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UNSCIENTIFIC POSTSCRIPT¹

THIS weighty volume from the pen of Soren Kierkegaard, written almost a century ago in Danish, is at last beginning to come into its own. The fact that the Oxford University Press have seen fit to produce a volume of almost six hundred pages in this year of acute paper shortage is perhaps some slight indication of the value that is attached to this translation by David Swenson and Walter Lowrie. The contents amply justify the venture. It is emphatically an epoch-making book, for here Kierkegaard is found at his profoundest and deepest. And this will forewarn the reader that here are found no shallow and easy thoughts. Kierkegaard is his own best interpreter:

“ What is developed in these pages does not concern the simple-minded, who bear feelingly the burdens of life, and whom God wishes to preserve in their lovable simplicity, which feels no need of any other sort of understanding. Or in so far as such need is felt, it tends to reduce itself to a sigh over the ills of life, the sigh humbly finding solace in the thought that the real happiness of life does not consist in having knowledge. On the other hand it does concern those who deem themselves possessed of leisure and talent for deeper inquiry. And it concerns such an one in the following manner: it seeks to estop him thoughtlessly taking on universal history, without first considering in self-reflection that being an existing human individual is so strenuous and yet so natural a task for everyone, that one tends first as a matter of courage to apply himself to this task, and reasonably finds in the exertion thereto requisite, a sufficiency for his entire life ” (Footnote p. 152).

The *Unscientific Postscript* was regarded by Kierkegaard himself as his *magnum opus*, while the title itself indicates that he regarded it as the conclusion of his work as a writer.

¹ *Unscientific Postscript*. By Soren Kierkegaard. Translated from the Danish by David F. Swenson, and completed after his death and provided with Notes and Introduction by Walter Lowrie. (Oxford University Press. 579 pp. 36s.)

I

S. K.¹ epitomised his aim in the following words:

“ It presents the ‘ problem ’, that of becoming a Christian. Having assumed responsibility for the whole pseudonymous aesthetic work as a description of *one* way a person may take to become a Christian (*viz. away* from the aesthetic so as to become a Christian), it undertakes to describe the other (*viz. away* from Speculation, etc., so as to become a Christian) ”
(*The Point of View*, p. 97f.).

Speculation, especially in the philosophical System of Hegel, had professed to have explained existence. In contradistinction to the all-comprehending, self-containing System, Christianity bestows an eternal happiness upon the individual man, thus presuming an infinite interest in his eternal happiness as *conditio sine qua non*; dismissing as irrelevant speculative systems and outlines of universal history (p. 19).

“ Subjectivity is truth ”: this is the hub of all S. K.’s thought, from which all his arguments radiate like the spokes of a wheel. It is because subjectivity is truth, which can only be known by the individual through appropriation and assimilation, that all speculation is abstraction, unrelated to existence. The inquiring, speculating subject thinks *in vacuo*: he is not infinitely and personally and passionately interested on behalf of his own eternal happiness for his relationship to this truth. He is not in an attitude of faith, but objectively in an attitude of contemplation, and hence not infinitely interested in the determination of the question. For the mere inquirer there is no existential decisive problem.

From the speculative point of view Christianity is viewed as an historical phenomenon. The problem of its truth becomes the problem of so interpenetrating it with thought, that Christianity at last reveals itself as the eternal truth. To achieve this the speculative philosopher has become completely objective: he contemplates Christianity for the sake of interpenetrating it with his speculative thought. But this attempt is sheer confusion: Christianity is subjectivity, an inner transformation, an actualisation of inwardness. If the speculative philosopher is at the

¹ This abbreviation is used throughout for the full name Soren Kierkegaard.

same time a believer, he must have perceived that philosophy can never acquire the same significance for him as faith. He does not base his eternal happiness upon his philosophical speculations. Rather he associates circumspectly with philosophy, lest it lure him away from the certainty of faith (which has in every moment the infinite dialectic of uncertainty with it) so as to rest in an indifferent objective knowledge (p. 53). Consequently for the speculative philosopher as such the question of his eternal happiness does not arise; precisely because his task consists in getting more and more away from himself so as to become objective . . . becoming what might be called the contemplative energy of philosophy itself.

