those of the Paradox; just as one who mimics or parodies another does not invent, but merely copies perversely. The more profound the passion with which the offended consciousness (active or passive) expresses itself, the more apparent it is how much it owes to the Paradox. Offense was not discovered by the Reason, far from it, for then the Reason must also have been able to discover the Paradox. No, offense comes into existence with the Paradox; it *comes into existence*. Here again we have the Moment, on which everything depends. Let us recapitulate. If we do not posit the Moment we return to Socrates; but it was precisely from him that we departed, in order to discover something. If we posit the Moment the Paradox is there; for the Moment is the Paradox in its most abbreviated form. Because of the Moment the learner is in Error; and man, who had before possessed self-knowledge, now becomes bewildered with respect to himself; instead of self-knowledge he receives the consciousness of sin, and so forth; for as soon as we posit the Moment everything follows of itself.

From the psychological point of view the offended consciousness will display a great variety of nuances within the more active and the more passive forms. To enter into a detailed description of these would not further our present purpose; but it is important to bear fixedly in mind that all offense is in its essence a misunderstanding of the *Moment*, since it is directed against the Paradox, which again is the Moment.

The dialectic of the *Moment* is not difficult. From the Socratic point of view the Moment is invisible and indistinguishable; it is not, it has not been, it will not come. Hence the learner is himself the Truth, and the moment of occasion is but a jest, like a bastard title that does not essentially belong to the book. From this point of view the Moment of decision becomes *folly*; for if a decision in time is postulated, then (by the preceding) the learner is in Error, which is precisely what makes a beginning in the Moment necessary. The reaction of the offended consciousness is to assert that the Moment is folly, and that the Paradox is folly, which is the contention of the Paradox that the Reason is absurd now reflected back as in an echo from the offended consciousness. Or the Moment is regarded as constantly about to come; it is so regarded, and the Reason holds it as *worthy of regard*; but since the Paradox has made the Reason absurd, the regard of the Reason is no reliable criterion.

The offended consciousness holds aloof from the Paradox, and the reason is: *quia absurdum*. But it was not the Reason that made this discovery; on the contrary it was the Paradox that made the discovery, and now receives this testimony from the offended consciousness. The Reason says that the Paradox is absurd, but this is mere mimicry, since the Paradox is the Paradox, *quia absurdum*. The offended consciousness holds aloof from the Paradox and keeps to the probable, since the Paradox is the most improbable of things. Again it is not the Reason that made this discovery; it merely snatches the words from the mouth of the Paradox, strange as this may seem; for the Paradox itself says: Comedies and romances and lies must needs be probable, but why should I be probable? The offended consciousness holds aloof from the Paradox, and what wonder, since the Paradox is the Miracle! This discovery was not made by the Reason; it was the Paradox that placed the Reason on the stool of wonderment and now replies: But why are you so astonished? It is precisely as you say, and the only wonder is that you regard it as an objection; but the truth in the mouth of a hypocrite is dearer to me than if it came from the lips of an angel or an apostle. When the Reason boasts of its splendors in comparison with the Paradox, which is most wretched and despised, the discovery was not made by the Reason but by the Paradox itself; it is content to leave to the Reason all its splendors, even the splendid sins (*vitia splendida*). When the Reason takes pity on the Paradox, and wishes to help it to an explanation, the Paradox does not indeed acquiesce, but nevertheless finds it quite natural that the Reason should do this; for why do we have our philosophers, if not to make supernatural things trivial and commonplace? When the Reason says that it cannot get the Paradox into its head, it was not the Reason that made the discovery but the Paradox, which is so paradoxical as to declare the Reason a blockhead and a dunce, capable at the most of saying yes and no to the same thing, which is not good divinity. And so always. All that the offended consciousness has to say about the Paradox it has learned from the Paradox, though it would like to pose as the discoverer, making use of an acoustic illusion.

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But I think I hear someone say: "It is really becoming tiresome the way you go on, for now we have the same story over again; not one of the expressions you have put into the mouth of the Paradox belongs to you." -- "Why should they belong to me, when they belong to the Paradox?" -- "You can spare us your sophistry, you know very well what I mean. These expressions are not yours, nor by you put into the mouth of the Paradox, but are familiar quotations, and everybody knows who the authors are." -- "My friend, your accusation does not grieve me, as you perhaps believe; what you say rather makes me exceedingly glad. For I must admit that I could not repress a shudder when I wrote them down; I scarcely recognized myself, that I who am usually so timid and apprehensive dared say such things. But if the expressions are not by me, perhaps you will explain to whom they belong?" -- "Nothing is easier. The first is by Tertullian, the second by Hamann, the third by Hamann, the fourth is by Lactantius and is frequently quoted; the fifth is by Shakespeare, in a comedy called *All's Well that Ends Well* Act II, Scene iii; the sixth is by Luther, and the seventh is a remark by King Lear. You see that I am well informed, and that I have caught you with the goods" -- "Indeed I do perceive it; but will you now tell me whether all these men have not spoken of the relation between some paradox and an offended consciousness, and will you now note that the individuals who spoke thus were not themselves offended, but precisely persons who held to the paradox; and yet they speak as if they were offended, and offense cannot find a more characteristic expression for itself. Is it not strange that the Paradox should thus, as it were, take the bread from the mouth of the offended consciousness, reducing it to the practice of an idle and unprofitable art? It seems as curious as if an opponent at a disputation, instead of attacking the author's thesis, defended him in his distraction. Does it not seem so to you? However, one merit unquestionably belongs to the offended consciousness in that it brings out the unlikeness more clearly; for in that happy passion which we have not yet given a name, the Unlike is on good terms with the Reason. There must be a difference if there is to be a synthesis in some third entity. But here the difference consisted in the fact that the Reason yielded itself while the Paradox bestowed itself (*halb zog sie ihn, halb sank er hin*), and the understanding is consummated in that happy passion which will doubtless soon find a name; and this is the smallest part of the matter, for even if my happiness does not have a name -- when I am but happy, I ask for no more."

Notes

1. It may seem ridiculous to give this proposition a doubtful form by "assuming" it, for in this theocentric age such matters are of course known to all. Aye, if it were only so well with us! Democritus also knew what man is, for he defines man as follows: "Man is what we all know," and then goes on to say: "for we all know what a dog, a horse, a plant is, and so forth; but none of these is a man." We do not aspire to the malice of Sextus Empiricus, nor have we his wit; for he concludes as we know, from the above definition, and quite correctly, that man is a dog; for man is what we all know, and we all know what a dog is, ergo -- but let us not be so malicious. Nevertheless, has this question been

so thoroughly cleared up in our own time that no one need feel a little uneasy about himself when he is reminded of poor Socrates and his predicament?

2. So Spinoza, who probes the depths of the God-idea in order to bring being out of it by way of thought, but not, it should be noted, as if being were an accidental characteristic, but rather as if it constituted an essential determination of content. Here lies Spinoza's profundity, but let us examine his reasoning. In *principia philosophiae Cartesianae, pars I, propositio VII, lemma I*, he says: "*quo res sua natura perfectior est, eo majorem existentiam et magis necessariam involvit; et contra, quo magis necessariam existentiam res sua natura involvit, eo perfectior.*" The more perfect therefore a thing is, the more being it has; the more being it has, the more perfect it is. This is however a tautology, which becomes still more evident in a note, *nota II*: "*quod hic non loquimur de pulchritudine et aliis perfectionibus, quas homines ex superstitione et ignorantia perfectiones vocare voluerunt. Sed per perfectionem intelligo tantum realitatem sive esse.*" He explains *perfectio* by *realitas, esse*; so that the more perfect a thing is, the more it is; but its perfection consists in having more *esse* in itself; that is to say, the more a thing is, the more it is. So much for the tautology, but now further. What is lacking here is a distinction between factual being and ideal being. The terminology which permits us to speak of more or less of being, and consequently of degrees of reality or being, is in itself lacking in clearness, and becomes still more confusing when the above distinction is neglected -- in other words, when Spinoza does indeed speak profoundly but fails first to consider the difficulty. In the case of factual being it is meaningless to speak of more or less of being. A fly, when it is, has as much being as the God; with respect to factual being the stupid remark I here set down has as much being as Spinoza's profundity, for factual being is subject to the dialectic of Hamlet: to be or not to be. Factual being is wholly indifferent to any and all variations in essence, and everything that exists participates without petty jealousy in being and participates in the same degree. Ideally, to be sure, the case is quite different. *But the moment I speak of being in the ideal sense I no longer speak of being, but of essence.* Highest ideality has this necessity and therefore it is. But this its being is identical with its essence; such being does not involve it dialectically in the determinations of factual being, since it is; nor can it be said to have more or less of being in relation to other things. In the old days this used to be expressed, if somewhat imperfectly, by saying that if God is possible, he is *eo ipso* necessary (Leibniz). Spinoza's principle is thus quite correct and his tautology in order; but it is also certain that he altogether evades the difficulty. For the difficulty is to lay hold of God's factual being and to introduce God's ideal essence dialectically into the sphere of factual being.

3. What an excellent subject for a comedy of the higher lunacy!

4. The Danish language correctly calls emotion (Dan. "*Affekten*") 'Sindslidelse' [compare Ger. "*Leidenschaft*"]. When we use the word "*Affekt*" we are likely to think more immediately of the convulsive daring which astounds us, and makes us forget that it is a form of passivity. So for example: pride, defiance, etc.

5. The idiom of the language also supports the view that all offense is passive. We say: "to be offended," which primarily expresses only the state or condition; but we also say, as identical in meaning with the foregoing: "to take offense," which expresses a synthesis of active and passive. The Greek word is $\epsilon\pi\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omicron\varsigma$. This word comes from $\epsilon\pi\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omicron$ (offense or stumbling-block), and hence means to take offense, or to collide with something. Here the movement of thought is clearly indicated; it is not that offense provokes the collision, but that it meets with a collision, and hence passively, although so far actively is itself to take offense. Hence the Reason is not the discoverer of offense; for the paradoxical collision which the Reason develops in isolation discovers neither the Paradox nor the reaction of offense.

6. In this sense the Socratic principle that sin is ignorance ends justification. Sin does not understand itself in the Truth, but it does not follow that it may not will itself in Error.

Chapter 4: The Case of the Contemporary Disciple

The God has thus made his appearance as Teacher (for we now resume our story), and has assumed the form of a servant. To send another in his place, one high in his confidence, could not satisfy him; just as it could not satisfy the noble king to send in his stead even the most trusted man in his kingdom. But the God had also another reason; for between man and man the Socratic relationship is the highest and truest. If the God had not come himself, all the relations would have remained on the Socratic level; we would not have had the Moment, and we would have lost the Paradox. The God's servant-form however is not a mere disguise, but is actual; it is not a parastatic body but an actual body; and from the hour that in the omnipotent purpose of his omnipotent love the God become a servant, he has so to speak imprisoned himself in his resolve, and is now bound to go on (to speak foolishly) whether it pleases him or no. He cannot then betray himself. There exists for him no such possibility as that which is open to the noble king, suddenly to show that he is after all the king -- which is no perfection in the king (that he has this possibility), but merely discloses his impotence, and the impotence of his resolve, that he cannot really become what he desires to be. But while the God will not be able to send anyone in his place, he can indeed send someone before him, to arouse the learner's attention. This forerunner can of course know nothing of what the God will teach. For the God's presence is not accidental in relation to his teaching, but essential. The God's presence in human form, aye in the humble form of a servant, is itself the teaching, and the God must give the condition along with it (Chapter I) or the learner will understand nothing. Such a forerunner may then serve to arouse the learner's attention, but nothing more.

But the God did not assume the form of a servant to make a mockery of men; hence it cannot be his intention to pass through the world in such manner that no single human being becomes aware of his presence. He will therefore doubtless give some sort of sign, though every understanding resting upon an accommodation is essentially without value for one who does not receive the condition; for which reason he yields to the necessity

only unwillingly. Such a sign when given is as capable of repelling the learner as of drawing him nearer. He humbled himself and took upon him the form of a servant, but he did not come to spend his life as a servant in some private employment, attending to his tasks without in any manner making himself known, either to his master or to his fellow servants -- such a measure of wrath we dare not ascribe to the God. That he was a servant means then only that he was a common man, humble and lowly, not to be distinguished from the multitude of men either by soft raiment or other earthly advantages, nor yet by the innumerable legions of angels he left behind him when he humbled himself. But though in these ways resembling common men, his thoughts and cares are not like those which fill the minds of men in general. He goes his way indifferent to the distribution and division of earthly goods, as one who has no possessions and desires none; he is not concerned for his daily bread, like the birds of the air; he does not trouble himself about house and home, as one who neither has nor seeks a shelter or a resting-place; he is not concerned to follow the dead to the grave; he does not turn his head to look at the things that usually claim the attention of men; he is not bound to any woman, so as to be charmed by her and desirous of pleasing her. He seeks one thing only, the love of the disciple. All this seems indeed beautiful, but is it also appropriate? Does he not by this manner of life lift himself above the plane of what is valid for a human life? Is it right for a man to be as care-free as a bird, and even to surpass these creatures in unconcern, since they fly hither and thither in search of food? Ought he not rather to take thought for the morrow? True, we cannot imagine the God otherwise, but what does the imagination prove? Is it permissible thus to become a foot-loose wanderer, stopping wherever evening overtakes him? The question is whether a human being may venture to express the same idea; for otherwise the God has not realized the essential elements of a human life. We answer in the affirmative; a man may so venture if he has the needed strength. If he can so lose himself in the service of the spirit that it never occurs to him to take care for meat and drink; if he is certain that want will not distract him, and that distress will not confound for him the structure of his life, and teach him to rue that he did not first master the simple things before he presumed to understand more -- then he may indeed venture, and his greatness will be more glorious than the serene security of the lilies of the field.

