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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Bonnie Dreps Voigtlander entitled "The God-Man Relationship in Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript." I recommend that it be accepted for nine quarter hours of credit in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Philosophy.

Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Vice Chancellor for
Graduate Studies and Research

# THE GOD-MAN RELATIONSHIP IN KIERKEGAARD'S CONCLUDING UNSCIENTIFIC POSTSCRIPT

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Graduate Council of

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this investigation was to bring out the arguments concerning a proper God-man relationship which Søren Kierkegaard employs in his work, Concluding Unscientific Postscript. This was to be effected through a discussion of Kierkegaard's concepts of subjectivity, paradox and suffering.

The first two chapters were for the purpose of setting the groundwork of subjective reflection upon which Kierkegaard bases his argument for the proper mode of inquiry that man must take toward God. Kierkegaard's abandonment of objective certainty in the realm of ethics and religion was discussed. The third chapter sought to point out and clarify the God-man Paradox which Kierkegaard sees as the focal point of religious inwardness. In the fourth chapter the necessity and persistence of suffering for the religious man was noted.

Finally, an attempt was made to evaluate Kierkegaard's arguments, concluding that subjectivity and inward faith commitment are defensible positions which do not necessarily imply a need for paradox or suffering. Kierkegaard's influence on subsequent theology and philosophy was acknowledged.



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# INTRODUCTION

A very important part of the work of Søren Kierkegaard is his writings on man's need for a relationship with God. The nineteenth century, in which Kierkegaard lived, had, in Kierkegaard's view, lost its concern for the individual and the individual's relationship with a personal God. Largely due to the writings and influence of Hegel, God had come to be identified with an abstract "spirit" which was guiding the course of history. To Kierkegaard, Hegel's system of pure thought was disastrous for the individual, who was existing in a much different reality than that which Hegel described. Kierkegaard saw it as his task, in the interest of the existing individual, to replace pure thought by emotion and personal involvement. He saw this task in the context of Christianity. The Christendom of his day had given way to the influence of Hegel's abstract "spirit." Personal, individual commitment was no longer necessary in Christianity. Being born to Christian parents in a Christian country was enough to constitute one as a Christian. Kierkegaard devoted his life as an author to dispel this illusion of Christendom and inspire individuals to become truly Christian. In his book, The Point Of View For My Work As An Author, Kierkegaard states very clearly what he feels has been his one purpose in all of his writings:

> The contents of this little book affirm, then what I truly am as an author, that I am and was a religious author, that the whole of my work as an author is related to Christianity, to the problem 'of becoming a Christian,' with a direct or indirect polemic against the monstrous illusion that in such a land as ours all are Christians of a sort.[1]

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[1] Søren Kierkegaard, The Point Of View For My Work As An Author, pp. 5-6.

Although Kierkegaard advocated what he considered to be a return to authentic Christianity, it would be wrong to consider him merely as a religious influence. Kierkegaard was much more than this. He had an insight into the social and political happenings of his time and offered what he considered to be the only solution to the turmoil of his century.

During the first half of the nineteenth century Europe was in a state of great unrest. This unrest evidenced itself dramatically in the political revolutions of 1848 which swept through Germany, France and Italy. In his writings Kierkegaard foresaw these revolutions. His predictions were fulfilled in his own lifetime. Kierkegaard saw the underlying problem of Europe as the attempt by political powers to negate the individual man. He states:

> Each age has its own characteristic depravity. Ours is perhaps not pleasure or indulgence or sensuality, but rather a dissolute pantheistic contempt for individual man.[2]

In the place of the individual a phantom had arisen, that of the public.

> In order that everything should be reduced to the same level, it is first of all necessary to procure a phantom, its spirit, a monstrous abstraction, an all-embracing something that is nothing, a mirage--and that phantom is "the public." It is only in an age which is without passion, yet reflective, that such a phantom can develop itself.[3]

In spite of certain political publications that he presented at this time, Kierkegaard did not believe that the answer to the problem that Europe was experiencing would lie in political change. Nor did he

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[2]Søren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 317. In the following this work by Kierkegaard will be refered to as CUP.

[3]Søren Kierkegaard, The Present Age and Of The Difference Between A Genius And An Apostle, pp. 59-60.

take any active part in political groups. Kierkegaard rather believed that each individual by a personal appropriation must establish a proper God-man relationship. This he felt would strengthen and preserve the importance of the individual in an age that was doing its best to level everyone to a member of "the public." Through a commitment to God, the individual would understand and realize his identity and worth. Hermann Diem in his book, Kierkegaard--An Introduction, sums up the view Kierkegaard had of his age and the solution he posed to its problem:

> But let us recall once more what he [Kierkegaard] considered to be the mortal danger threatened by the course of political events and the only possible means of escape. The political powers and authorities have corrupted themselves. The existing order has brought upon itself the avenging nemesis of revolution against all present class distinctions, differences of rank, and social obligations. Once underway, the leveling process cannot be arrested. The only way of escape lies ahead, the hope that the isolated individual will once more work his way out of this process in order to achieve the confidence of religiosity through a sense of uniqueness and responsibility before God--otherwise he will perish. But this way to deliverance cannot be opened by any political movement, nor indeed by any movement directed at the mob. One must rather turn to the individual, one must do everything in one's power to fragment the mass into individuals--this course of action, and it alone, is political in the deepest sense.[4]