II

Lessing is hailed with gratitude, because

" he religiously shut himself up within the isolation of his own subjectivity; he did not permit himself to be deceived into becoming world-historic and systematic with respect to the religious, but understood and knew how to hold fast to the understanding that the religious concerned Lessing, and Lessing alone, just as it concerns every other human being in the same manner; understood that he had infinitely to do with God, and nothing, nothing to do with any man directly " (p. 61).

S. K. reviews some of the theses which are possibly or actually attributable to Lessing. There is, first of all, the fact that the subjective existing thinker has regard to the dialectics of the process of communication. While objective thought is indifferent to the thinking subject and his existence, the subjective thinker is as an existing individual essentially interested in his own thinking. His thinking has reflective inwardness, by virtue of which it belongs to the thinking subject and to no one else. The difference between subjective and objective thinking must express itself also in the form of communication suitable to each. Objective thinking is wholly indifferent to subjectivity, and hence also to inwardness and appropriation: its mode of communication is therefore direct. It lacks the elusiveness and the art of a double reflection. A double reflection refers to the process whereby a thought which has found its suitable expression in

the word, which is realised by means of a first reflection, is followed by a second reflection, concerned with the relation between the communication and the author of it—a relation which reflects the author's own existential relationship to the Idea. The entire essential content of subjective thought is essentially secret, because it cannot be directly communicated. Everything subjective, which through its dialectical inwardness eludes a direct form of expression, is an essential secret.

Again, Lessing emphasised that "the existing subjective thinker is in his existential relation to the truth as negative as he is positive . . . and he is constantly in process of becoming, i.e. he is always striving" (p. 74). It is sheer absent-mindedness for the philosopher to forget that he is an existing human being living in the time process. An existing subject is occupied in existing: he is in process of becoming; and the form of communication which he adopts must be in essential conformity with his mode of existence. The subject himself is a synthesis: he is an existing infinite spirit. The infinite and eternal is the only certainty, but as being in the subject it is in existence; and the first expression for this, is its elusiveness, and this tremendous contradiction, that the eternal becomes, that it comes into being. It is necessary, therefore, for the thinking of the existing subject to have a form in which this can be reflected.

The subjective existing thinker who has the infinite in his soul has it always, and for this reason his form is always negative. He is conscious of the negativity of the infinite in existence, and he constantly keeps the wound of the negative open: he is always striving. Because he is constantly in process of becoming, the actual existing subjective thinker constantly reproduces this existential situation in his thoughts, and translates all his thinking into terms of process. Inevitably this incessant becoming generates the uncertainty of the earthly life, where everything is uncertain.

But the principle that he is constantly occupied in striving does not mean that, in the finite sense, he has a goal towards which he strives. He strives infinitely; is constantly in process of becoming. As long as he is an existing individual, he is in process of becoming. Existence is the child that is born of the infinite and finite, the eternal and the temporal, and is therefore a constant striving. And this sounds the death-knell for Hegelianism: "it is only systematists and objective philosophers", S. K. remarks, "who have ceased to be human beings, and have

become speculative philosophy in the abstract, an entity which belongs in the realm of pure being. . . . However much the subject has the infinite within himself, through being an existing individual, he is in process of becoming" (p. 85).

Further, Lessing said "that accidental historical truths can never serve as proofs for eternal truths of the reason; and that the transition by which it is proposed to base an eternal truth upon historical testimony is a leap".¹ Lessing attacks the *direct* transition from historical trustworthiness to the determination of an eternal happiness (although he admits that the accounts of the miracles are as reliable as other historical testimony, i.e. as reliable as historical testimony in general is capable of being). The paradoxical character of Christianity consists in its constant use of time and the historical in relation to the eternal.

At this point S. K. challenges Lessing. For Lessing held that from the historical accounts (i.e. from their admitted reliability), no conclusion could be drawn, but that if he had been contemporary with them, it would have helped him. But S. K. points out that contemporaneity is of no avail, because there can in all eternity be no *direct* transition from the historical to the eternal, whether the historical is contemporary or not. To single out the contemporary generation for special favour would be a boundless injustice against those who came after. Thus "the transition by which something historical and the relationship to it becomes decisive for an eternal happiness, is *μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος*, a leap, both for a contemporary and for a member of some later generation" (p. 90). It is not externally the width of the chasm which prevents the leap, but internally the dialectical passion which makes the chasm infinitely wide. The leap is itself the decision. Lessing saw very clearly that the leap, as being decisive, is subject to a qualitative dialectic, and permits no approximating transition.