This lofty absorption in his mission will of itself suffice to attract the attention of the multitude, among whom the learner will doubtless be found. The latter will in all probability come from the humbler walks of life; for the wise and the learned will presumably wish first to propose captious questions to the Teacher, invite him to *colloquia*, or subject him to an examination, upon which they will assure him a permanent position and a secure livelihood.

Let us now picture the God going about in the city of his appearance (which city this is, is indifferent). To make his teaching known is the sole necessity of his life; it is his meat and drink. Teaching is his labor, and caring for the learner is his rest from labor. He has no friends nor kindred, but the learner is his brother and sister. It may readily be understood that a web of rumor will soon be woven, catching the curious multitude in its snare. Wherever the Teacher appears the crowd gathers, curious to see, curious to hear, and eager to tell others that they have seen and heard him. Is this curious multitude the learner? By no means. Or if some one of the authorized teachers of that city sought him

out secretly, in order to try his strength with him in argument -- is he the learner? By no means. If this teacher or that multitude *learn* anything, the God serves merely as an occasion in the strict Socratic sense.

The God's appearance has now become the news of the day, in the market-place, in the homes of the people, in the council chamber, in the ruler's palace. It gives occasion for much foolish and idle talk, perhaps also for some earnest reflection. But for the learner the news of the day is not an occasion for something else, not even an occasion for the acquirement in Socratic sincerity of a deeper and fuller self-knowledge; for the learner it is the Eternal, the beginning of eternity. The news of the day the beginning of eternity! If the God had permitted himself to be born in an inn, wrapped in swaddling-clothes and laid in a manger, could the contradiction have been greater than that the news of the day should be the swaddling-clothes of the Eternal, aye, as in the supposed instance its actual form, so that the *Moment* is really decisive for eternity! Unless the God grants the condition which makes it possible to understand this, how is it to be supposed that the learner will be able to discover it! But that the God himself gives this condition has been shown above to be a consequence of the *Moment*, and it has also been shown that the *Moment* is the Paradox, and that without it we are unable to advance, but return to Socrates.

Here at the outset let us take care to make it clear that the question of an historical point of departure arises even for a contemporary disciple; for if we are not careful here, we shall meet with an insuperable difficulty later (in Chapter V), when we come to deal with the case of the disciple whom we call the disciple at second hand. The contemporary disciple gets an historical point of departure for his eternal consciousness as well as any later disciple; for he is contemporary with precisely that historical phenomenon which refuses to be reduced to a moment of merely occasional significance, but proposes to interest him in another sense than the merely historical, presenting itself to him as a condition for his eternal happiness. If this is not so, then (deducing the consequences conversely) the Teacher is not the God but only a Socrates, and if he does not conduct himself like a Socrates, he is not even a Socrates.

But how does the learner come to realize an understanding with this Paradox? We do not ask that he understand the Paradox but only understand that this is the Paradox. How this takes place we have already shown. It comes to pass when the Reason and the Paradox encounter one another happily in the *Moment*, when the Reason sets itself aside and the Paradox bestows itself. The third entity in which this union is realized (for it is not realized in the Reason, since it is set aside: nor in the Paradox, which bestows itself -- hence it is realized *in* something) is that happy passion to which we will now assign a name, though it is not the name that so much matters. We shall call this passion: *Faith*. This then must be the condition of which we have spoken, which the Paradox contributes. Let us not forget that if the Paradox does not grant this condition the learner must be in possession of it. But if the learner is in possession of the condition he is *eo ipso* himself the Truth, and the moment is merely the moment of occasion (Chapter I).

The contemporary learner finds it easy enough to acquire and equate historical information. But let us not forget that with respect to the Teacher's birth he will be in the same position as the disciple at second hand; if we wish to urge absolute historical precision there will be only one human being who is fully informed, namely the woman of whom he permitted himself to be born. But though a contemporary learner readily becomes an historical eye-witness, the difficulty is that the knowledge of some historical circumstance, or indeed a knowledge of all the circumstances with the reliability of an eye-witness, does not make such an eye-witness a disciple; which is apparent from the fact that this knowledge has merely historical significance for him. We see at once that the historical in the more concrete sense is a matter of indifference; we may suppose a degree of ignorance with respect to it, and permit this ignorance as if to annihilate one detail after the other, historically annihilating the historical; if only the Moment remains, as point of departure for the Eternal, the Paradox will be there. Suppose a contemporary who had reduced his hours of sleep to a minimum in order that he might follow this Teacher about, attending him more closely than the pilot-fish the shark; suppose him to keep a hundred spies in his service to watch over the Teacher everywhere, conferring with them each evening in order to obtain a description of the Teacher's movements exact to the minutest detail, accounting for what he had said and where he had been each hour of the day, because his zeal led him to attach importance even to the least trifle -- would such a contemporary be the disciple? By no means. If he is accused of historical inaccuracy he can wash his hands of the accusation, but that is all. Suppose another contemporary who concerned himself solely with the doctrine which this Teacher was wont upon occasion to expound. If every word of instruction that fell from his lips seemed more important to him than his daily bread; if he kept a hundred assistants watching for every syllable, so that nothing should be lost; if he conferred with them carefully each evening, in order to obtain a presentation of the doctrine that should have the highest possible reliability -- would he on this account be the disciple? By no means, no more than Plato was a disciple of Socrates. Suppose that a contemporary who had been living abroad returned at a time when the Teacher had only a day or two to live. If engagements had prevented him from going to see the Teacher, so that he was brought into touch with him only at the last moment, when he was about to yield his spirit -- would this historical ignorance prevent him from becoming the disciple, provided the Moment became for him decisive for eternity? For the first contemporary, the life of the Teacher was merely an historical event; for the second, the Teacher served as an occasion by which he came to an understanding of himself, and he will be able to forget the Teacher (Chapter I). As over against an eternal understanding of oneself, any knowledge about the Teacher is accidental and historical only, a mere matter of memory. As long as the Eternal and the historical are external to one another, the historical is merely an occasion. If then such a zealous learner, though not carrying things so far as to become a disciple, were to discourse loudly and volubly of how much he owed the Teacher, so that his eulogy was almost endless and its gilding priceless; if he were to resent our explanation that the Teacher had been merely an occasion, neither his eulogy nor his resentment could further our inquiry, since both had the same ground, namely, that though lacking in the courage to understand he had nevertheless not lacked the audacity to go beyond. By romancing and trumpeting in his manner one only deceives oneself and others, in so far as one persuades oneself and others that one really has thoughts -- since

one owes them to another. Though politeness is ordinarily not supposed to cost anything, such politeness as his is dearly purchased. The enthusiastic outpouring of gratitude, perhaps itself not devoid of tears nor without a moving effect upon others, is a misunderstanding; for the thoughts that such a man has he certainly does not owe to another, and the nonsense he talks is all his own. Ah, how often has it not happened that someone has politely insisted upon owing Socrates a great debt, although he owed Socrates absolutely nothing! Whoever understands Socrates best understands precisely that he owes him nothing, which is as Socrates would have it, and which it is beautiful to have been able to will; whoever believes that he owes Socrates so great a debt may be tolerably certain that Socrates stands ready to acquit him of it without payment, since it will doubtless cause him regret to learn that he has unwittingly furnished anyone with capital for such usurious speculations. But if the entire situation is non-Socratic, as we have assumed, the disciple will owe *all* to the Teacher; which is quite impossible in relation to Socrates, since as he himself says, he was unable to *beget*. This relationship of owing all to the Teacher cannot be expressed in terms of romancing and trumpeting, but only in that happy passion we call Faith, whose object is the Paradox. But the Paradox unites the contradictories, and is the historical made eternal, and the Eternal made historical. Everyone who understands the Paradox differently may keep the honor of having explained it, which honor he won by not being content to understand it.

It is easy to see, though it scarcely needs to be pointed out, since it is involved in the fact that the Reason is set aside, that Faith is not a form of knowledge; for all knowledge is either a knowledge of the Eternal, excluding the temporal and historical as indifferent, or it is pure historical knowledge. No knowledge can have for its object the absurdity that the Eternal is the historical. If I know Spinoza's doctrine, then I am in so far not concerned with Spinoza but with his doctrine; at some other time I may be concerned historically with Spinoza himself. But the disciple is in Faith so related to his Teacher as to be eternally concerned with his historical existence.

Now if we assume that it is as we have supposed (and without this assumption we return to the Socratic order of things), that the Teacher himself contributes the condition to the learner, it will follow that the object of Faith is not the *teaching* but the *Teacher*. The Socratic principle is, that the learner being himself the Truth and in possession of the condition can thrust the teacher aside; the Socratic art and the Socratic heroism consisted precisely in helping men to do this. But Faith must steadily hold fast to the Teacher. In order that he may have the power to give the condition the Teacher must be the God; in order that he may be able to put the learner in possession of it he must be Man. This contradiction is again the object of Faith, and is the Paradox, the Moment. That the God has once for all given man the requisite condition is the eternal Socratic presupposition, which comes into no hostile collision with time, but is incommensurable with the temporal and its determinations. The contradiction of our hypothesis is that man receives the condition in the Moment, the same condition which, since it is requisite for the understanding of the eternal Truth, is *eo ipso* an eternal condition. If the case is otherwise we stand at the Socratic principle of Recollection.

It is easy to see, though it scarcely needs to be pointed out, since it is involved in the fact that the Reason is set aside, that Faith is not an act of will; for all human volition has its capacity within the scope of an underlying condition. Thus if I have the courage to will the understanding, I am able to understand the Socratic principle, i.e., to understand myself, because from the Socratic point of view I have the condition, and so have the power to will this understanding. But if I do not have the condition (and this is our assumption, in order not to be forced back on the Socratic order of things) all my willing is of no avail; although as soon as the condition is given, the Socratic principle will again apply.

The contemporary learner enjoys one advantage, which the learner of a later generation alas! will doubtless greatly envy him, if only for the sake of doing something. A contemporary may go where he can see the Teacher -- and may he then believe his eyes? Why not? But may he also believe that this makes him a disciple? By no means. If he believes his eyes he is deceived, for the God is not immediately knowable. But then perhaps he may shut his eyes. Just so; but if he does, what profit does he have from his contemporaneity? And when he shuts his eyes he will presumably try to form some conception of the God. But if he is able to do this by himself, he is evidently in possession of the condition. What he conceives, moreover, will be a figure revealing itself to the inner eye of the soul; if he now beholds this, the figure of the servant will confuse him when he again opens his eyes. Let us go on. We have assumed that the Teacher dies; now that he is dead, what will the learner who had been his contemporary do? Perhaps he has sketched some portraits of him; he may even have in his possession an entire series of such portraits, depicting and accurately reflecting every change that by reason of age or state of mind may have taken place in the outward appearance of the Teacher. When he examines these portraits and assures himself that such and such was his appearance, may he then believe his eyes? Why not? But is he on that account a disciple? By no means. But then he may proceed to form some conception of the God. But the God cannot be conceived; it was for this very reason that he appeared in the form of a servant. And yet the servant-form is no deception; for if such were the case, this moment would not be the Moment, but an accidental circumstance, a mere appearance, which as an occasion infinitely vanishes in comparison with the Eternal. And if the learner had the power to form a conception of the God by himself, he must himself have had the condition. Thus he needed only a reminder to be enabled to form this conception, in a manner well within his capacity; though of this he may not previously have been aware. But if this is the case, the reminder will vanish instantly like a tiny atom in the eternal potentiality which was present in his soul, and which now becomes a reality, but again as reality eternally presupposes itself.