It was in this atmosphere in the nineteenth century that Kierkegaard posed the God problem. Faced with the problems of this century what form should the concept of a God-man relationship take? Does it become important to be able to prove the existence of God to the satisfaction of one's intellect? Is it vital to prove by a close examination of history that Jesus of Nazareth did indeed walk upon this

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[4]Hermann Diem, Kierkegaard--An Introduction, pp. 12-13.

earth? Is it helpful to study scriptures with an eye for authentic meanings of Hebrew text? This type of questioning was popular at that time. Kierkegaard saw these questions as being based upon an overintellectualization of a problem that belonged to the realm of subjective faith and not to that of objective fact. Knowledge does not necessarily bring about conversion. What was needed in the nineteenth century was that an individual man feel close to God, that he be motivated to take the steps necessary to form a union between himself and his God.

Kierkegaard posed the God question in the framework of how man is to establish a proper relationship with God. His emphasis was on this relationship and not on an objective report of the content of the God concept. It will be seen that Kierkegaard's basic answer to the question of God was that man should turn to God with a strong inward intensity. He believed that the "how" and the "what" of the God-man relationship could be easily separated. Only the "how"--that man related to God with "the decisive passion of the infinite"[5]--was of vital importance. Kierkegaard clearly stated that the content or the "what" one was relating to was secondary. It was only important that it be an objective uncertainty so as to increase the inwardness with which it was believed: that it be an unknowable quantity--completely Other.

Kierkegaard saw it as his task to jolt the individual from his complacent assurance that he is a "Christian of a sort," and therefore

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[5] CUP, p. 182.

has solved his God problem. The individual must replace complacency by a one-to-one relationship to God. Kierkegaard hoped that if this jolting process could effectively take place the individual would no longer feel himself to be merely a member of the public. An individual, once he realized that God was not to be found in objective fact, would turn away from the public in his need for God and appropriate, in the commitment of faith, the objective uncertainty that is God. In this way he would leave the abstraction of Hegel's system and learn once more how to feel and to react toward a personal God.

Kierkegaard was indeed successful in presenting an alternative to Hegel's system. His emphasis on the existing individual had a great effect on the philosophers and theologians who came after him. In philosophy it was the existentialists who borrowed from Kierkegaard, and in theology it was the dialectical theologians who regarded Kierkegaard as one of their more important, if not the most important, ancestors. All themes developed in this thesis were picked up by them and further explicated.

In his work, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Kierkegaard elaborated on his concept of a God-man relationship and what is necessary to effect its establishment. It will be the purpose of this paper to take a closer look at his arguments. The plan of the paper will involve five chapters. The first two will develop Kierkegaard's position on subjective reflection. Chapter III will explain Kierkegaard's use of paradox and the fourth chapter will show why Kierkegaard believed suffering to be the expression that the Christian life must take. Chapter V is the conclusion.

# CHAPTER I

## SUBJECTIVE REFLECTION AS THE MODE OF INQUIRY REGARDING ETHICO-RELIGIOUS DECISIONS

Concluding Unscientific Postscript was meant to be Kierkegaard's final work. Personal circumstances in Copenhagen at that time were such that Kierkegaard was forced to follow this work with many others. However, the Postscript remains a turning point in his literary efforts. In his book, The Point Of View For My Work As An Author, Kierkegaard places the Postscript between his pseudonymous, aesthetic works and his religious works which were published under his own name. The Postscript is pseudonymously authored by Johannes Climacus and edited by S. Kierkegaard. Thus Kierkegaard felt that the work was enough of an expression of his own thought that he could attach his name to it but not yet his final viewpoint as a religious author.

> The first group of writings represents aesthetic productivity, the last group is exclusively religious: between them, as a turning-point, lies the Concluding Postscript. This work concerns itself with and sets 'the Problem,' which is the problem of the whole authorship: how to become a Christian. ... The Concluding Postscript is not an aesthetic work, but neither is it in the strictest sense religious. Hence it is by a pseudonym, though I add my name as editor--a thing I did not do in the case of any purely aesthetic work.[6]

In the Postscript Kierkegaard attempts to answer the question: what is demanded of man in establishing a proper God-man relationship? Kierkegaard makes two assumptions at the very beginning of this work

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[6]Søren Kierkegaard, The Point Of View For My Work As An Author, p. 13.

which are not to be questioned and which are taken as a starting point. These assumptions are that (1) man ought to be infinitely concerned with his eternal happiness, and that (2) a God-man relationship is to be seen in terms of Christianity. This does not mean that Kierkegaard is going to attempt in any way to prove the doctrines or even the significance of Christianity. To prove a doctrine of Christianity would only be to set out objective facts supported by other objective facts about the doctrine. This might gain intellectual assent to the doctrine but it would not necessarily motivate a man to appropriate and believe in the doctrine. Kierkegaard saw intellectual assent and the commitment of faith to be two very distinct things. The distinction he attempts to draw is like that between the man who, sitting in his comfortable living roon, makes the statement, "I understand that I ought to love my neighbor." and, in contrast, the man who actively participates in constructive charitable programs in his community. It will be pointed out in the following that this is not necessarily a valid distinction. Kierkegaard believes that intellectual assent can be equated with a passive acceptance of a reasonable fact. He is not concerned with this passivity but only with man's active relationship to the fact of Christianity.