"All Christianity is rooted in the paradoxical, whether one accepts it as a believer, or rejects it precisely because it is paradoxical. Aye, it lies in fear and trembling; which are the desperate categories of Christianity, and of the leap . . . Christianity was a desperate way out when it first came into the world, and in all ages remains such; because it is a desperate way out for everyone who really accepts it" (p. 96).

¹ *Ueber den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft*, Vol. X.

III

Having acknowledged the contribution which Lessing has made, S. K. proceeds to demonstrate the patent inconsistencies implicit in Hegel's renowned System. In the System of Hegel the Absolute develops by expressing itself in an infinite multiplicity of partial representations. But the Absolute whole is prior to its expression of itself in the world of appearance. The Absolute is the immanent spring from which all thought rises, as well as the final synthesis of experience. To explain his System, Hegel was forced to introduce movement into his logic, to which S. K. retorts that "it is surely strange to make movement fundamental in a sphere where movement is unthinkable; and to make movement explain logic, when as a matter of fact logic cannot explain movement" (pp. 99-100).

The System claims to begin with the immediate; hence without any presuppositions; hence absolutely. But if the System is presumed to come after existence, then the System is *ex post facto*, and so does not begin immediately with the immediacy with which existence began. The beginning which begins with the immediate is thus itself reached by means of a process of reflection. No existential system is possible: no logical system may boast of an absolute beginning, since such a beginning, like pure being, is a pure chimera.

It is impossible, therefore, to begin with the immediate. It is necessary to reach the beginning through a process of reflection. Resolution has the property of being infinite, and if a resolution of the will is required to end the preliminary process of reflection, the presuppositionless character of the System is renounced. Only when reflection comes to a halt can a beginning be made, and reflection can be halted only by something else; a resolution of the will. When the breach is effected by breaking off the process of reflection arbitrarily, so as to make a beginning possible, then the beginning cannot be absolute; it has come into being through a *μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος*. When a subject does not put an end to his reflection, he does not arrive at a decision.

Plainly an existential system cannot be formulated. Reality itself is a system—for God; but it cannot be a system for an existing spirit. System and finality correspond to one another, but existence is precisely the opposite of finality.

“From a purely abstract point of view, system and existence are incapable of being thought together; because in order to think existence at all, systematic thought must think it as abrogated, and hence as not existing. Existence separates, and holds the various moments of existence discreetly apart; the systematic thought consists of the finality which brings them together ” (p. 107).

Anyone who is himself an existing individual cannot gain finality outside existence, which corresponds to the eternity into which the past has entered. God is the only One who is outside of existence and yet in existence, who is in His eternity forever complete, and yet includes all existence within Himself.

We have not to determine fantastically *in abstracto* whether a persistent striving is something lower than the systematic finality, or *vice versa*, but what existing human beings, in so far as they are existing beings, must needs be content with. In the ethical sense, the persistent striving represents the consciousness of being an existing individual; the constant learning is the expression for the incessant realisation, in no moment complete as long as the subject is in existence. The System abrogates the distinction between good and evil, and destroys freedom. It dissipates the concept existence. Every system is pantheistic precisely because of its finality.

IV

It is well to turn from the bankruptcy of philosophical speculation to the Divine revelation of salvation for the individual in Christ. Christianity proposes to endow the individual with an eternal happiness, a good which is not distributed wholesale, but only to one individual at a time. Christianity protests against every form of objectivity: it desires that the individual should be infinitely concerned about himself.

“ It is subjectivity that Christianity is concerned with, and it is only in subjectivity that its truth exists, if it exists at all; objectively, Christianity has no existence. If its truth happens to be in only a single subject, it exists in him alone; and there is greater Christian joy in heaven over this one individual than over universal history and the System, which as objective entities are incommensurable for that which is Christian ” (p. 116).