How does the learner then become a believer or disciple? When the Reason is set aside and he receives the condition. When does he receive the condition? In the Moment. What does this condition condition? The understanding of the Eternal. But such a condition must be an eternal condition. -- He receives accordingly the eternal condition in the Moment, and is aware that he has so received it; for otherwise he merely comes to himself in the consciousness that he had it from eternity. It is in the Moment that he receives it, and from the Teacher himself. All romancing and trumpeting abroad about

one's cleverness in penetrating the God's incognito, though without receiving the condition from the Teacher; that one took notice of him by the impression he made, such a strange feeling coming over one in his presence; that there was a something in his voice and mien, etc., etc. -- all this is but silly twaddle, by which one does not become a disciple but only makes a mockery of the God.¹ The servant-figure was no incognito. And when in the strength of his omnipotent resolve, which is like his love, the God makes himself the equal of the humblest, let no innkeeper or professor of philosophy imagine that he is a shrewd enough fellow to detect anything, unless the God gives the condition. And when the God in the form of a servant stretches forth the hand of omnipotence, let no astonished and open-mouthed beholder imagine that he is a disciple because he is astonished, and because he can gather others about him who in their turn are astonished over his story. If there is no necessity for the God to give the condition, the learner knew from the beginning how it is with the God, even if he did not know that he knew it; the other is not even the Socratic thought, but infinitely lower.

But the outward figure (we do not mean its detail) is not a matter of indifference to the disciple. It is what he has seen and his hands have handled. However, the outward figure is not important in the sense that he would cease to be a believer if he happened to meet the Teacher some day on the street and did not at once recognize him or even walked some distance with him on the way without realizing that it was he. The God gave to the disciple the condition that enables him to see him, opening for him the eyes of Faith. But it was a terrible thing to see this outward figure, to have converse with him as with one of us, and every moment that Faith was not present to see only the servant-form. When the Teacher is gone from the disciple in death, memory may bring his figure before him; but it is not on this account that the disciple believes, but because he received the condition from the God, and hence is enabled again to see, in memory's trustworthy image, the person of the God. So it is with the disciple, who knows that he would have seen nothing without the condition, since the first thing he learned to understand was that he was in Error.

But in that case is not Faith as paradoxical as the Paradox? Precisely so; how else could it have the Paradox for its object, and be happy in its relation to the Paradox? Faith is itself a miracle, and all that holds true of the Paradox also holds true of Faith. But within the framework of this miracle everything is again Socratic, yet so that the miracle is never cancelled -- the miracle namely, that the eternal condition is given in time. Everything is Socratic; the relation between one contemporary and another in so far as both are believers is entirely Socratic: the one owes the other nothing, but both owe everything to the God.

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I think I hear someone say: "Then it seems that the contemporary derives absolutely no advantage from his contemporaneity; and yet if we assume what you have assumed about God's appearance among men, it lies so near at hand to count the contemporary generation blessed, because it saw and heard." -- "Aye, truly it lies near at hand; so near I think, that this generation has doubtless also counted itself blessed. Shall we assume that

this was the case? For otherwise it was surely not happy, and our praise of this generation is merely an expression for the fact that by acting differently under the same circumstances, one might have become happy. But if this is the case, our praise may need to be qualified in a variety of ways, when we consider the matter more carefully, and may in the last analysis become altogether ambiguous. Suppose, as we sometimes read in old chronicles, that an emperor celebrated his marriage for an entire week with festivities the like of which had never before been seen, every breath of air being scented with perfume, while the ear found it constantly vibrant with music and song, so as to enhance the enjoyment of the costliest viands, set forth in richest abundance. Day and night the festivities continued, for the night was made as bright as the day by torches that illumined the scene -- but whether seen by the light of day or by the illumination of the night, the queen was more beautiful and more gracious than any mortal woman; and the whole was an enchantment, wonderful as the most audacious desire in its still more audacious fulfillment. Let us assume that all this had happened in the past, and that we had to be content with the meager and fasting report of what had taken place -- why should we not, humanly speaking, count the contemporaries happy? That is to say those contemporaries who saw and heard and grasped with their hands; for otherwise of what avail would it be to be contemporary? The splendors of the imperial marriage-feast and the rich abundance of its pleasures were directly accessible to sight and touch, so that anyone who was a contemporary in the stricter sense would presumably have feasted his eyes and made his heart to be glad. But suppose the splendor had been of a different kind, not immediately apparent to the senses, what profit would there then be in being a contemporary, since one would not on that account necessarily be contemporary with the splendor? Such a contemporary could scarcely be counted happy, nor could we bless his eyes and ears; for he was not contemporary with the splendor, neither hearing nor seeing anything of it. And this not because he lacked time and opportunity (in the immediate sense), but because of something else, which could be lacking even if he himself had been present, and favored with opportunities for seeing and hearing to the fullest extent, and had not permitted these opportunities (in the immediate sense) to go unused. But what does it mean thus to say that one can be a contemporary without being contemporary, that one may be a contemporary and though utilizing this advantage (in the immediate sense) yet be a non-contemporary -- what does this mean except that it is quite impossible to be an immediate contemporary of such a Teacher and of such an event; so that the real contemporary is not the real contemporary by virtue of an immediate contemporaneity, but by virtue of something else? A contemporary may for all that be a non-contemporary; the real contemporary is such not by virtue of his immediate contemporaneity; *ergo*, it must also be possible for a non-contemporary (in the immediate sense) to be a contemporary, by virtue of that something which makes the contemporary a real contemporary. But the non-contemporary (in the immediate sense) is of course the member of a later generation, whence it must be possible for an individual so situated to be a real contemporary. Or what do we mean by being contemporary? Is it perhaps this kind of a contemporary that we praise, one who can speak as follows: 'I ate and drank in his presence, and he taught in our streets. I saw him often, and knew him for a common man of humble origin. Only a very few thought to find something extraordinary in him; as far as I am concerned, I could see nothing remarkable about him, and I was certainly as much of a contemporary as anybody.' Or is this what we mean by calling anyone a

contemporary, and is he a contemporary to whom the God must say if they meet in another life, and he seeks to urge his contemporaneity: 'I do not know you'? And so it was in truth, just as it was equally true that such a contemporary could not have known the Teacher. Only the believer, i.e., the non-immediate contemporary, knows the Teacher, since he receives the condition from him, and therefore knows him even as he is known." -- "Stop there a moment, I beg you; for if you keep on talking in this fashion I will not be able to get in a single word. You talk like a disputant for the doctorate, or better still, you talk like a book; and what is worse for you, you talk like a very particular book. For here again, whether wittingly or unwittingly, you have introduced some words into the discourse which are not your own, nor by you placed in the mouths of the speakers. The words are very well known, except that you have substituted the singular for the plural. Here are the scripture passages (for the words are taken from the Bible): 'We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets'; 'I tell ye, I know not whence ye are.' However, let this pass without further comment for the present. But are you not drawing too sweeping a conclusion when you infer from the Teacher's reply to a given individual, 'I do not know you, that this individual was not a contemporary and had not known the Teacher? If the emperor of whom you spoke had said to one who claimed contemporaneity with his splendid marriage-feast, 'I do not know you,' would the emperor thereby have proved that he was not a contemporary?" -- "By no means would the emperor have proved such a thing; he would at the most have proved himself a fool, not content like Mithridates to know the name of every soldier in his army, but pretending to know every contemporary, and assuming to decide by this knowledge whether any given individual had been contemporary or not. The emperor was immediately knowable, and hence someone may very well have known the emperor, even if the emperor did not know him. But the Teacher of our hypothesis was not immediately knowable; he could be known only when he himself gave the condition. Whoever received the condition received it from the Teacher himself, and hence the Teacher must know everyone who knows him, and no one can know the Teacher except through being known by him. Are we not agreed on this point, and do you perhaps at once perceive the remoter consequences of what we have been saying? When the believer is the believer and knows the God through having received the condition from the God himself, every successor must receive the condition from the God himself in precisely the same sense, and cannot receive it at second hand; for if he did, this second hand would have to be the hand of the God himself, and in that case there is no question of a second hand. But a successor who receives the condition from the God himself is a contemporary, a real contemporary; a privilege enjoyed only by the believer, but also enjoyed by every believer." -- "Indeed, now that you have pointed it out I clearly perceive the truth of this, and I already descry the far-reaching consequences. I am only surprised that I had not discovered it for myself, and I would give a great deal for the honor of having been the discoverer." -- "And I would give still more if I could be sure that I had fully understood it; this concerns me far more than who discovered it. But I have not yet entirely understood it, as I shall show you presently in a later chapter, at which time I will rely on your assistance, you who have at once understood the whole. But with your permission I shall now submit what the lawyers call a brief, summarizing what I have expounded and understood up to the present time. And as I present this brief I ask you to look to your rights and to assert them; for I hereby summon you *sub poena praeclusi et perpetui*

silentii. The immediate contemporaneity can serve only as an occasion. (a) It can serve as occasion for the acquirement of historical knowledge. In this respect a contemporary of the emperor's marriage-feast is far more fortunately situated than a contemporary of the Teacher; for the latter merely gets an opportunity to see the servant-form, and at most one or another mysterious deed, in relation to which he must remain uncertain whether to admire or to resent being made a fool of, since he will presumably not even wish to persuade the Teacher to do it over again, as a juggler does, in order to give the spectators a better opportunity to see how the trick is turned. (b) It may serve as an occasion for the contemporary to acquire a Socratic deepening of his self-knowledge, in which case the contemporaneity vanishes as nothing in comparison with the Eternal which he discovers within himself. (c) Finally (and this is our assumption, lest we be thrown 'back on Socrates'), it may serve as an occasion by means of which the contemporary, as one who is in Error, receives the condition from the God, and so beholds his glory with the eyes of faith. Aye, happy such a contemporary! But such a contemporary is not in the immediate sense an eye-witness; he is contemporary as a believer, in the autopsy of Faith. But in this autopsy every non-contemporary (in the immediate sense) becomes a contemporary. If then some member of a later generation, perhaps even moved by his own romanticism, yearns to be a contemporary in the immediate sense, he only proves himself a pretender, recognizable like the false Smerdes by the absence of ears -- the ears of Faith namely, though he may have asses' ears long enough to permit even a contemporary (in the immediate sense) to hear himself into being a non-contemporary. If such a man continues to romance about how splendid it is to be a contemporary (in the immediate sense), betraying a restless eagerness to be up and away, he must doubtless be allowed to go; but if you watch him you will readily see, both from the nature of his movements and the direction he takes, that he goes not 'to meet the Paradox with its awe and fear, but rather trips off like a dancing-master to be in time for the emperor's nuptials. And though he gives his expedition a sacred name, preaching fellowship for others so that they join the pilgrimage in crowds, he will none the less scarcely discover the holy land (in the immediate sense), since it is not to be found either on the map or on the earth; his journey is a jest, like the children's game of seeing somebody to 'grandmother's door.' And though he may give himself no rest, but runs faster than a horse can trot or a man can lie, he runs only with the lime-rod, misunderstanding himself as bird-catcher; for if the birds do not come to him of their own accord, it will certainly not help to run after them. -- In only one respect could I be tempted to count a contemporary (in the immediate sense) more fortunate than the member of some later generation. For if we assume that centuries intervene between this event and the period of a succeeding generation there will presumably have accumulated much gossip about this thing, so much foolish chatter that the untrue and confusing rumors with which the contemporary (in the immediate sense) had to contend, did not prove nearly so serious an obstacle to the realization of a right relationship. And that so much the more, since the echo of the centuries, like the echo in some of our churches, would not only have tended to surround Faith with noisy chatter, but might even have transformed Faith itself into chatter; which could not very well have happened in the first generation, when Faith must have revealed itself in all its pristine vigor, through the contrast easily distinguishable from everything else."

Notes:

1. Every determination of his nature which makes the God immediately knowable is indeed a milestone on the way of approximation, but one which marks an increase instead of a decrease in the distance; it does not measure toward the Paradox but away from it, back past Socrates and the Socratic ignorance. This needs to be carefully noted, lest one experience in the world of the spirit what befell the traveler who asked if the road on which he was journeying went to London, and was told by the Englishman that it did; in spite of which he failed to reach London, because the Englishman had omitted to mention that he needed to turn about, since he was proceeding in the opposite direction.