> But in order to avoid confusion, it is at once necessary to recall that our treatment of the problem does not raise the question of the truth of Christianity. It merely deals with the question of the individual's relationship to Christianity. It has nothing whatever to do with the systematic zeal of the personally indifferent individual to arrange the truths of Christianity in paragraphs; it deals with the concern of the infinitely interested individual for his own relationship to such a doctrine. To put it as simply as possible, using myself by way of illustration: I, Johannes Climacus, born in this city and now thirty years old, a common ordinary human being like most people, assume that there

> awaits me a highest good, an eternal happiness, in the same sense that such a good awaits a servant-girl or a professor. I have heard that Christianity proposes itself as a condition for the acquirement of this good, and now I ask how I may establish a proper relationship to this doctrine.[7]

To inquire into the truth of Christianity would be an objective problem. This would involve a systematic inspection of each doctrine, tracing its historical background, establishing its divine or inspired authorship and building a case for its validity or authenticity. At the end of this inquiry the individual might conceivably be convinced that the doctrine is indeed worth his intellectual assent. But this process, in Kierkegaard's opinion, could never bring the individual into a proper relationship with the doctrine. In order to come to a desire for such a relationship one must pose a subjective, personal question: "I ask how I may establish a proper relationship to this doctrine." Thus subjectivity must take precedence over objectivity in any decision that bears on one's eternal happiness.

Kierkegaard devotes a substantial portion of the Postscript to this problem of subjectivity. One must understand just what Kierkegaard means by subjectivity, how it is opposed to objectivity, and in what circumstances subjectivity must take precedence.

The ordinary meaning of objectivity is that capacity by which an individual emphasizes the qualities and features of the things dealt with without bias to his own feelings and personal relationship to the things or objects. Opposed to this, subjectivity would be emphasizing the ideas, thoughts and feelings of the individual, not just rigidly

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[7] CUP, pp. 18-19.

transcribing or reflecting the known object. Kierkegaard's use of the term objectivity is slightly different than the ordinary use. He believes the two terms, objectivity and subjectivity, to be mutually exclusive. For Kierkegaard objectivity negates any reference whatsoever to how the individual may feel toward the object or fact. However, it would seen conceivable that an individual could take into account how a decision will affect his emotional life or how he has felt about this situation in the past and still be termed as making a decision objectively. We might say that the concept of objectivity does imply a lack of emotionalism. But taking into account one's feelings is not the same thing as acting solely out of emotion. Kierkegaard draws a sharper distinction between objectivity and subjectivity than the terms in their ordinary use warrant. His working definition of objectivity has reference to decisions made with no regard for the individual decision-maker, whereas his definition of subjectivity is in reference to decisions made where personal feelings and relationships are of primary importance. Kierkegaard argues that in those situations where the object or circumstance has great consequence for the decision-maker, it becomes vital to investigate the subjective relationship between the object and the individual. In this context, subjectivity is viewed by Kierkegaard as the only route for an existing individual. To be truly existing means to be subjective. When one is objective and views things as a third party, one is simply absent-minded--one forgets that one is an existing individual. In the following quotation Kierkegaard argues against objective reflection when inquiring into moral or religious truth. It becomes clear in this context that Kierkegaard is using the term objectivity in the narrow sense outlined above.

> The way of objective reflection makes the subject accidental, and thereby transforms existence into something indifferent, something vanishing. Away from the subject the objective way of reflection leads to the objective truth, and while the subject and his subjectivity become indifferent, the truth also becomes indifferent, and this indifference is precisely its objective validity; for all interest, like all decisiveness, is rooted in subjectivity. The way of objective reflection leads to abstract thought, to mathematics, to historical knowledge of different kinds; and always it leads away from the subject, whose existence or non-existence, and from the objective point of view quite rightly, becomes infinitely indifferent. Quite rightly, since as Hamlet says, existence and non-existence have only subjective significance. At its maximum this way will arrive at a contradiction, and in so far as the subject does not become wholly indifferent to himself, this merely constitutes a sign that his objective striving is not objective enough, ... And yet, the objectivity which has thus come into being is, from the subjective point of view at the most, either an hypothesis or an approximation, because all eternal decisiveness is rooted in subjectivity.[8]

Kierkegaard believes that a man who is infinitely concerned about his eternal happiness must ground all decisions which have a bearing on the attainment of that eternal happiness on subjective reflection. Objective reflection, by its very nature, seeks to eradicate the subject. To be objective is to disregard one's own emotions and relationships--to treat oneself as if one did not exist. Once objective truth is found it becomes indifferent to the individual because his relationship to that truth was not considered from the start.