While philosophy teaches that the way is to become objective, Christianity teaches that the way is to become subjective, i.e., to become a subject in truth. The objective tendency proposes to make everyone an observer. The objective tendency (intellectual contemplation) is the way and the truth . . . the ethical is—becoming an observer! Ethics is made irrelevant. But the System is consistent enough not to include an Ethics in its systematic scheme.

Ethics, as constituting the essential anchorage for all individual existence, has an indefeasible claim upon every existing individual.

“ It is for this reason that Ethics looks upon all world historical knowledge with a degree of suspicion, because it may so easily become a snare, a demoralizing aesthetic diversion for the knowing subject, in so far as the distinction between what does or does not have historical significance obeys a quantitative dialectic. As a consequence of this fact, the absolute ethical distinction between good and evil tends for the historical survey to be neutralised in the aesthetic-metaphysical determination of the great and significant, to which category the bad has equal admittance with the good. In the case of what has world-historic significance, another set of factors plays an essential rôle, factors which do not obey an ethical dialectic: accidents, circumstances, the play of forces entering into the historic totality that modifyingly incorporates the deed of the individual so as to transform it into something that does not belong to him ” (p. 120).

It is perilous to erect anything relative into a standard for ethical action. The exaltation of the world historical is a snare: through an absorption in constant contemplation of the accidental, of that *accessorium* through which historical figures become historical, one may easily be misled into confusing this with the ethical. A constant intercourse with the world historical tends to make the individual unfit for action: the will begins to look right and left for results: the individual begins to become immoral. The ethicist fears a conclusion or transition from the ethical to something non-ethical. In contrast to all this moral relativity, it is the Christian's task to cling to the ethical, making absolutely no demands, but continuing to find his enthusiasm

in the ethical relationship to God. The ethical is present in the historical process, but the finite spirit cannot see it there in truth. For God, the apprehension of the historical is interpenetrated by His knowledge of the inmost secret of conscience, alike in the greatest and in the humblest.

For the Christian the ethical as the absolute is infinitely valid in itself, and does not need to be tricked out with accessories to help it make a better showing. The world historical is precisely such a dubious *accessorium* (when it is not the eye of omniscience, but the eye of a human being which is to interpenetrate it). From the point of view of the historical, an individual may easily be tempted to assume that when he is an insignificant individual, it has no infinite significance if he errs; and when he is a great man, that the magnitude of the circumstances may transmute the error into something good. But ethically the individual, whether great or poor, is infinitely important. To be a particular individual is world-historically absolutely nothing; and yet this is the only true and highest significance of a human being.

The world historical is just one aspect of the philosophic search for objective truth. But all objective reflection makes the individual accidental, and thereby transforms existence into something indifferent. The way of objective thought leads to abstract thought; always it leads away from the subject, whose existence or non-existence, from the objective point of view, becomes infinitely indifferent. The subjective reflection turns its attention inwardly to the subject, and desires in this intensification of inwardness to realise the truth. Inwardness in an existing subject culminates in passion; corresponding to passion in the subject the truth becomes a paradox; and the fact that the truth becomes a paradox is rooted precisely in its having a relationship to an existing subject.

An objective uncertainty held fast in an approximation process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth: the highest truth attainable for an *existing* individual. The truth is precisely the venture which chooses an objective uncertainty with the passion of the infinite. This is faith.

“ Without risk there is no faith. Faith is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual’s inwardness and the objective uncertainty. If I wish to preserve myself in faith I must constantly be intent upon holding fast

the objective uncertainty, so as to remain out upon the deep, over seventy thousand fathoms of water, still preserving my faith " (p. 182).

V

The paradoxical character of the truth is its objective uncertainty. The eternal essential truth (the truth which has an essential relationship to an existing individual) is by no means a paradox: it becomes paradoxical by virtue of its relationship to an existing individual. The paradox arises when the eternal truth and existence are placed in juxtaposition with one another. The eternal truth has come into being in time: this is the paradox. When the paradox is paradoxical in itself, it repels the individual by virtue of its absurdity, and the corresponding passion of inwardness is faith. This is S. K.'s fundamental tenet: "there can be no stronger expression for inwardness than when . . . with truth confronting the individual as a paradox, gripped in the anguish and pain of sin, facing the tremendous risk of the objective insecurity, the individual believes" (p. 188).