Interlude

Dear reader! Let us now assume that this Teacher has made his appearance, that he is dead and buried, and that some time intervenes between Chapters IV and V. Likewise it sometimes happens in a comedy that several years elapse between two successive acts. In order to indicate this passage of time, the orchestra is occasionally made to play a symphony or the like, foreshortening the time by filling it with music. In a somewhat similar manner I have thought to fill out the intervening time by a consideration of the problem set forth above. How long the interval should be, I am content to leave to your discretion; but if it seems agreeable to you, let us in a spirit of jest and earnest assume that precisely 1843 years have elapsed. You will note that I ought to proceed somewhat leisurely, if only for the sake of the illusion; for 1843 years is an exceptionally generous allotment of time, likely to put me in a predicament the opposite of that in which our philosophers find themselves, whom the time usually permits only an indication of their meaning; and the opposite also to that of our historians, who find that not the material, but the time, leaves them in the lurch. Hence when you find me somewhat long-winded, repeating the same things, "about the same things" please notice, you must remember that it is for the sake of the illusion; and then you will no doubt pardon my prolixity, and interpret it in a manner more satisfactory to yourself rather than suppose that I allowed myself to think that this matter needed consideration, even by you, in that I suspected you of not completely understanding yourself with respect to it. And this in spite of the fact that I do not by any means doubt that you have completely understood and assented to the newest philosophy, which like the modern age generally seems to suffer from a curious distraction, confusing promise with performance, the superscription with the execution; for what age and what philosophy was ever so wonderful and wonderfully great as our own -- in superscriptions!

1. Coming into Existence

In what sense is there change in that which comes into existence? Or, what is the nature of the coming-into-existence kind of change ()? All other change () presupposes the existence of that which changes, even when the change consists in ceasing to exist. But this is not the case with coming into existence. For if the subject of coming into existence

does not itself remain unchanged during the change of coming into existence, that which comes into existence is not *this* subject which comes into existence, but something else. Then the question involves a in that the inquirer in the given case either sees another change co-present with the change of coming into existence, which confuses the question for him, or he mistakes the nature of what is coming into existence and therefore is not in position to ask the question. If a plan in coming into existence [in being fulfilled or carried out] is in itself changed, it is not this plan which comes into existence; but if it comes into existence without being changed, what then is the change of coming into existence? This coming-into-existence kind of change, therefore, is not a change in essence but in being and is a transition from not existing to existing. But this non-being which the subject of coming into existence leaves behind must itself have some sort of being. Otherwise "the subject of coming into existence would not remain unchanged during the change of coming into existence," unless it had not been at all, and then the change of coming into existence would for another reason be absolutely different from every other kind of change, since it would be no change at all, for every change always presupposes something which changes. But such a being, which is nevertheless a non-being, is precisely what possibility is; and a being which is being is indeed actual being or actuality; and the change of coming into existence is a transition from possibility to actuality.

Can the necessary come into existence? Coming into existence is a change, but the necessary cannot be changed, since it always relates itself to itself and relates itself to itself in the same way. All coming into existence is a *suffering*, and the necessary cannot suffer; it cannot undergo the suffering of the actual, which is that the possible (not only the excluded possibility but also the accepted possibility) reveals itself as nothing in the moment it becomes actual, for the possible is made into nothing by the actual. Everything which comes into-existence proves precisely by coming into existence that it is not necessary, for the only thing which cannot come into existence is the necessary, because the necessary *is*.

Is not necessity then a synthesis of possibility and actuality? What could this mean? Possibility and actuality do not differ in essence but in being; how could there from this difference be formed a synthesis constituting necessity, which is not a determination of being but a determination of essence, since it is the essence of the necessary to be. If possibility and actuality could be united to become necessity, they would become an absolutely different essence, which is not a kind of change; and in becoming necessity or the necessary, they would become that which alone of all things excludes coming into existence, which is just as impossible as it is self-contradictory. (Compare the Aristotelian principle: "it is possible," "it is possible that not," "it is not possible." -- The theory of true and false propositions -- Epicurus -- tends only to confuse the issue here, since essence and not being is reflected upon, and in this way no help is given with respect to the characterization of the future.)

The necessary is a category entirely by itself. Nothing ever comes into existence with necessity; likewise the necessary never comes into existence and something by coming into existence never becomes the necessary. Nothing whatever exists because it is

necessary, but the necessary exists because it is necessary or because the necessary is. The actual is no more necessary than the possible, for the necessary is absolutely different from both. (Compare Aristotle's doctrine of the two kinds of possibility in relationship to the necessary. His mistake lies in his beginning with the principle that everything necessary is possible. In order to avoid having to assert contradictory and even self-contradictory predicates about the necessary, he helps himself out by two kinds of possibility, instead of discovering that his first principle is incorrect, since possibility cannot be predicated of the necessary.)

The change involved in coming into existence is actuality; the transition takes place with freedom. No coming into existence is necessary. It was not necessary before the coming into existence, for then there could not have been the coming into existence, nor after the coming into existence, for then there would not have been the coming into existence.

All coming into existence takes place with freedom, not by necessity. Nothing comes into existence by virtue of a logical ground, but only by a cause. Every cause terminates in a freely effecting cause. The illusion occasioned by the intervening causes is that the coming into existence seems to be necessary; the truth about intervening causes is that just as they themselves have come into existence they point back ultimately to a freely effecting cause. Even the possibility of deducing consequences from a law of nature gives no evidence for the necessity of any coming into existence, which is clear as soon as one reflects definitively on coming into existence. The same is the case with manifestations of freedom, provided we do not let ourselves be deceived by the manifestations of freedom but reflect upon the coming into existence.

2. The Historical

Everything that has come into existence is *eo ipso* historical. For even if it accepts no further historical predicate, it nevertheless accepts the one decisive historical predicate: it has come into existence. That whose coming into existence is a simultaneous coming into existence (*Nebeneinander*, Space) has no other history than this. But even when viewed in this light (*en masse*), and abstracting from what an ingenious speculation calls the history of nature in a special sense, nature has a history.

But the historical is the past (for the present pressing upon the confines of the future has not yet become historical). How then can it be said that nature, though immediately present, is historical, except in the sense of the said ingenious speculation? The difficulty comes from the fact that nature is too abstract to have a dialectic with respect to time in the stricter sense. This is nature's imperfection, that it has no history in any other sense; but it is a perfection in nature that it nevertheless has this suggestion of a history, namely that it has come into existence. (This constitutes its past, the fact that it exists is its present.) On the other hand, it is the perfection of the Eternal to have no history and, of all that is, the Eternal alone has absolutely no history.

However, coming into existence may present a reduplication, i.e., the possibility of a second coming into existence within the first coming into existence. Here we have the

historical in the stricter sense, subject to a dialectic with respect to time. The coming into existence which in this is a possibility, a possibility which for nature is its whole sphere is identical with the coming into existence of nature is a possibility, a possibility which for nature is its whole reality. But this historical coming into existence in the stricter sense is a coming into existence within a coming into existence, which should constantly be kept in mind. The more specifically historical coming into existence occurs by the operation of a relatively freely effecting cause, which in turn points ultimately to an absolutely freely effecting cause.

3. The Past

What has happened has happened, and cannot be undone; in this sense it does not admit of change (Chrysippus the Stoic -- Diodorus the Megarian). Is this immutability identical with the immutability of the necessary? The immutability of the past has been brought about by a change, namely the change of coming into existence; such an immutability does not exclude all change, since it did not exclude this change. All change is excluded (subjecting the concept to a temporal dialectic) only by being excluded in every moment. If the past is conceived as necessary, this can happen only by virtue of forgetting that it has come into existence; is such forgetfulness perhaps also necessary?

What has happened has happened as it happened; in this sense it does not admit of change. But is this immutability identical with the immutability of the necessary? The immutability of the past consists in the fact that its actual "thus" cannot become different; but does it follow from this that its possible "how" could not have been realized in a different manner? The immutability of the necessary, on the contrary, consists in its constant relating itself to itself, and in its relating itself to itself always in the same manner, excluding every change. It is not content with the immutability that belongs to the past, which as we have shown is not merely subject to a dialectic with respect to a prior change from which it emerges, but must even suffer a dialectic with respect to a higher change which annuls it. (Repentance, for example, which seeks to annul an actuality.)

The future has not yet happened. But it is not *on that account* less necessary than the past, since the past did not become necessary by coming into existence, but on the contrary proved by coming into existence that it was not necessary. If the past had become necessary it would not be possible to infer the opposite about the future, but it would rather follow that the future also was necessary. If necessity could gain a foothold at a single point, there would no longer be any distinguishing between the past and the future. To assume to predict the future (prophesy) and to assume to understand the necessity of the past are one and the same thing, and only custom makes the one seem more plausible than the other to a given generation. The past has come into existence; coming into existence is the change of actuality brought about by freedom. If the past had become necessary it would no longer belong to freedom, i.e., it would no longer belong to that by which it came into existence. Freedom would then be in a sorry case, both an object of laughter and deserving of tears, since it would be responsible for what did not belong to necessity to devour. Freedom itself would be an illusion, to it, being destined to bring

offspring into the world for and coming into existence no less so; freedom would be witchcraft and coming into existence a false alarm.¹

4. The Apprehension of the Past

Nature, as the spatial order, has only an immediate existence. But everything that admits of a dialectic with respect to time is characterized 'by a certain duality, in that after having been present it can persist as past. The essentially historical is always the past (it is over, but whether years since or only a matter of days ago makes no difference), and has as past its own actuality; for the fact that it has happened is certain and dependable. But the fact that it has happened is on the other hand the ground of an uncertainty, by which the apprehension will always be prevented from assimilating the past as if it had been thus from all eternity. Only in terms of this conflict between certainty and uncertainty, the distinguishing mark of all that has come into existence, and hence also of the past, can the past be understood. When the past is understood in any other manner, the apprehension has misunderstood itself in the role of apprehension; and it has misunderstood its object, as if anything such could be the object of an apprehension. Every apprehension of the past which proposes to understand it better by construing it,; has only the more thoroughly misunderstood it. (A manifestation theory instead of a construction theory is at first sight deceptive, but the next moment we have the secondary construction and the necessary manifestation.) The past is not necessary, since it came into existence; it did not become necessary by coming into existence (which is a contradiction); still less does it become necessary through someone's apprehension of it. (Distance in time tends to promote an intellectual illusion, just as distance in space provokes a sensory illusion. A contemporary does not perceive the necessity of what comes into existence, but when centuries intervene between the event and the beholder he perceives the necessity, just as distance makes the square tower seem round.) If the past became necessary through being apprehended, the past would be the gainer by as much as the apprehension lost, since the latter would come to apprehend something else, which is a poor sort of apprehension. If the object of apprehension is changed in the process of apprehension, the apprehension is changed into a misapprehension. Knowledge of the present does not confer necessity upon it; foreknowledge of the future gives it no necessity (Boethius); knowledge of the past confers no necessity upon the past; for no knowledge and no apprehension has anything of its own to give.

Whoever apprehends the past, *historico-philosophus*, is therefore a prophet in retrospect (Daub). That he is a prophet expresses the fact that the certainty of the past is based upon an uncertainty, an uncertainty that exists for the past in precisely the same sense that it exists for the future, being rooted in the possibility (Leibniz and the possible worlds) out of which it could not *emerge* with necessity, *nam necessariam se ipso prius sit, necesse est*. The historian thus again confronts the past, moved by the emotion which is the passionate sense for coming into existence: wonder. If the philosopher never finds occasion to wonder (and how could it occur to anyone to wonder at a necessary construction, except by a new kind of contradiction?) he has *eo ipso* nothing to do with the historical; for wherever the process of coming into existence is involved, as is the case in relation to the past, there the uncertainty attaching to the most certain of events

(the uncertainty of coming into existence) can find expression only in this passion, which is as necessary to the philosopher as it is worthy of him. (Plato, Aristotle.) Even if the event is certain in the extreme, even if wonder offers its consent in advance, saying that if this had not happened it would have had to be invented (Baader), even then the passion of wonder would fall into contradiction with itself if it falsely imputed necessity, and thereby cheated itself. -- As for the Method, both the word itself and the concept sufficiently show that the progress connoted is teleological. But in every such movement there is each instant a pause (where wonder stands *in pausa* and waits upon coming into existence), the pause of coming into existence and of possibility, precisely because the lies outside. If there is only one way possible, the is not outside, but in the movement itself, and even behind it, as in the case of an immanent progression.

So much for the apprehension of the past. We have in the meanwhile presupposed that a knowledge of the past is given; how is such knowledge acquired? The historical cannot be given immediately to the senses, since the *elusiveness* of coming into existence is involved in it. The immediate impression of a natural phenomenon or of an event is not the impression of the historical, for the *coming into existence* involved cannot be sensed immediately, but only the immediate presence. But the presence of the historical includes the process of coming into existence, or else it is not the presence of the historical as such.