Here again it needs to be remarked that Kierkegaard's view of objectivity is uniquely his own. Kierkegaard, perhaps with Hegel in mind, is thinking of a type of objectivity whose only end is providing

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[8] CUP, p. 173.

a cohesive system--a system that has no reference to and no consequences for the individual. Yet take the case of the historian. He determines the particular problem he will study and outlines several possible approaches to the solution by reference to his own interests and prejudices. This type of study makes the individual decision-maker a vital factor. Now, the very fact of taking into account the importance of the subject, in this case the historian conducting the study, would no longer make it objective reflection for Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard argues that "indifference is precisely its objective validity."[9] There appears to be a confusion here between indifference and an unbiased view. When an historian works objectively he attempts to seek the facts in his area of concentration recognizing his bias to what he personally believes to be the significance of the area in question but willing to set aside his views if they should prove to be in error. This does not mean that he is indifferent to his own views. He has chosen the topic and the method of approach. Complete indifference would be impossible. Yet Kierkegaard states in the above quotation: "in so far as the subject does not become wholly indifferent to himself, this merely constitutes a sign that his objective striving is not objective enough."[10] This shows that Kierkegaard is using objective in a very extreme sense. His reason for this is that by taking objectivity to imply indifference to the subject, Kierkegaard is better able to support his argument for the need of subjective reflection. Of course, his extreme sense of objectivity is not without justification. Objectivity does at times take

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[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid.

the meaning which he ascribes to it. Scientists in certain periods have attempted to eradicate any influence of the individual researcher in the hope of coming to pure objective truth without realizing that this is impossible.

It becomes important at this point to realize in just what sort of situations Kierkegaard is advocating subjective reflection. In his Postscript, the only question Kierkegaard is interested in is how the existing individual might establish a proper God-relationship so as to secure his eternal happiness. Kierkegaard is not concerned with developing his own theory of knowledge. He does not intend to discover how man arrives at true knowledge but seeks only to determine how man is to make correct decisions so as to secure his eternal happiness. This interest is not against objectivity or reason. Kierkegaard merely claims that objective reflection is not supreme in making a decision concerning this eternal happiness. Kierkegaard states:

> So the believing Christian not only possesses but uses his understanding, respects the universal-human, does not put it down to lack of understanding if somebody is not a Christian; but in relation to Christianity he believes against the understanding and in this case also uses understanding...to make sure that he believes against the understanding. ...but he makes so much use of the understanding that he becomes aware of the incomprehensible, and then he holds to this, believing against the understanding.[11]

Kierkegaard has posited a rational argument, namely the argument that in those cases where man's eternal happiness is involved it becomes necessary to abandon objectivity in favor of subjective reflection. But to point out that this argument is based on reason is not to negate

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[11] CUP, p. 504.

the fact that Kierkegaard is advocating an abandonment of objectivity when approaching the establishment of a God-man relationship.

The next chapter will turn to Kierkegaard's specific arguments concerning the God-man relationship. In this context he will radically abandon objectivity because he will claim that man can never have objective knowledge of God. Because God is an objective uncertainty man must define his relationship with God by total subjectivity.

## CHAPTER II

## TOTAL SUBJECTIVITY AS DEFINING THE GOD-MAN RELATIONSHIP

Thus far Kierkegaard has established subjectivity as the mode of reflection for the existing individual. But Kierkegaard sharpens his concept of subjectivity. He now proceeds to an explanation of what it means to live in total subjectivity and why this kind of subjectivity is necessary to establishing a proper God-man relationship. Up to this point, Kierkegaard might have been interpreted as believing that ethical decisions include subjective considerations as well as objective fact. However, he finds no room for objectivity at all. Kierkegaard does not believe that objective reflection can take a place alongside of subjective reflection. He argues that objectivity has no place whatsoever in ethico-religious truth.

In developing his argument Kierkegaard makes a distinction between what he calls essential knowledge and accidental knowledge:

> All essential knowledge relates to existence, or only such knowledge as has an essential relationship to existence, is essential knowledge. All knowledge which does not inwardly relate itself to existence, in the reflection of inwardness, is, essentially viewed, accidental knowledge; its degree and scope is essentially indifferent.[12]

Kierkegaard's main emphasis in this passage is that "all essential knowledge relates to existence." Kierkegaard wants it always kept in mind that the individual is existing, which means he is in a state of movement and change. An existing individual does not have the wherewithal to step outside of himself and view things "objectively." By

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[12] CUP, p. 176-7.

his very nature as existing, knowledge which is essential must have a relationship to the individual. He cannot stop existing, place himself in the fantastic realm of speculative philosophy, and thereby come to knowledge that has no relation to himself. Kierkegaard continues his argument in the same passage quoted above:

> That essential knowledge is essentially related to existence does not mean the above-mentioned identity which abstract thought postulates between thought and being; nor does it signify, objectively, that knowledge corresponds to something existent as its object. But it means that knowledge has a relationship to the knower, who is essentially an existing individual, and that for this reason all essential knowledge is essentially related to existence. Only ethical and ethico-religious knowledge has an essential relationship to the existence of the knower.[13]

Kierkegaard attempts to make it clear in this passage that he is not concerned with any rational or empirical theory of knowledge. He is not stating a theory of clear and distinct ideas, or of identity between thought and being, or of knowledge corresponding to the thing "out there." Kierkegaard clarifies that by using the term existence he does not mean the object existing but rather the existing individual, the knower. In closing this passage Kierkegaard refers once more to the fact that this essential knowledge which has so vital a connection with the existing individual is ethico-religious knowledge--knowledge that has a bearing on the individual's eternal happiness. All other knowledge is "accidental" and "essentially indifferent." In thus defining essential knowledge Kierkegaard's main emphasis is that the most essential part of man is that he is existing, becoming, in movement. If this is so, then that

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[13] CUP, p. 177.

knowledge which is directly related to man as existing is essential knowledge. Kierkegaard claims that it is ethico-religious knowledge that relates itself most clearly to man as existing. When man considers his eternal happiness it is necessary that he consider himself and his emotions and thus, by Kierkegaard's definition, it is necessary that he make a subjective decision.