What constitutes the absurdity of the paradox? The absurd is that the eternal truth has come into being in time, that God has come into being, has been born . . . quite indistinguishable from other individuals. It is conceivable that philosophy will repudiate this: speculative philosophy may say that there is no paradox when the matter is viewed eternally, divinely, theocentrically; but as I am only a poor existing human being, I am not competent to contemplate the eternal either eternally or divinely or theocentrically, but am compelled to content myself with existing. Christianity has proclaimed itself as the Paradox: it is an offence to the Jews and a folly to the Greeks, and an absurdity to the understanding. It is impossible to express more strongly the fact that subjectivity is truth, and that the objectivity is repellent, repellent even by virtue of its absurdity.

S. K. proceeds to demonstrate the absolute character of the paradox. First of all, the fact that God has existed in human form is the paradox *sensu strictissimo*. As such it cannot relate itself to a relative difference between men. It is typical of the speculative interpretation that even the absolute paradox expresses only the relative difference between more and less gifted men. But the decisive nature of the Christian revelation puts an end

to all this prating that attaches to a certain degree. When Christianity proposes to offer itself to the existing subject as the eternal decision, and speculative philosophy thereupon explains that the decisiveness is only relative, then it is clear that philosophy does not explain Christianity but corrects it.

Again, the paradox of the forgiveness of sins is a paradox *sensu strictiori*, because the existing individual is stamped as a sinner; because it purports to be an eternal decision in time with retroactive power to annul the past, and because it is linked with the existence of God in time.

Faith always gives thanks, is always in peril of life, in this collision of finite and infinite, which is precisely a mortal danger for him who is a composite of both. To believe against the understanding is martyrdom; to begin to get the understanding a little in one's favour is temptation and retrogression.

The direct relationship to God is paganism. Paganism relates man to God directly, as the astonished observer to the obviously extraordinary. The spiritual relationship to God in truth corresponds to the divine elusiveness that God has absolutely nothing obvious about Him: that God is invisible. Nature, the totality of created things, is the work of God. And yet God is not there, but within the individual man there is a potentiality which is awakened in inwardness to become a God relationship, and then it becomes possible to see God everywhere.

VI

Because abstract thought is *sub specie aeterni* it ignores the concrete and the temporal, the existential process, the predicament of the existing individual arising from his being a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal situated in existence. The questionable character of abstract thought becomes apparent in connection with all existential problems, where abstract thought gets rid of the difficulty by leaving it out. Thus Hegel is absolutely right in asserting that viewed eternally, *sub specie aeterni*, in the language of abstraction, in pure thought and pure being, there is no either/or. The question is whether the Hegelian philosopher is an existing human being, or himself *sub specie aeterni*, even when he eats or blows his nose. If he in fact exists, he is in process of becoming. Eternity for an existing individual is not eternity but the future.

To think existence in abstract terms is essentially to abrogate it. It is impossible to conceive existence without movement, and movement cannot be conceived *sub specie aeterni*. The Hegelian philosophy by failing to define its relation to an existing individual, and by ignoring the ethical, confounds existence.

Further, the good, the beautiful, and other Ideas are in themselves so abstract that they are indifferent to existence, indifferent to any other than a conceptual existence. A particular existing human being is not an Idea, and his existence is something quite different from the conceptual existence of the Idea.

The subjective thinker is a dialectician dealing with the existential, and he has the passion of thought requisite for holding fast to the qualitative disjunction. The subjective thinker is aesthetic enough to give his life aesthetic content, ethical enough to regulate it, and dialectical enough to interpenetrate it with thought. The subjective thinker has the task of understanding himself in his existence: he is an existing individual and a thinker at one and the same time.

“ While abstract thought seeks to understand the concrete abstractly, the subjective thinker has conversely to understand the abstract concretely. Abstract thought turns from concrete men to consider man in general; the subjective thinker seeks to understand the abstract determination of being human in terms of this particular existing human being ” (p. 315).

This is why S. K. affirms that “ the characteristic depravity of our age is a dissolute pantheistic contempt for the individual man ”.