Immediate sensation and immediate cognition cannot deceive. This is by itself enough to show that the historical -cannot be the object of either, because the historical has the elusiveness which is implicit in all coming into existence. As compared with the immediate, coming into existence has an elusiveness by which even the most dependable fact is rendered doubtful. Thus when the observer sees a star, the star becomes involved in doubt the moment he seeks to become aware of its having come into existence. It is as if reflection took the star away from the senses. So much then is clear, that the organ for the historical must have a structure analogous with the historical itself; it must comprise a corresponding somewhat by which it may repeatedly negate in its certainty the uncertainty that corresponds to the uncertainty of coming into existence. The latter uncertainty is two-fold: the nothingness of the antecedent non-being is one side of it, while the annihilation of the possible is another, the latter being at the same time the annihilation of every other possibility. Now faith has precisely the required character; for in the certainty of belief (*Tro* is translated here and in the following three pages as *belief* or "faith . . . in a direct and ordinary sense," as distinguished from Faith "in an eminent sense." See pp. 108-09. -- H.V.H.) [Danish: *Tro, faith* or *belief*] there is always present a negated uncertainty, in every way corresponding to the uncertainty of coming into existence. Faith believes what it does not see; it does not believe that the star is there, for that it sees, but it believes that the star has come into existence. The same holds true of an event. The "what" of a happening may be known immediately, but by no means can it be known immediately that it has happened. Nor can it be known immediately that it happens, not even if it happens as we say in front of our very noses. The elusiveness pertaining to an event consists in its having happened, in which fact lies the transition from nothing, from non-being, and from the manifold possible "how." Immediate sensation and immediate cognition have no suspicion of the uncertainty with which belief

approaches its object, but neither do they suspect the certainty which emerges from this uncertainty. Immediate sensation and immediate cognition cannot deceive, This is important for the understanding of doubt, and for the assignment to belief of its proper place through a comparison with doubt. This thought underlies Greek skepticism, strange as it may seem. Yet it should not be so difficult to understand, nor to perceive the light that this throws upon the nature of belief, provided one has escaped being altogether confused by the Hegelian doctrine of a universal doubt, against which it is certainly not necessary to preach. For what the Hegelians say about this is of such a character as rather to encourage a modest little doubt of how far it can be true that they have ever doubted anything at all. Greek skepticism was of the retiring kind (). The Greek skeptic did not doubt by virtue of his knowledge, but by an act of will (refusal to give assent --). From this it follows that doubt can be overcome only by a free act, an act of will, as every Greek skeptic would understand as soon as he had understood himself. But he did not wish to overcome his skepticism, precisely because he willed to doubt. For this he will have to assume the responsibility; but let us not impute to him the stupidity of supposing that doubt is necessary, or the still greater stupidity of supposing that if it were, it could ever be overcome. The Greek skeptic did not deny the validity of sensation or immediate cognition; error, he says, has an entirely different ground, for it comes from the conclusions that I draw. If I can only refrain from drawing conclusions, I will never be deceived. If my senses, for example, show me an object that seems round at a distance but square near at hand, or a stick bent in the water which is straight when taken out, the senses have not deceived me. But I run the risk of being deceived when I draw a conclusion about the stick or the object. Hence the skeptic keeps his mind constantly in suspense, and it was this frame of mind that he *willed* to maintain. In so far as Greek skepticism has been called , , , these predicates do not express its distinctive feature, for Greek skepticism had recourse to knowledge only for the sake of protecting the state of mind which was its principal concern, and therefore did not even express its negative cognitive results , for fear of being caught in a conclusion. The state of mind was the skeptic's chief concern. (, Diogenes Laertius, IX, 107.)² -- By way of contrast it now becomes easy to see that belief is not a form of knowledge, but a free act, an expression of will. It believes the fact of coming into existence, and has thus succeeded in overcoming within itself the uncertainty that corresponds to the nothingness of the antecedent non-being; it believes the "thus" of what has come into existence, and has consequently succeeded in annulling within itself the possible "how." Without denying the possibility of another "thus," this present "thus" is for belief most certain.

In so far as that which through its relation to belief becomes historical and as historical becomes the object of belief (the one corresponds to the other) has an immediate existence, and is immediately apprehended, it is not subject to error. A contemporary may then safely use his eyes and so forth, but let him look to his conclusions.

He cannot know, as a matter of immediate cognition, that his fact has come into existence, but neither can he know it as a matter of necessity; for the very first expression for coming into existence is a 'breach of continuity. The moment faith believes that its fact has come into existence, has happened, it makes the event and the fact doubtful in the process of becoming, and makes its "thus" also doubtful through its relation to the

possible "how" of the coming into existence. The conclusion of belief is not so much a conclusion as a resolution, and it is for this reason that belief excludes doubt. When belief concludes: this exists, *ergo*, it must have come into existence, it might appear to be making an inference from effect to cause. However, this is not quite the case; and even if it were so it must be remembered that the cognitive inference is from cause to effect, or rather, from ground to consequent (Jacobi). But it is not accurate to say that the conclusion of belief is an inference from effect to cause; I cannot sense or know immediately that what I sense or know immediately is an effect, since for the immediate apprehension it merely is. I 'believe that it is an effect, for in order to bring it under this category I must already have made it doubtful with the uncertainty implicit in coming into existence. When belief resolves to do this, doubt has been overcome; in that very instant the indifference of doubt has been dispelled and its equilibrium overthrown, not by knowledge but by will. Thus it will be seen that belief is the most disputable of things while in process of approximation; for the uncertainty of doubt, strong and invincible in making things ambiguous, *dis-putare*, is brought into subjection within it. But it is the least disputable when once constituted, by virtue of its new quality. Belief is the opposite of doubt. Belief and doubt are not two forms of knowledge, determinable in continuity with one another, for neither of them is a cognitive act; they are opposite passions. Belief is a sense for coming into existence, and doubt is a protest against every conclusion that transcends immediate sensation and immediate cognition. The skeptic does not, for example, deny his own existence; but he draws no conclusion from fear of being deceived. In so far as he has recourse to dialectics in order to make the opposite of any given conclusion seem equally probable, it is not on the foundation of these dialectical arguments that he sets up his skepticism. They are but outworks, human accommodations. He has no result, therefore, not even a negative result; for this would be to recognize the validity of knowledge. By an act of will he resolves to keep himself under restraint, and to refrain from every conclusion ().

One who is not contemporary with the historical, has, instead of the immediacy of sense and cognition, in which the historical is not contained, the testimony of contemporaries, to which he stands related in the same manner as the contemporaries stand related to the said immediacy. Even if the content of the testimony has undergone in the process of communication the change which makes it historical, the non-contemporary cannot take it up into his consciousness without giving it his assent, thus making it historical for himself, unless he is to transform it into something unhistorical for himself. The immediacy of the testimony, i.e., the fact that the testimony is there, is what is given as immediately present to him; but the historicity of the present consists in its having come into existence, and the historicity of the past consists in its having once been present through having come into existence. Whenever a successor believes the past (not its truth, which is a matter of cognition and concerns not existence but essence), whenever he believes that the past was once present through having come into existence, the uncertainty which is implicit in coming into existence is present in the past that is the object of his belief. This uncertainty (the nothingness of the antecedent non-being -- the possible "how" corresponding to the actual "thus") will exist for him as well as for a contemporary; his mind will be in a state of suspense exactly as was the mind of a contemporary. He has no longer a mere immediacy before him; neither does he confront

a necessary coming into *existence*. A successor believes, to be sure, on accounting into existence, but only the "thus" of *coming into existence*. A successor believes, to be sure, on account of the testimony some contemporary; but only in the same sense as a contemporary believes on account of his immediate sensation and immediate cognition. But no contemporary can believe by virtue of this immediacy alone, and neither can any successor believe solely by virtue of the testimony to which he has access.

* *

Thus at no time does the past become necessary, just as it was not necessary when it came into existence nor revealed itself as necessary to the contemporary who believed it, i.e., believed that it had come into existence. For belief and coming into existence correspond to one another, and are concerned with the two negative determinations of being, namely the past and the future, and with the present in so far as it is conceived from the point of view of a negative determination of being, namely as having come into existence. Necessity, on the other hand, is wholly a matter of essence, and thus it is of the essence of the necessary to exclude coming into existence. The possibility from which that which became actual once emerged still clings to it and remains with it as past, even after the lapse of centuries. Whenever a successor reasserts its having come into existence, which he does by believing it, he evokes this potentiality anew, irrespective of whether there can be any question of his having a more specific conception of it or not.

Supplement: Application

What has here been said applies to the historical in the direct and ordinary sense, whose only contradiction is that it has come into existence, which contradiction is implicit in all coming into existence.³ Here again one must guard against the illusion of supposing that it is easier to understand after the event than before the event. Whoever thinks this does not yet grasp the fact that what he apprehends has come into existence; he has before him only the present content of a sensory and cognitive immediacy, in which coming into existence is not contained. Let us now return to our story, and to our hypothesis that the God *has been*. As far 'as the direct and ordinary form of the historical is concerned, we have seen that this cannot become historical for immediate sensation or cognition, either for a contemporary or for a successor. But this historical fact which is the content of our hypothesis has a peculiar character, since it is not an ordinary historical fact, but a fact based on a self-contradiction. (This is sufficient to show that in relation to this fact there is no difference between an immediate contemporary and a successor; for over against a self-contradiction, and the risk involved in giving it assent, an immediate contemporaneity can yield no advantage.) Yet it is an historical fact, and only for the apprehension of Faith. Faith is here taken first in the direct and ordinary sense [belief], as the relationship of the mind to the historical; but secondly also in the eminent sense, the sense in which the word can be used only once, i.e., many times, but only in one relationship. From the eternal point of view, one does not *have Faith* that the God exists [eternally is], even if one assumes that he does exist. The use of the word Faith in this connection enshrines a misunderstanding. Socrates did not have faith that the God existed. What he knew about the God he arrived at by way of Recollection; the God's

existence was for him by no means historical existence. If his knowledge of the God was imperfect in comparison with his who according to our supposition receives the condition from the God himself, this does not concern us here; for Faith does not have to do with essence, but with being [historical existence], and the assumption that the God is determines him eternally and not historically. The historical fact for a contemporary is that the God has *come into existence*; for the member of a later generation the historical fact is that the God has been present through *having come into existence*. Herein precisely lies the contradiction. No one can become immediately contemporary with this historical fact, as has been shown in the preceding; it is the object of Faith, since it concerns coming into existence. No question is here raised as to the true content of this; the question is if one will give assent to the God's having come into existence, by which the God's eternal essence is inflected in the dialectical determinations of coming into existence.

Our historical fact thus stands before us. It has no immediate contemporary, since it is historical in the first degree, corresponding to faith [belief] in the ordinary sense; it has no immediate contemporary in the second degree, since it is based upon a contradiction, corresponding to Faith in the eminent sense. But this last resemblance, subsisting between those who are most diversely situated temporally, cancels the difference which in respect of the first relation exists for those of diverse temporal situations. Every time the believer makes this fact an object of his Faith, every time he makes it historical for himself, he re-instates the dialectical determinations of coming into existence with respect to it. If ever so many thousands of years have intervened, if the fact came to entail ever so many consequences, it does not on that account become more necessary (and the consequences themselves, from an ultimate point of view, are only relatively necessary, since they derive from the freely effecting cause); to say nothing of the topsy-turvy notion that the fact might become necessary by reason of the consequences, the consequences being wont to seek their ground in something else, and not to constitute a ground for that of which they are the consequences. If a contemporary or a predecessor saw ever so clearly the preparations, perceived intimations and symptoms of what was about to come, the fact was nevertheless not necessary when it came into existence. That is to say, this fact is no more necessary when viewed as future, than it is necessary when viewed as past.

Notes:

1. A prophesying generation despises the past, and will not listen to the testimony of the scriptures; a generation engaged in understanding the necessity of the past does not like to be reminded of the future. Both attitudes are consistent, for each would have occasion to discover in the opposite the folly of its own procedure. The Absolute Method, Hegel's discovery, is a difficulty even in Logic, aye a glittering tautology, coming to the assistance of academic superstition with many signs and wonders. In the historical sciences it is a fixed idea. The fact that the method here at once begins to become concrete, since history is the concretion of the Idea, has given Hegel an opportunity to

exhibit extraordinary learning, and a rare power of organization, inducing a quite sufficient commotion in the historical material. But it has also promoted a distraction of mind in the reader, so that, perhaps precisely from respect and admiration for China and Persia, the thinkers of the middle ages, the four universal monarchies (a discovery which, as it did not escape Geert Westphaler, has also set many a Hegelian Geert Westphaler's tongue wagging), he may have forgotten to inquire whether it now really did become evident at the end, at the close of this journey of enchantment, as was repeatedly promised in the beginning, and what was of course the principal issue, for the want of which not all the glories of the world could compensate, what alone could be a sufficient reward for the unnatural tension in which one had been held -- that the method was valid. Why at once become concrete, why at once begin to experiment *in concreto*? Was it not possible to answer this question in the dispassionate brevity of the language of abstraction, which has no means of distraction or enchantment, this question of what it means that the Idea becomes concrete, what is the nature of coming into existence, what is one's relationship to that which has come into existence, and so forth? Just as it surely might have been cleared up in the Logic what "transition" is and means, before going over to write three volumes describing its workings in the categories, astounding the superstitious, and making so difficult the situation of one who would gladly owe much to the superior mind and express his gratitude for what he owes, but nevertheless cannot over this forget what Hegel himself must have considered the matter of principal importance.