In order to make clear just how radically he means his subjectivity to be taken, Kierkegaard gives an example of what he means by living in subjectivity. Subjective truth for the individual must lie in the relationship between the individual and the object known and never simply in the object itself. Kierkegaard will go so far as to state the object has nothing whatsoever to do with the individual being in truth or not. His example is as follows:

> If one who lives in the midst of Christendom goes up to the house of God, the house of the true God, with the true conception of God in his knowledge, and prays, but prays in a false spirit; and one who lives in an idolatrous community prays with the entire passion of the infinite, although his eyes rest upon the image of an idol: where is there most truth? The one prays falsely to the true God, and hence worships in fact an idol.[14]

To say that the man who has a clear concept of the true God was the one who worshipped in truth would be to opt for the objective. Kierkegaard calls this raising the question of truth in an objective manner and argues thus:

> When the question of truth is raised in an objective manner, reflection is directed objectively to the truth, as an object to which the knower is related. Reflection is not focused upon the relationship, however, but upon

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[14] CUP, pp. 179-180.

> the question of whether it is the truth to which the knower is related. If only the object to which he is related is the truth, the subject is accounted to be in the truth.[15]

Objective reflection takes account only of the object in isolation from the knowing subject. On the other hand, subjective reflection, in the extreme that Kierkegaard is now searching for, takes into account only the relationship of the existing subject and not the object. Kierkegaard puts it as follows:

> When the question of the truth is raised subjectively, reflection is directed subjectively to the nature of the individual's relationship; if only the mode of this relationship is in the truth, the individual is in the truth even if he should happen to be thus related to what is not true.[16]

It must be noted once more that Kierkegaard's notion of objective reflection must be understood in the sense in which he has defined it--as that reflection which takes no account of the subject, which is indifferent to the subject. He is now defining subjective reflection in a similarly extreme, but opposite, sense. Subjective reflection takes no account of the object. When dealing with essential truth the subject must be considered. The "question of truth" that Kierkegaard is referring to in the above quotation is the God question. When the question is asked objectively it is stated in the sense of "Is there a God?" or "What is God like?" Kierkegaard maintains that these questions are irrelevant since they have no immediate relation to the subject. They are simply inquiring about an object. The question that

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[15] CUP, p. 178.

[16] Ibid.

needs to be asked is a subjective one--"How am I to relate myself to God in order to attain eternal happiness?"

When Kierkegaard eliminates the relevance of any objective truth in regard to what is being worshipped or related to, he leaves himself open to various criticisms. If all that matters is that the individual relate with "the entire passion of the infinite"[17] how could one condemn the fanatic and still remain within Kierkegaard's philosophy? In the next chapter it will be shown that Kierkegaard does believe that there is some objective criteria for determining what is to fulfill the God-concept. He states: "When subjectivity is the truth, the conceptual determination of the truth must include an expression for the antithesis to objectivity..."[18] Therefore there is conceptual determination or, what would seem to be the same thing, objective criteria. These criteria are that the God-concept be an objective uncertainty and finally a logical absurdity. The question can still be asked, does it matter to Kierkegaard just which absurdity is chosen as long as a passionate belief in it is maintained? This problem will be discussed at the end of Chapter III.

At this point in the argument Kierkegaard has not yet come to the content of the "conceptual determination." He is now trying to plead the case for total subjectivity. He maintains that to live in total subjectivity, which must be the goal of the existing individual, it is necessary for the mode of the relationship to be in truth. To refer to the example of the two men worshipping it would seen that the correct

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[17] CUP, p. 180.

[18] CUP, p. 188.

mode that Kierkegaard wants to establish is that of "the entire passion of the infinite."[19] Kierkegaard states "passion is also the highest expression of subjectivity."[20] Thus the first requisite for the existing individual who is searching for a proper God-man relationship is that he do so with passion. The individual who has made all his ethical decisions without taking his own self into account does not possess Kierkegaard's concept of passion, and is content to live his entire life in trying to gain knowledge about God--is He all good?, is He omniscient?, do these two qualities imply a contradiction?, did He truly send His son to earth?, do historical records prove the existence of a Jesus of Nazareth?. This type of process by which God is more closely defined cannot be entered into by the intense subjective individual. He needs to know God, now. Kierkegaard describes the dilemma of this individual thus:

> The existing individual who chooses the subjective way apprehends instantly the entire dialectical difficulty involved in having to use some time, perhaps a long time, in finding God objectively; and he feels this dialectical difficulty in all its painfulness, because every moment is wasted in which he does not have God.[21]

Faced with this pain and this need the existing individual postulates God. It is not important if this is the true God, it is only important that the individual appropriate and adhere to the God he has postulated. His passion has brought him to God and passion is the mode of his relationship with God. This is the only way in which an existing individual

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[19] CUP, p. 180.

[20] CUP, p. 178.