VII

Preoccupation with the abstract conception of the collective man has obliterated the infinite importance of the individual man. This is particularly seen in the matter of becoming a Christian. The circumstance that children are baptised has led to the assumption that all are, without further qualification, that which they have merely anticipated as a possibility. There has been a complete reversal of the original position in the Early Church. Once it required energy and determination to become

a Christian; now it requires courage and energy to renounce it; while it needs only thoughtlessness to remain a nominal Christian. At the present time, the difficulty of becoming a Christian involves actively transforming an initial-being-a-Christian into a possibility, in order to become a Christian in reality. Baptism, without personal appropriation, is an expression for the possibility that a baptised child may become a Christian, neither more nor less. The fact that people have become Christians merely through being baptised transforms Christendom into a baptised paganism.

“Becoming a Christian is the most fearful decision of a man’s life, a struggle through to attain faith against despair and offense, the twin Cerberuses that guard the entrance to the Christian life. . . . In baptism Christianity gives him a name, and he is *de nomine* a Christian; but in the moment of decision he becomes a Christian and gives his name to Christianity (*nomen dare aliqui*)” (p. 233).

There is no immediate transition from the introduction to the becoming a Christian, the transition rather constituting a qualitative leap. The eternal happiness of the individual is decided in time through the relationship to something historical, which is furthermore of such a character as to include in its composition that which by virtue of its essence cannot become historical, and must therefore become such by virtue of an absurdity. If for an individual an eternal happiness is the highest good, all finite satisfactions must be volitionally relegated to the status of that which is renounced in favour of an eternal happiness. If the idea of an eternal happiness does not transform his existence absolutely, he does not stand related to it; if there is anything he is not willing to give up for its sake, the relationship is not there. Devotion to the highest *telos* involves a volitional concentration in the highest sense. All relative volition is marked by willing something for something else, but the highest end must be willed for its own sake. The absolute *telos* exists for the individual only when he yields it an absolute devotion. And since an eternal happiness is a *telos* for existing individuals, these two (the absolute end and the existing individual) cannot be conceived as realising a union in existence in terms of rest: the whole of time is here the period of courtship.

The *telos* is not merely one end among many. What is the maximum that a man may gain through the relationship to the highest *telos*? In the finite sense there is nothing whatever to gain, and everything to lose. In the life of time the expectation of an eternal happiness is the highest reward, because an eternal happiness is the highest *telos*; and it is precisely a sign of the relationship to the absolute that there is not only no reward to expect, but suffering to bear.

“ The task is to exercise the absolute relationship to the absolute *telos*, striving to reach the maximum of maintaining simultaneously a relationship to the absolute *telos* and to relative ends, not by mediating them, but by making the relationship to the absolute *telos* absolute, and the relationship to the relative ends relative. The relative relationship belongs to the world, the absolute relationship to the individual himself; and it is not an easy thing to maintain an absolute relationship to the absolute *telos* and at the same time participate like other men in this and that. . . . The absolute *telos* is the greatest plan in human life, and that is why the Middle Ages sought a corner where a man might concern himself with the absolute. But just this was a loss for the absolute, since it became something external ” (pp. 364–365).

In the respect which the individual entertains for the absolute *telos*, there is a yawning chasm fixed between it and the relative ends. Existence thus becomes exceedingly strenuous, since there is always a double movement to be executed. Through resignation the Christian still lives in the finite, but he does not have his life in the finite. His life has, like that of other human beings, the various predicates of a human existence, but he is in them as one who is clothed in the borrowed garments of a stranger. He is a stranger in the world of the finite, but he is incognito: his incognito consists in having an appearance entirely like others.

Consequently it is madness for an individual whose nature is dedicated to the eternal to use all his strength to lay hold of the perishable, clinging to what is precarious. For the perishable is nothing when it is past: a moment in time filled with emptiness.

VIII

An individual relationship to the absolute *telos* will have a determinative influence over every department of his human existence. The legitimacy or illegitimacy of certain pleasures must be determined by a consideration of the God-relationship. To say that an outing is an innocent pleasure, means that it is the opposite of a guilty pleasure, but this contrast belongs to the field of morals or ethics. Because a thing is ethically permissible, it does not follow that it is religiously permissible: it must be thought together with the thought of God. Nowadays preaching observes the most rigid monastic abstinence from the affairs of daily life, thereby indirectly revealing that the existence of daily life is carried on in different categories. Religious truths cannot be preached *in abstracto*. It is necessary to bring together in exposition the absoluteness of the religious and the particularities of life, which togetherness is in existence precisely the ground and significance of the religious suffering. The conception of God effects in the individual a transformation of his entire existence in relation thereto, and this transformation is a process of dying away from the immediate.