* *Tro* is translated here and in the following three pages as *belief* or "faith . . . in a direct and ordinary sense," as distinguished from Faith "in an eminent sense." See pp. 108-109. -- H.V.H.

2. Both Plato and Aristotle insist on the principle that immediate sensation and immediate cognition cannot deceive. Later also Descartes, who says precisely as do the Greek skeptics, that error has its root in the will, which is over-hasty in drawing conclusions. This also throws light on faith; when faith resolves to believe it runs the risk of committing itself to an error, but it nevertheless believes. There is no other road to faith; if one wishes to escape risk, it is as if one wanted to know with certainty that he can swim before going into the water.

3. The word "contradiction" must not here be taken in the frothy sense into which Hegel has beguiled himself and others and the concept -- that it has the power to produce something. As long as nothing has come into existence, the contradiction is merely the impulsive power in the passion of wonder, its *nisus*; but it is not the *nisus* of the process of coming into existence itself. When the process of coming into existence has occurred, the contradiction is 'again present as the *nisus* of the wonder in the passion which reproduces the coming into existence.

Chapter 5: The Disciple at Second Hand

Dear reader! Since by our supposition 1843 years have elapsed between the contemporary disciple and the time of this conversation, there would seem to be ample reason to raise the question of a disciple at second hand, for this relationship must often have been repeated. The question seems one, therefore, that we cannot refuse to discuss; nor does it seem that we can dismiss the demand involved in the question for an explanation of the difficulties that may offer when we seek to determine the disciple at second hand in his resemblance to, and difference from, the contemporary disciple. But in spite of this, should we not perhaps first consider whether the above question is as legitimate as it lies near at hand? For if it should appear that the question is illegitimate, or that one cannot ask such a question without stupidity, and hence forfeiting the right to charge one with stupidity who happens to be so wise as not to be able to answer it -- in that case the difficulties would seem to be removed." -- "Undoubtedly; for when the question cannot be asked the answer need not trouble us, and the difficulty becomes slight indeed." -- "This does not quite follow; for suppose the difficulty lay in perceiving that one cannot ask such a question. Or have you perhaps already perceived this; was it this you meant by what you said in our last conversation (Chapter IV), that you had understood me and all the consequences of my proposition, while I confess that I had not yet entirely understood myself?" -- "By no means was this my meaning; nor is it my opinion that the question can be dismissed, so much the less as it immediately involves a new question, whether there is not a difference between the many who consort under the head: the disciple at second hand. In other words, is it right to divide so tremendous a section of time into two such unequal parts: the generation of contemporary disciples on the one hand, and all the subsequent generations on the other?" -- "You mean that there must be room for question concerning the disciple at fifth hand, at seventh hand, and so forth. But even if to please you something were to be said about this, does it follow that a discussion of all these differences, unless it be in contradiction with itself, may not properly be comprised under a single head, over against the class: the contemporary disciple? Or would our discussion be justified if it imitated your example, in its simplicity following in the steps of your cunning, so as to transform the problem of the disciple at second hand into an entirely different problem, by which, instead of assenting to or dissenting from my proposal, you would find opportunity to trick me by raising a new question? But since you probably do not wish to continue this conversation from fear of its degenerating into sophistry and bickering, I will break it off at this point; but from the exposition I now intend to place before you, you will observe that notice has been taken of the remarks that have passed between us."

1

The class of disciples at second hand considered with respect to the differences comprised within it

In this section we do not reflect upon the relation between the secondary disciple and the contemporary disciple, but the differences considered are such as to leave intact the identity which the internally different exhibits over against something external; for the variation which is only a variation within a class remains subordinate to the identity which constitutes the class. For this reason it is not arbitrary to cut off the discussion

where we please; the relative differences here in question constitute no sorties, from which a new quality may be made to emerge by a *coup de mains*, since they are all comprised within a determinate common quality. A sorties would arise only if we subjected the concept of contemporaneity to a false dialectic, for example by showing that in a certain sense no one could be a contemporary, since no one could be contemporary with every moment or phase; or by asking where contemporaneity leaves off and non-contemporaneity begins, whether there may not exist a twilight zone subject to bargaining, of which the prating understanding might say: to a certain degree, and so forth. All such inhuman profundities lead nowhere, or perhaps in our day they may lead to a reputation for genuine speculative insight; for the despised sophism, the devil only knows how, has become the wretched secret of genuine speculation, and the to-a-certain-degree mode of thought (that travesty on tolerance which mediates everything without petty scrupulosity), regarded as negative by the ancients, has now become positive; and what the ancients regarded as positive, the passion for distinctions, has now become a childish folly.

Opposites stand revealed most clearly when they are juxtaposed, and hence we choose for discussion here the first generation of secondary disciples and the last, i.e., that which limits the given *spatium*, the 1843 years. We shall make our exposition as brief as possible, since we do not speak historically but algebraically, and have no wish to distract or beguile the mind by the enchantments of the manifold. On the contrary, we shall strive constantly to remember to hold fast the common likeness subsisting beneath the differences discussed, as over against the contemporary disciple (not until we come to the next paragraph will we have occasion to note more precisely that the question of the disciple at second hand is at bottom illegitimate); and we shall take care to see that the differences do not swell to such proportions as to confuse everything.

A. The First Generation of Secondary Disciples

This generation enjoys the (relative) advantage of being nearer to an immediate certainty, of being nearer to the attainment of an exact and reliable account of what happened, from witnesses whose reliability is subject to collateral control. We have already in Chapter IV calculated the value of this immediate certainty. To be somewhat nearer to it is doubtless an illusory advantage; for he who is not so near to immediate certainty as to be immediately certain, is absolutely separated from it. But suppose we try to estimate the value of this relative difference, that which marks the first generation of secondary disciples over against later ones; how great a value shall we assign to it? We can evaluate it only by comparing it with the advantage enjoyed by a contemporary. But his advantage, the advantage namely of immediate certainty in the strict sense, we have already shown in Chapter IV to be ambiguous (*anceps* -- dangerous), and we shall show this further in the next paragraph. -- Suppose there lived a man in the immediately succeeding generation who combined in his own person a tyrant's power with a tyrant's passion, and suppose that this man had somehow conceived the idea of concentrating his entire time and energy upon the problem of bringing the truth to light on this point, would this constitute him a disciple? Suppose he possessed himself of all the contemporary witnesses still living, together with the immediate circle of their associates; suppose he

subjected them one by one to the most searching inquisition, shutting them up in prison like the seventy interpreters, starving them to make them tell the truth, confronting them with one another in the craftiest possible manner, all for the sake of making sure by every possible means of a reliable account -- would the possession of this account constitute him a disciple? Must not the God rather smile at him, because he thought to arrogate to himself in this manner what cannot be purchased for money, nor yet seized by violence? Even if the fact we speak of were a simple historical fact, difficulties would not fail to present themselves as soon as he tried to realize an absolute agreement in all petty details, which would be of extreme importance to him, because the passion of faith, i.e., the passion with the intensity of faith, had been misdirected upon the merely historical as its object. It is a familiar fact that the most conscientious and truthful of witnesses are the first to involve themselves in contradiction when subjected to inquisitorial treatment and questioned in the light of an inquisitor's fixed idea; while it is the prerogative of a hardened criminal, on account of the precision which an evil conscience tends to enforce, not to contradict himself in his lie. But leaving this aside, the fact of which we speak is not a simple historical fact: of what advantage then is all this precision? If he succeeded in bringing to pass a complicated account, consistent to the letter and to the minute, he would beyond all doubt be deceived. He would have obtained a certainty even greater than was possible for a contemporary observer, one who saw and heard; for the latter would quickly discover that he sometimes failed to see what was there, and sometimes saw what was not there, and so with his hearing. And besides, a contemporary would constantly be reminded that he did not see or hear the God immediately, but merely a humble human being who said of himself that he was the God; in other words, he would constantly be reminded that the fact in question was based upon a self-contradiction. Would this man then gain anything by reason of the reliability of his account? Historically speaking yes, but otherwise not; for all talk of the God's earthly beauty, when he was after all only in the form of a servant, an individual human being like one of us, the cause of offense; all talk of his immediately manifest divinity, though divinity is not an immediate characteristic, and the Teacher must first develop in the learner the most profound self-reflection, the sense of sin, as a condition for the understanding; all talk of the immediate miraculousness of his deeds, though a miracle does not exist for immediate apprehension, but only for faith, if it be true that whoever does not believe does not see the miracle -- all such talk is here as everywhere galimatias, an attempt to substitute idle words for serious consideration.

This generation has the relative advantage of being nearer to the shock produced by the impact of our fact. This shock and its reverberations will help to arouse the attention. The significance of such an aroused attention (which may also issue in taking offense) has already been evaluated in Chapter IV. The being somewhat nearer to it in comparison with later generations, well, suppose we call it an advantage; its value can only be relative to the doubtful advantage enjoyed by an immediate contemporary. The advantage is entirely dialectical, like the aroused attention itself. It consists in having one's attention aroused, whether the result is that one believes or is offended. The aroused attention is by no means partial to faith, as if faith followed from the attention by a simple consequence. The advantage is that a state of mind is induced in which the crucial nature of the decision confronting the individual becomes more clearly evident. This is an advantage,

and the only one of any account; aye, so significant is it that it is fearful, by no means an easy and comfortable convenience. Unless in consequence of a stupid insensibility this fact should some time deteriorate into a meaningless human conventionality, each subsequent generation will exhibit the same proportion of offense as the first; for there is no immediacy by the aid of which anyone could come any nearer to it. One may be educated up to this fact as much as you please, it will be of no avail. On the contrary, and especially if the educator is himself accomplished in this direction, it may help one to become a well-drilled chatterer, in whose mind there is no suspicion of the possibility of offense, nor any room for faith.

B. The Last Generation

This generation is far removed from the initial shock, but it has on the other hand the consequences to lean upon, the proof of probability afforded by the results. It has before it, as immediate datum, the consequences with which this fact must doubtless have invested everything; it has an obvious recourse to a demonstration of probability, from which however no immediate transition to Faith is possible, since as we have shown Faith is by no means partial to probability; to make such an assertion about Faith is to slander it.¹ If this fact came into the world as the Absolute Paradox, nothing that happens subsequently can avail to change this. The consequences will in all eternity remain the consequences of a paradox, and hence in an ultimate view will be precisely as improbable as the Paradox itself; unless it is to be supposed that the consequences, which as such are derivative, have retroactive power to transform the Paradox, which would be about as reasonable as to suppose that a son had retroactive power to transform his own father. Even if the consequences be conceived in a purely logical relation to their cause, and hence under the form of immanence, it still remains true that they can be conceived only as identical and homogeneous with their cause; least of all will they have a transforming power. To have the consequences as a datum is then precisely as dubious an advantage as to have an immediate certainty; whoever takes the consequences immediately to his credit is deceived, precisely as one who takes the immediate certainty for Faith.