[21] CUP, pp. 178-9.

can possibly come to God since the approximation-process of the objective individual has no real concern for a God-man relationship but only for objective truth. This objective man feels no passion, no sense of urgency to find God. This is what sets him apart from the subjective, passionate man. Kierkegaard describes this difference thus:

> ...while objective knowledge rambles comfortably on by way of the long road of approximation without being impelled by the urge of passion, subjective knowledge counts every delay a deadly peril, and the decision so infinitely important and so instantly pressing that it is as if the opportunity had already passed.[22]

When this passionate individual realizes that the mode of objective reflection will only take precious time and will not bring him to God "that very instant he has God, not by virtue of any objective deliberation, but by virtue of the infinite passion of inwardness." [23]

For Kierkegaard there is no doubt that in his example the man who prays with passion to what is in fact an idol is standing in the truth while the man who prays in a false spirit to the true God is not in truth. It is not important <u>what</u> is thought of as God but only <u>how</u> the individual relates himself to his concept of God. "At its maximum this inward 'how' is the passion of the infinite, and the passion of the infinite is the truth. But the passion of the infinite is precisely subjectivity, and thus subjectivity becomes the truth."[24] The individual searching with passion for God is looking for a truth that has a vital relationship to himself. Therefore he abandons the

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[22] <u>CUP</u>, p. 179.

[23] Ibid.

[24] <u>CUP</u>, p. 181.

way of objectivity, which makes the individual a disinterested third party, and appropriates subjectivity. He thus has discovered that the truth of a God-man relationship for him lies in subjectivity. In this moment, Kierkegaard tells us, the existing individual has found God. He exists in truth, in subjectivity, since he is passionately related to God. The objective content of God does not matter, only the intense relationship. This is not to say the entire problem is solved once and for all. Kierkegaard hastens to add:

> In the passionate moment of decision, where the road swings away from objective knowledge, it seems as if the infinite decision were thereby realized. But in the same moment the existing individual finds himself in the temporal order, and the subjective "how" is transformed into a striving, a striving which receives indeed its impulse and a repeated renewal from the decisive passion of the infinite, but is nevertheless a striving.[25]

A relationship with God is a striving. This must be the case since the individual is an existing individual. Existence is an ongoing process. The individual has found God but continues to strive toward God with an intense zeal. Once one finds to whom one is to be related, there is still the striving of maintaining that awareness and that relationship.

Kierkegaard now extends his argument to show that, not only is it impossible for the existing individual to search objectively for God, but it is, in any case, impossible to know God with objective certainty. What the individual appropriates in his search for God must indeed be an objective uncertainty. Kierkegaard states the case thus:

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[25] CUP, p. 182.

> At the point where the way swings off (and where this is cannot be specified objectively, since it is a matter of subjectivity), there objective knowledge is placed in abeyance. Thus the subject merely has, objectively, the uncertainty; but it is this which precisely increases the tension of that infinite passion which constitutes his inwardness. The truth is precisely the venture which chooses an objective uncertainty with the passion of the infinite.[26]

When the individual comes to the point where he realizes that an objective searching for God will get him nowhere he swings away from objectivity not having discovered any objective certainty. He only knows that objectivity will not put him in relation to God. He is uncertain but the intensity with which he desires to be placed in relation with God causes him to venture, to risk appropriating an objective uncertainty, to postulate God. This venture, this risk, Kierkegaard equates with truth. He goes on to say:

> But the above definition of truth is an equivalent expression for 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.[27]

It might be well to summarize Kierkegaard's arguments up to this point. Kierkegaard has first pointed out that in any decision that has an effect on one's eternal happiness one cannot take an objective stand, ignoring feeling and personal circumstances. Subjective reflection is the mode of inquiry one must take on ethical decisions. This subjectivity must take precedence to such a degree that objectivity is completely eradicated, having no place whatsoever in ethico-religious truth. Kierkegaard claims that only this type of ethico-religious know-

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

ledge is essential for the existing individual, all other knowledge being accidental. When this subjective reflection is applied directly to the God problem it becomes evident that a subjective, existing individual who is infinitely concerned about his eternal happiness will approach the establishment of a union between himself and his God with a great degree of urgency and desire. He will not have time to study proofs of God's existence or historical evidence for Christianity. He will realize that these objective methods will never establish any truth beyond doubt. This type of evidence is merely an approximation process. Kierkegaard claims that at the moment that the individual sees that objectivity will gain him nothing, he turns to subjective reflection and is in truth. This individual sees that objective certainty concerning God is not possible and thus because of his passionate need for God, appropriates in faith the objective uncertainty that is God for him. In searching for the proper God-man relationship Kierkegaard has thus far defined that it must be sought through subjective reflection and be shaped by "the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness."[28]

In the next chapter Kierkegaard's idea of paradox will be discussed. Paradox must be the distinguishing mark of a God-man relationship. When one is relating to a doctrine that is in itself a paradox, the subjectivity with which the doctrine is believed is heightened. When there is no objective justification, all is faith and subjective passion.

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[28]Ibid.