A man can do nothing of himself. The more critical an enterprise, a resolution, an event, the easier it is, precisely because it is more direct and natural to bring the God-idea into relation with it.¹ From the religious point of view the inwardness of the prayer is not measured by its momentary impetuosity, but by its persistence. The more insignificant, on the other hand, anything is, the more difficult it is to bring the God-idea into relation with it; and yet it is precisely here that we have the touchstone of the God relationship.

In view of the contemporary evangelical tendency of our day to erect extra-biblical standards for the ethical behaviour of existing individuals, it is worth noticing S. K.'s emphatic disapproval of external prohibitions, constituting a kind of modern Decalogue.

“ Between God and man there exists an absolute difference, and hence this direct equality (in the love relationship) is a presumptuous and dizzy thought. . . . But since there is this absolute difference between God and man, how does the

¹ Cf. James iv. 13-15.

principle of equality in love express itself? By means of the absolute difference. And what is the form of this absolute difference? Humility. What sort of humility? The humility that frankly admits its human lowliness with humble cheerfulness before God, trusting that God knows all this better than man himself. . . . But there is a certain kind of religiosity which, presumably because the first beginning of its annihilation was not thorough enough and not thoroughly inward enough, entertains a notion of God that makes Him a jealous and stupid despot, driven by a sickly eagerness to have the whole world know, because of the queer gesticulations of some particular individual, that God is the object of a certain "human being's love" (pp. 439-441).

IX

Il faut en finir! S. K. cannot be appreciated by a catena of quotations and extracts. His book must be read. S. K. himself used to complain that he was overwhelmed by the variety and originality of his thoughts, which teemed through his brain. In the *Unscientific Postscript* the richness of his intellectual thoughts, and the versatility of his literary style, are seen at their best.

It is impossible to conclude without paying tribute to the consistency with which S. K. applies his fundamental tenets of the transcendence of God, the significance of the individual in existence, the Christian conception of the Paradox, the infinite qualitative distinction between God and man, and existential thinking, to every problem. I have deliberately reserved one quotation which admirably illustrates his consistent logicity. He is speaking of Christ as the Paradox.

"A childish orthodoxy has managed to direct decisive attention to the fact that Christ at His birth was swaddled in rags and laid in a manger, in short, to the humiliation of coming in the lowly form of a servant, and it believes that this is the paradox, in contrast to coming in glory. Confusion. The paradox consists principally in the fact that God, the Eternal, came into existence in time as a particular man. Whether this particular man is a servant or an emperor is neither here nor there, it is no more adequate for God to be

king than to be beggar; it is not a greater humiliation for God to become a beggar than to become an emperor" (pp. 527-528).

It may appear cavilling or presumptuous to criticise a work so profoundly great. Nevertheless many will feel that it is regrettable that S. K. did not make more use of the *ipsissima verba* of Holy Scripture. There are probably not more than two or three quotations altogether. Again, S. K. described himself as "neither a religious orator, nor . . . a religious individual, but merely a humouristic experimenting psychologist" (p. 431); while in another place he confessed that he was endowed with "a sincerity which . . . in turn comforts and arms me with an uncommon sense for the comic and a certain talent for making ludicrous what is ludicrous" (p. 549). While some will delight in the whimsicality of his style, others will be exasperated by the extensive use of aesthetic terms such as "pathos", "humour", and "irony". S. K. was a synthesis of poet, philosopher, and theologian (although probably he would repudiate the name of all three), and his works reflect all their characteristics. This demands an intensive intellectual concentration and application on the part of his readers—a demand which may exasperate certain readers.

Finally, it remains to point out a couple of slight mistakes. The note (1) on page 505 has been omitted from the Editor's Notes at the end of the book, and a blank page has been strangely left in the Editor's Notes on page 557.

Thetford, Norfolk.

S. BARTON BABBAGE.