The advantage of the consequences would seem to lie in a gradual *naturalization* of this fact. If such is the case, i.e., if such a thing is conceivable, the later generation has even a direct advantage over the contemporary generation; and a man would surely have to be very stupid if he could speak of the consequences in this sense, and yet rave about how fortunate the contemporaries were. Under the assumption of naturalization, it will be possible for a later generation to appropriate the fact without the slightest embarrassment, without sensing anything of the ambiguity of the aroused attention, from which offense may issue as well as faith. However, this fact is no respecter of the drill-master's discipline; it is too proud to desire a disciple whose willingness to attach himself to the cause is based upon the favorable turn that events have taken; it disdains naturalization, whether under the protection of a king or a professor. It is and remains the Paradox, and cannot be assimilated by any speculation. This fact exists for Faith alone. Faith may indeed become the *second nature* in a man, but the man in whom it becomes a second nature must surely have had a *first nature*, since Faith became the second. If the fact in question is *naturalized*, this may be expressed in relation to the individual by saying that

the individual is born with faith, i.e., with his second nature. If we begin in this manner all sorts of galimatias will simultaneously begin to jubilate; for now the flood of nonsense has broken through and nothing can stop it. This particular nonsense will naturally have been discovered by the process of making an advance; for in Socrates' view there was certainly a genuine meaning, though we left it behind in order to discover the hypothesis here set forth; such galimatias as that just described would doubtless feel deeply insulted if anyone refused to concede that it had advanced far beyond Socrates. There is meaning even in a doctrine of transmigration; but the doctrine that a man may be born with his second nature, a second nature involving a reference to a temporally dated historical fact, is a veritable *non plus ultra* of absurdity. From the Socratic point of view the individual has an existence prior to his coming into being and remembers himself, so that the Recollection here involved is his preexistence, and not a recollection about his preexistence. His nature (his one nature, for here there is no question of a first and second nature) is determined in continuity with itself. But in our project, on the contrary, everything is forward-looking and historical, so that the notion of being born with faith is as plausible as the notion of being born twenty-four years old. Were it really possible to find an individual born with Faith, he would constitute a prodigy, more notable even than the marvel told of by the barber in *The Busy Man*, the birth in the Neuen-Buden; even though barbers and "busy" men be inclined to regard him as a precious little darling, the crowning triumph of philosophical speculation. -- Or is it perhaps the case that the individual is born with both natures simultaneously; please to note, not with two natures which supplement one another and together form an ordinary human nature, but with two complete human natures, one of which pre-supposes the intermediation of an historical event. If this is the case, everything which we have proposed in our first chapter is confounded, nor do we stand at the Socratic order of things, but we stand before a confusion which not even Socrates would have been able to master. It would be a confusion in the forward direction having much in common with that invented by Apollonius of Tyana in the backward direction. Apollonius was not content like Socrates to remember himself as being before he came into existence (the eternity and continuity of the consciousness is the fundamental meaning of the Socratic thought), but was quick to make an advance; he remembered who he was before he became himself. If this fact has been naturalized, birth is no longer merely birth, but is at the same time a *new birth*, so that one who has never before been in existence is born anew -- in being born the first time. In the individual life the hypothesis of naturalization is expressed in the principle that the individual is born with faith; in the life of the race it must be expressed in the proposition that the human race, after the introduction of this fact, has become an entirely different race, though determined in continuity with the first. In that event the race ought to adopt a new name; for there is nothing inhuman about faith as we have proposed to conceive it, as a birth within a birth (the new birth); but if it were as the proposed objection would conceive it, it would be a fabulous monstrosity.

The advantage afforded by the consequences is dubious for still another reason, in so far as the consequences do not follow directly, as simple consequences. Let us assess the advantage of the consequences at its highest maximum, and assume that this fact has completely transformed the world, that it has interpenetrated even the smallest detail of life with its omnipresence -- how has this come to pass? Surely not all at once, but by a

succession of steps; and how have these steps been taken? By each particular generation again coming into relationship with this fact. This intermediary determination must be brought under control, so that the entire virtue of the consequences can redound to one's advantage only by means of a conversion. Or may not a misunderstanding also have consequences, may not a lie also be powerful? And has it not happened so to each generation? If now the previous generations collectively propose to bequeath to the last the whole splendid array of consequences without further ado, will not the consequences constitute a misunderstanding? Or is not Venice built over the sea, even if it became so solidly built up that a generation finally came upon the scene that did not notice it; and would it not be a sad misunderstanding if this last generation made the mistake of permitting the piles to rot and the city to sink? But consequences founded on a paradox are humanly speaking built over a yawning chasm, and their total content, which can be transmitted to the individual only with the express understanding that they rest upon a paradox, are not to be appropriated as a settled estate, for their entire value trembles in the balance.

C. Comparison

We shall not pursue these considerations further, but leave it to each one in particular to practice for himself the art of coming back to this thought from the most diverse angles, using his imagination to hit upon the strangest cases of relativity in difference and situation, in order thereupon to cast up the account. Thus the quantitative is confined within its limits, and within these limits it has unrestricted scope. It is the quantitative that gives to life its manifold variety, ever weaving its motley tapestry; it is that sister of Destiny who sat spinning at the wheel. But Thought is the other sister, whose task it is to cut the thread; which, leaving the figure, should be done every time the quantitative attempts to create a new quality.

The first generation of secondary disciples has the advantage that the difficulty is patently there; for it is always an advantage, an alleviation of a difficult task, that it is made to appear difficult. If the last generation, beholding the first, and seeing it almost sink under its burden of awe and fear, were to find it in its heart to say: "It is impossible to understand why they should take it so hard, for the whole is not heavier than that one could easily take it up and run with it," there will doubtless be someone to answer: "You are welcome to run with it if you like; but you ought at all events make sure that what you run with really is that of which we are speaking; for there is no disputing the fact that it is easy enough to run with the wind."

The last generation has the advantage of a greater ease; but as soon as it discovers that this ease is precisely the danger which breeds the difficulty, this new difficulty will correspond to the difficulty of the fear confronting the first generation, and it will be gripped as primitively by awe and fear as the first generation of secondary disciples.

2

The problem of the disciple at second hand

Before taking up the problem itself, let us first present one or two considerations by way of orientation. (a) If our fact is assumed to be a simple historical fact, contemporaneity is a *desideratum*. It is an advantage to be a contemporary in the more precise sense described in Chapter IV, or to be as near to such contemporaneity as possible, or to be in a position to check the reliability of contemporary witnesses, and so forth. Every historical fact is merely relative, and hence it is in order for time, the relative power, to decide the relative fortunes of men with respect to contemporaneity; such a fact has no greater significance, and only childishness or stupidity could so exaggerate its importance as to make it absolute. (b) If the fact in question is an eternal fact, every age is equally near; but not, it should be noted, in Faith; for Faith and the historical are correlative concepts, and it is only by an accommodation to a less exact usage that I employ in this connection the word "fact," which is derived from the historical realm. (c) If the fact in question is an absolute fact, or to determine it still more precisely, if it is the fact we have described, it would be a contradiction to suppose that time had any power to differentiate the fortunes of men with respect to it, that is to say, in any decisive sense. Whatever can be essentially differentiated by time is *eo ipso* not the Absolute; this would be to make the Absolute itself a *casus* in life, or a *status* relative to other things. But though the Absolute is declinable in all the *casibus* of life, it remains itself ever the same; and though it enters continually into relations with other things, it constantly remains *status absolutus*. But the absolute fact is also an historical fact. Unless we are careful to insist on this point our entire hypothesis is nullified; for then we speak only of an eternal fact. The absolute fact is an historical fact, and as such it is the object of Faith. The historical aspect must indeed be accentuated, but not in such a way that it becomes decisive for the individuals, for then we stand at the alternative described in (a), though when so understood it involves a contradiction; for a simple historical fact is not absolute, and has no power to force an absolute decision. But neither may the historical aspect of our fact be eliminated, for then we have only an eternal fact. -- Now just as the historical gives occasion for the contemporary to become a disciple, but only it must be noted through receiving the condition from the God himself, since otherwise we speak Socratically, so the testimony of contemporaries gives occasion for each successor to become a disciple, but only it must be noted through receiving the condition from the God himself.

Now we are ready to begin. From the God himself everyone receives the condition who by virtue of the condition becomes the disciple. If this is the case (and this has been expounded in the foregoing, where it was shown that the immediate contemporaneity is merely an occasion, but not in the sense that the condition was presupposed as already present), what becomes of the problem of the disciple at second hand? For whoever has what he has from the God himself clearly has it at first hand; and he who does not have it from the God himself is not a disciple.

Let us assume that it is otherwise, that the contemporary generation of disciples had received the condition from the God, and that the subsequent generations were to receive it from these contemporaries -- what would follow? We shall not distract the attention by reflecting upon the historical pusillanimity with which the contemporary accounts would presumably be sought after, as if everything depended on that, thus introducing a new contradiction and a new confusion (for if we once begin in this manner, the confusions

will be inexhaustible). No, if the contemporary disciple gives the condition to the successor, the latter will come to believe in him. He receives the condition from him, and thus the contemporary becomes the object of Faith for the successor; for whoever gives the individual this condition is *eo ipso* (cf. the preceding) the object of Faith, and the God.

Such a meaningless consequence will surely deter thought from making this assumption. If on the contrary the successor also receives the condition from the God, the Socratic relationships will return, of course within the total difference which is constituted by the fact in question, and by the individual's (the contemporary's and the successor's) particular relationship to the God. The above meaningless consequence on the other hand is unthinkable, in a different sense than when we say of the fact in question and of the individual's particular relationship to the God, that it is unthinkable. Our hypothetical assumption of this fact and of the individual's particular relationship to the God contains no self-contradiction, and thought is free to occupy itself therewith as with the strangest proposal possible. But the meaningless consequence developed above contains a self-contradiction; it does not rest content with positing an absurdity, the content of our hypothesis, but within this absurdity it brings forth a self-contradiction, namely that the God is the God for the contemporary, but that the contemporary is the God for a third party. Only through placing the God in particular relationship with the individual did our project go beyond Socrates; but who would dare to appear before Socrates with the nonsense that a human being is a God in his relation to another human being? The nature of the relationship between one human being and another is something that Socrates understood with a heroism of soul which it requires courage even to appreciate. And yet it is necessary to acquire the same understanding within the framework of what has here been assumed, namely the understanding that one human being, in so far as he is a believer, owes nothing to another but everything to the God. It will doubtless be readily perceived that this understanding is not easy, and especially not easy constantly to preserve (for to understand it once for all without meeting the concrete objections that present themselves in life, i.e., to imagine that one has understood it, is not difficult); and he who will make a beginning of practicing himself in this understanding will often enough catch himself in a misunderstanding, and will have need of the utmost circumspection if he proposes to enter into communication with others. But if he has understood it, he will also understand that there is not and never can be a disciple at second hand; for the believer, and he alone is a disciple, is always in possession of the autopsy of Faith; he does not see through the eyes of another, and he sees only what every believer sees -- with the eyes of Faith.

What then can a contemporary do for a successor? (a) He can inform him that he has himself believed this fact, which is not in the strict sense a communication (as expressed in the absence of any immediate contemporaneity, and in the circumstance that the fact is based upon a contradiction), but merely affords an occasion. For when I say that this or that has happened, I make an historical communication; but when I say: "I believe and have believed that so-and-so has taken place, *although it is a folly to the understanding and an offense to the human heart,*" then I have simultaneously done everything in my power to prevent anyone else from determining his own attitude in immediate continuity

with mine, asking to be excused from all companionship, since every individual is compelled to make up his own mind in precisely the same manner. (b) In this form he can relate the content of the fact. But this content exists only for Faith, in the same sense that colors exist only for sight and sounds for hearing. In this form, then, the content can be related; in any other form he merely indulges in empty words, perhaps misleading the successor to determine himself in continuity with the inanity.

*In what sense may the credibility of a contemporary witness interest a successor? Not with respect to whether he really has had Faith, as he has testified of himself. This does not concern a successor in the least; such knowledge would profit him nothing; it can neither help him nor hurt him with respect to becoming a believer. Only one who receives the condition from the God is a believer. (This corresponds exactly to the requirement that man must renounce his reason, and on the other hand discloses the only form of authority that corresponds to Faith.) If anyone proposes to believe, i.e., imagines himself to believe, because many good and upright people living here on the hill have believed, i.e., have said that they believed (for no man can control the profession of another further than this; even if the other has endured, borne, suffered all for the Faith, an outsider cannot get beyond what he says about himself, for a lie can be stretched precisely as far as the truth -- in the eyes of men, but not in the sight of God), then he is a fool, and it is essentially indifferent whether he believes on account of his own and perhaps a widely held opinion about what good and upright people believe, or believes a Münchhausen. If the credibility of a contemporary is to have any interest for him -- and alas! one may be sure that this will create a tremendous sensation, and give occasion for the writing of folios; for this counterfeit earnestness, which asks whether so-and-so is trustworthy instead of whether the inquirer himself has faith, is an excellent mask for spiritual indolence, and for town gossip on a European scale -- if the credibility of such a witness is to have any significance it must be with respect to the historical fact. But what historical fact? The historical fact which can become an object only for Faith, and which one human being cannot communicate to another, i.e., which can indeed be communicated to another but not so that the other believes it; and which if communicated in the form of Faith is so communicated as to prevent the other, so far as possible, from accepting it immediately. If the fact spoken of were a simple historical fact, the accuracy of the historical sources would be of great importance. Here this is not the case, for Faith cannot be distilled from I even the nicest accuracy of detail. The historical fact that the God has been in human form is the essence of the matter; the rest of the historical detail is not even as important as if we had to do with a human being instead of with the God. Jurists say that a capital crime submerges all lesser crimes, and so it is with Faith. Its absurdity makes all petty difficulties vanish. Inconsistencies which would otherwise be disconcerting do not count for anything here; they make no difference whatsoever. But it does make a difference on the contrary, if someone by petty calculation should try to auction off faith to the highest bidder; it makes so much difference as to prevent him from ever becoming a believer. If the contemporary generation had left nothing behind them but these words: "We have believed that in such and such a year the God appeared among us in the humble figure of a servant, that he lived and taught in our community, and finally died," it would be more than enough. The contemporary generation would have done all that was necessary; for this little advertisement, this *nota bene* on a page of*

universal history, would be sufficient to afford an occasion for a successor, and the most voluminous account can in all eternity do nothing more.