## CHAPTER III

## THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN PARADOX IN A SUBJECTIVE GOD-MAN RELATIONSHIP

Kierkegaard established not only what the mode of the God-man relationship must be, he also described the content of the God-man relationship. It might at first glance appear that he has negated the possibility of defining such a content since he clearly stated that the what of a relationship matters little compared to the how of that relationship. Yet, in some sense, Kierkegaard does speak of such content or the what of the God-man relationship--namely, in terms of paradox. Kierkegaard argues that there must be a constant reminder that the God one has appropriated is an uncertainty, from an objective point of view. Kierkegaard states:

> When subjectivity is the truth, the conceptual determination of the truth must include an expression for the antithesis to objectivity, a memento of the fork in the road where the road swings off; this expression will at the same time serve as an indication of the tension of the subjective inwardness.[29]

In its most perfect form this "memento" is a paradox, a logical absurdity. At this point Kierkegaard introduces Christianity. Christianity demands more personal involvement than a non-Christian relationship of man with God. This is because Christianity, in Kierkegaard's view, is earmarked by the absurd. To believe in God one must appropriate an objective uncertainty; but to be a Christian one must accept that which is objectively certain to be false, an absurdity. Kierkegaard states:

> What now is the absurd? The absurd is--that the eternal truth has come into being in time, that God

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[29] CUP, p. 182.

> has come into being, has been born, has grown up, and so forth, precisely like any other individual human being, quite indistinguishable from other individuals.[30]

For Kierkegaard this Christian doctrine that the infinite, eternal God has become finite and existed in time in the person of Jesus of Nazareth demands a more intense faith commitment because it is further from objective truth than the mere objective uncertainty of God. Herein lies the value of this Christian Paradox--that it calls forth a greater need for faith and a greater abandonment of objectivity.

It might be well to backtrack at this point and follow Kierkegaard's arguments regarding paradox a little more slowly and carefully. One thing that needs to be defined is just what Kierkegaard means by the term paradox. This will be easier to speak about after a discussion of the two paradoxes Kierkegaard is working with, namely, the Christian Paradox and the Socratic Paradox. He begins by defining what he believes to be the Socratic Paradox and then goes on to indicate how Christianity has intensified this paradox.

For Kierkegaard, the Socratic Paradox, simply stated, is that the eternal is related to the existing individual. This involves what was spoken of in the previous chapter. Man comes to realize that he cannot know God in any way except that God is an objective uncertainty. Yet man appropriates this uncertainty and thereby puts himself in a relationship with the eternal. When this man and his relationship is looked upon objectively, truth becomes a paradox. Kierkegaard states:

> When subjectivity, inwardness, is the truth, the truth becomes objectively a paradox; and the fact that the truth

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[30] CUP, p. 188.

> is objectively a paradox shows in its turn that subjectivity is the truth. For the objective situation is repellent; and the expression for the objective repulsion constitutes the tension and the measure of the corresponding inwardness. The paradoxical character of the truth is its objective uncertainty; this uncertainty is an expression for the passionate inwardness, and this passion is precisely the truth. So far the Socratic principle.[31]

In order to see why this subjective appropriation of an objective uncertainty is seen as paradoxical it is necessary to take a close look at the several ways in which the term truth is being used in this context. Truth is ordinarily spoken of in terms of probability. One speaks of some principle as true because it can be established with a certain degree of probability that this principle describes a verifiable occurence in human experience. It is true that the sun rises in the east because in every instance that I or any other person I have spoken to has had occasion to see the sun rising it did appear in the eastern portion of the sky. When one seeks to establish the truth of a personal God with whom a relationship can be formed there is for Kierkegaard no probability, no verifiable human experience that can be pointed to. This is a decision so vital to the individual's life that it will not do to point to historical evidence or to the personal experience of others. This type of evidence Kierkegaard has labeled knowledge by an approximation process. Because it is an approximation and never certain, it is not enough on which to base one's eternal happiness. The truth of God is an uncertainty. This fact is not paradoxical in itself. It only becomes paradoxical when one relates it to the existing individual who will appropriate that truth. The individual abandons the objective search for the truth of

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[31] CUP, p. 183.

God and with subjectivity appropriates an objective uncertainty. Kierkegaard claims that he then stands in a true relationship to God. In this case truth is being used in an entirely different sense. This now is subjective truth. When this subjective truth is looked upon with an eye to objectivity one is confronted by a paradox. Objectively truth demands probability, but here is a truth for Kierkegaard that has no probability, a truth whose very basis is in his opinion uncertainty. The subjective truth of the existing individual appropriating an objective uncertainty is then self-contradictory or paradoxical.

Kierkegaard argues that the Christian Paradox goes beyond the Socratic Paradox in that it calls forth a greater demand for faith and inward appropriation. The Christian Paradox, simply stated, is that the eternal has existed in time, that God has become man. This is paradoxical in itself whereas the Socratic Paradox only becomes paradoxical in its relationship to the existing individual. That God has become man is a logical absurdity. The basic laws of logic are violated by the idea of a God-man. A being cannot be God and not God (man) at the same time. Kierkegaard believes that this very ability to repel human intelligence is the value of the Christian Paradox. Because it is a logical absurdity in itself it succeeds in going beyond the Socratic Paradox. Kierkegaard explains this difference between the two paradoxes and the subsequent value of the Christian Paradox over the Socratic Paradox in the following passage:

> When the eternal truth is related to an existing individual it becomes a paradox. The paradox repels in the inwardness of the existing individual, through the objective uncertainty and the corresponding Socratic ignorance. But since the paradox is not in the first instance itself paradoxical (but only in its relationship to the existing individual), it does not repel with suffi-

> cient intensive inwardness. For without risk there is no faith, and the greater the risk the greater the faith; the more objective security the less inwardness (for inwardness is precisely subjectivity), and the less objective security the more profound the possible inwardness. When the paradox is paradoxical in itself, it repels the individual by virtue of its absurdity, and the corresponding passion of inwardness is faith.[32]