If we wish to express the relation subsisting between a contemporary and his successor in the briefest possible compass, but without sacrificing accuracy to brevity, we may say: The successor believes *by means of* (this expresses the occasional) the testimony of the contemporary, and *in virtue of* the condition he himself receives from the God. -- The testimony of the contemporary provides an occasion for the successor, just as the immediate contemporaneity provides an occasion for the contemporary. And if the testimony is what it ought to be, namely the testimony of a believer, it will give occasion for precisely the same ambiguity of the aroused attention as the witness himself has experienced, occasioned by the immediate contemporaneity. If the testimony is not of this nature, then it is *either* by an historian, and does not deal essentially with the object of Faith, as when a contemporary historian who was not a believer recounts one or another fact; *or* it is by a philosopher, and does not deal with the object of Faith. The believer on the other hand communicates his testimony in such form as to forbid immediate acceptance; for the words: I believe -- in spite of the Reason and my own powers of invention, present a very serious counter-consideration. There is no disciple at second hand. The first and the last are essentially on the same plane, only that a later generation finds its occasion in the testimony of a contemporary generation, while the contemporary generation finds this occasion in its own immediate contemporaneity, and in so far owes nothing to any other generation. But this immediate contemporaneity is merely an occasion, which can scarcely be expressed more emphatically than in the proposition that the disciple, if he understood himself, must wish that the immediate contemporaneity should cease, by the God's leaving the earth.

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But I think I hear someone say: "It is very strange; I have now read your exposition through to the end, and really not without a certain degree of interest, noting with pleasure that there was no catchword, no invisible script. But how you twist and turn, so that, just as Saft always ended up in the pantry, you inevitably always manage to introduce some little word or phrase that is not your own, and which awakens disturbing recollections. This thought, that it is profitable for the disciple that the God should again leave the earth, is taken from the New Testament; it is found in the Gospel of John. However, whether this procedure of yours is intentional or not, whether you have perhaps desired to give this remark a special significance by clothing it in this form or not, as the case now stands it would seem that the advantage of the contemporary, which I was originally inclined to estimate very highly, is considerably reduced, since there can be no question of a disciple at second hand; which in plain English is as much as to say that all are essentially alike. But not only so for the immediate contemporaneity viewed as an advantage seems by your last remark so dubious that the most that can be said for it is that it is better that it should cease. This would seem to indicate that it is an intermediate situation, having its significance indeed, and not eliminable without, as you would say,

turning back to the Socratic order of things, but nevertheless without absolute significance for the contemporary; he is not deprived of anything essential by its cessation, but rather profits by it; although if it had not been he loses all, and returns to the Socratic order of things." -- "Well said, I would reply, did not modesty forbid; for you speak as if it were myself. It is precisely as you say, the immediate contemporaneity is by no means a decisive advantage. This is readily seen if we think it through, and are not merely prompted by curiosity; provided we are not in too much of a hurry, provided we are not overly desirous, aye, perhaps in desire already standing on tip-toe in readiness to risk our lives to be first to tell remarkable news, like the barber in ancient Greece; and provided we are not so stupid as to consider such a death to be the death of a martyr. The immediate contemporaneity is so far from being an advantage that the contemporary must precisely desire its cessation, lest he be tempted to devote himself to seeing and hearing with his bodily eyes and ears, which is all a waste of effort and a grievous, aye a dangerous toil. But these considerations, as you have doubtless observed, belong in another place, in connection with the problem of what advantage a contemporary believer, after having become a believer, might have of his contemporaneity; while here we speak only of how far the immediate contemporaneity makes it easier to become a believer. A successor cannot be so tempted, for he is confined to the testimony of contemporaries, which in so far as it is the testimony of believers, has the prohibitive form of Faith. If the successor therefore understands himself he will wish that the contemporary testimony be not altogether too voluminous, and above all not filling so many books that the world can scarce contain them. There is in the immediate contemporaneity an unrest, which does not cease until the word goes forth that it is finished. But the succeeding tranquillity must not be such as to do away with the historical, for then everything will be Socratic." -- "In this manner then equality seems to have been achieved, and the differences between the parties involved brought back to a fundamental likeness." -- "Such is also my opinion; but you should take into consideration the fact that it is the God himself who effects the reconciliation. Is it thinkable that the God would enter into a covenant with a few, such that this their covenant with him established a difference between them and all other men so unjust as to cry to heaven for vengeance? That would be to bring strife instead of peace. Is it conceivable that the God would permit an accident of time to decide to whom he would grant his favor? Or is it not rather worthy of the God to make his covenant with men equally difficult for every human being in every time and place; equally difficult, since no man is able to give himself the condition, nor yet is to receive it from another, thus introducing new strife; equally difficult but also equally easy, since the God grants the condition. This is why I looked upon my project in the beginning as a godly one (in so far as an hypothesis can be viewed in this light), and still so consider it, though not on that account being indifferent to any human objection; on the contrary I now ask you once more, if you have any valid objection, to bring it forward." -- "How festive you suddenly become! Even if the case did not demand it, one would almost have to make some objection for the sake of the festiveness; unless it should be regarded as more festive to omit it, and your solemn challenge is merely intended indirectly to enjoin silence. But that the nature of the objection may at least be such as not to disturb this festive mood, I will draw it from the festivity by which it seems to me that a later generation will distinguish itself from the contemporary generation. I recognize indeed that the

contemporary generation must profoundly feel and suffer the pain entailed by the coming into being of such a Paradox, or as you have put it, the God's implantation of himself in human life. But gradually the new order of things will presumably struggle its way through to victory; and then at last will come the happy generation which garners with songs of joy the fruits of the seed sowed in the first generation with so many tears. Now this triumphant generation, which passes through life with song and clang, is surely different from the first and earlier ones?" -- "Aye, undoubtedly it is different, and perhaps so different as not to retain the resemblance which makes it necessary for us to take it into consideration; it may be lacking in the condition which could cause its difference to disconcert our efforts to establish equality. But can such a triumphant generation, which goes through life as you say with song and clang, by which if my memory does not fail me you intend to remind me of the sophomoric and ale-Norse translation of a scripture passage by a not unknown genius -- can this generation actually be a believing generation? Verily, if Faith ever gets the notion of marching forward triumphantly *en masse*, it will not be necessary to license the singing of songs of mockery, for it would not help to forbid them to all. Even if men were stricken dumb, this mad procession would draw upon itself a shrill laughter, like the mocking nature-tones on the island of Ceylon; for a faith that celebrates its triumph is the most ridiculous thing conceivable. If the contemporary generation of believers found no time to triumph, neither will any later generation; for the task is always the same, and Faith is always militant. But as long as there is struggle there is always a possibility of defeat, and with respect to Faith it is there fore well not to triumph before the time, that is to say, in time; for when will there be found time to compose songs of triumph or occasion to sing them? If such a thing were to happen it would be as if an army drawn up in battle array, instead of marching forward to meet the enemy, were to march home again in triumph to their barracks in the city -- even if no human being laughed at this, even if the entire contemporary generation sympathized with this abracadabra, would not the stifled laughter of the universe break forth where it was least expected? What would the behavior of such a so-called believer be but an intensification of the offense committed by the contemporary believer (compare Chapter II) who begged of the God -- in vain, since the God would not -- that he refrain from exposing himself to humiliation and contempt? For this later so-called believer was not only himself unwilling to bear humiliation and contempt, unwilling to strive as the world's fool, but *was* willing to believe when this could be done with song and clang. To such a man the God will not, nay cannot say, as to the contemporary in question: And so you love only the omnipotent wonder-worker, but not Him who humbled himself to become your equal! But here I will break off. Even if I were a better dialectician than I am, there would still be a limit to my powers; at bottom it is an immovable firmness with respect to the absolute, and with respect to absolute distinctions, that makes a man a good dialectician. This is something that our age has altogether overlooked, in and by its repudiation of the principle of contradiction, failing to perceive what Aristotle nevertheless pointed out, namely that the proposition: the principle of contradiction is annulled, itself rests upon the principle of contradiction, since otherwise the opposite proposition, that it is not annulled, is equally true. One further remark I wish to make, however, with respect to your many animadversions, all pointing to my having introduced borrowed expressions in the course of my exposition. That such is the case I do not deny, nor will I now conceal from you

that it was done purposely, and that in the next section of this piece, if I ever write such a section, it is my intention to call the whole by its right name, and to clothe the problem in its historical costume. If I ever write a next section; for an author of pieces such as I am has no seriousness of purpose, as you will doubtless hear said about me; why then should I now at the end feign a seriousness I do not have, in order to please men by making what is perhaps a great promise? It is a frivolous matter, namely, to write a piece -- but to promise the System is a serious thing; many a man has become serious both in his own eyes and in those of others by making such a promise. However, what the historical costume of the following section will be is not hard to see. It is well known that Christianity is the only historical phenomenon which in spite of the historical, nay precisely by means of the historical, has intended itself to be for the single individual the point of departure for his eternal consciousness, has intended to interest him otherwise than merely historically, has intended to base his eternal happiness on his relationship to something historical. No system of philosophy, addressing itself only to thought, no mythology, addressing itself solely to the imagination, no historical knowledge, addressing itself to the memory, has ever had this idea: of which it may be said with all possible ambiguity in this connection, that it did not arise in the heart of any man. But this is something I have to a certain extent wished to forget, and, making use of the unlimited freedom of an hypothesis, have assumed that the whole was a curious conceit of my own; which I did not wish to abandon, however, until I had thought it through. The monks never finished telling the history of the world because they always began with the creation; if in dealing with the relations between philosophy and Christianity we begin by first recounting what has previously been said, how will it ever be possible -- not to finish but to begin; for history continues to grow. If we have to begin first with 'that great thinker and sage, *executor Novi Testamenti*, Pontius Pilate,' who in his own way has been of considerable service to Christianity and to philosophy, even if he did not discover the principle of mediation; and if before beginning with him we must wait for one or another decisive contribution (perhaps the System), for which the banns have several times already been published *ex cathedra*; in that case how will we ever come to begin ?"

MORAL

The projected hypothesis indisputably makes an advance upon Socrates, which is apparent at every point. Whether it is therefore more true than the Socratic doctrine is an entirely different question, which cannot be decided in the same breath, since we have here assumed a new organ: Faith; a new presupposition: the consciousness of Sin; a new decision: the Moment; and a new Teacher: the God in Time. Without these I certainly never would have dared present myself for inspection before that master of Irony, admired through the centuries, whom I approach with a palpitating enthusiasm that yields to none. But to make an advance upon Socrates and yet say essentially the same things as he, only not nearly so well -- that at least is not Socratic.

Notes:

1. The idea, in whatever concrete form it may be understood, of attaching a demonstration of probability to the improbable (to prove -- that it is probable? but in that case the concept is altered; to prove that it is improbable? but in that case it is a contradiction to use probability for the purpose) is so stupid when seriously conceived, that it would seem impossible for it to be entertained; but as jest and banter it is in my view extraordinarily amusing; to practice in this narrow turning is a very entertaining pastime. -- A good man wishes to serve humanity by presenting a probability-proof, so as to help it accept the improbable. He is successful beyond all measure; deeply moved, he receives congratulations and addresses of thanksgiving, not only from the quality, who know how to appreciate the proof as experts, but also from the general public -- and alas! the good man has precisely ruined everything. -- Or a man has a conviction; the content of this conviction is the absurd, the improbable. The same man is not a little vain. The following procedure is adopted. In as quiet and sympathetic a manner as possible you prompt him to an expression of his conviction. Since he suspects nothing wrong, he presents it in sharply defined outlines. When he has finished, you come down upon him with an attack calculated to be as irritating as possible for his vanity. He is embarrassed, abashed, apologetic, "to think that he could entertain so absurd an opinion." Instead of replying calmly: "Honored sir, you speak like a fool; of course it is absurd, as it ought to be, in spite of all objections, which I have thought through myself in a far more terrible shape than anyone else could bring them home to me; in spite of which I have deliberately chosen to believe the improbable" -- instead of replying thus, he seeks to bring a probability demonstration to bear. Now you come to his assistance, you permit yourself to be vanquished, and finally wind up about as follows: "Ah, now I see it; why, nothing could be more probable!" And then you embrace him; if you wish to carry the jest very far you kiss him, and thank him *ob meliorem informationem*. In saying farewell you look once more into the depths of his romantic eyes, and part from him as from a friend and brother in life and death, a congenial soul whom you have learned to understand for ever. Such banter is justified; for if the man had not been vain, I would have stood revealed as a fool over against the sincere earnestness of his conviction. -- What Epicurus says about the individual's relationship to death (though his view contains but a sorry comfort) holds of the relation between the probable and the improbable: when I am, it (death) is not, and when it (death) is, I am not.