This shows again that Kierkegaard puts a high value on subjectivity or inwardness, which two terms in this quotation he has pointed out to be identical. Kierkegaard's original example[33] of the man who is searching for God and can find no objective reasons on which to base his relationship must be recalled. Kierkegaard has pointed out that it is at that moment when the individual abandons the way of objectivity and appropriates with intense desire the objective uncertainty of God that the individual stands in faith and in truth. Kierkegaard argues that the greater the abandonment of objectivity the greater the faith will be. Therefore the Christian paradox which is further from objectivity because it is in itself a logical absurdity calls forth greater faith and thus by Kierkegaard's standard is of greater value. In the Socratic Paradox the content which was to be believed was an objective uncertainty, in the Christian Paradox the content has become an absurdity. That God should become man we objectively know to be false because it is a logical impossibility. Kierkegaard states:

> When Socrates believed that there is a God, he held fast to the objective uncertainty with the whole passion of his inwardness, and it is precisely in this contradiction and in this risk, that faith is rooted. Now it is otherwise. Instead of the objective uncertainty, there

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[32] CUP, pp. 187-8.

[33] Cf. above, pp. 19-20.

> is here a certainty, namely, that objectively it is absurd; and this absurdity, held fast in the passion of inwardness, is faith. The Socratic ignorance is as a witty jest in comparison with the earnestness of facing the absurd; and the Socratic existential inwardness is as Greek light-mindedness in comparison with the grave strenuosity of faith.[34]

Before going further a number of objections should be raised against Kierkegaard's position. As we have seen, the basis on which Kierkegaard builds his argument for belief in the paradoxical is the idea that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to find God objectively. For Kierkegaard it becomes necessary to accept objective uncertainty. It could be argued that this is not necessarily everyone's experience. The Deists of the eighteenth century thought it quite simple to find God. All they needed to do was look to nature, God's handiwork. On this basis they were certain that God existed and was to be worshipped. This type of simple argument will not do for Kierkegaard. He would argue that acknowledging God to be the first cause of all creation is only an intellectual assumption and does not have the emotional content to inspire a faith commitment. By arguing in this way, he is drawing a distinction that is not always valid. There are instances and individuals for whom intellectual assent implies a faith commitment as strong or perhaps even stronger than any commitment that Kierkegaard is trying to inspire.

Another objection that Kierkegaard would have against Deism is that it does not lead to Christianity. Kierkegaard does not offer any good argument why belief in God must entail Christianity. This appears to be one of his unquestioned assumptions. Christianity becomes important to Kierkegaard because it offers the doctrine of the dual nature

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[34] CUP, p. 188.

of Jesus Christ. Deism would lack this doctrine and therefore lack the logical absurdity that calls for a high subjective intensity.

This last point raises another objection against Kierkegaard. The groundwork of Kierkegaard's preference of the Christian Paradox over the Socratic Paradox[35] is the idea of less certainty demanding greater subjective involvement. But how is one to measure "sufficient intensive inwardness."[36] On what grounds can one say that this paradox will demand a lower level of intensity and this other paradox a higher level of intensity? When one is dealing with emotions and commitment, as Kierkegaard is, it is a difficult thing to ascertain what will inspire an individual. Yet Kierkegaard believes that the conditions of being unreasonable, or of being unprovable by reason, will necessarily inspire a great intensity of feeling and commitment. It must certainly be true that some individuals can believe and commit themselves to a subject that is reasonable with the same degree of intensity that another individual finds in commiting himself to that which is unreasonable. Kierkegaard would answer this objection by insisting that where there is objective certainty there is no risk and therefore no faith and no inwardness.[37] Even if this point be granted to Kierkegaard there is still difficulty with positing the Christian Paradox as needful for a greater inward faith commitment. If it be true that one can have no objective certainty that there is a personal God willing to form a relationship with the individual man, then it would follow that a certain amount of

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[35] Cf. above, pp. 27-28.

[36] CUP, p. 188.

[37] Cf. above, p. 22.

risk would be involved in making a commitment to believe in such a God. Kierkegaard argues that this risk should be made stronger in order to make the commitment stronger. But this does not necessarily follow. The fact that there is a risk in believing in God does not imply that the greater the risk, the more intense the faith.

Even if one accepts the position that great intensity of feeling is an essential part of a God-man relationship, positing a God-man paradox need not be the only method of motivating this intense commitment. It would seem defensible to take a position opposite to Kierkegaard's. Since there is a risk involved in establishing a relationship with a God that one cannot know with certainty is an existing personal being, another possible course would be to conceive of this God in a rational manner so that one might more easily feel a commitment and a closeness to a being that is similar to man but infinitely wiser and consistently benevolent. No doubt there are individuals who could feel much more intensely about this kind of relationship than they could about commiting themselves to belief in the absurd. But to posit this type of God-man relationship would be to completely negate everything that Kierkegaard is trying to establish. Kierkegaard does not want to define God as to His attributes since God is completely Other. Nor does he want to make commitment to God easy or simple. He was fighting against a culture that had made men Christians as a matter of course. In contrast to this Kierkegaard attempted to make it difficult to become a Christian, believing that this difficulty would make men turn toward God with more personal involvement and intensity of feeling. But, it might be argued, this type of cause-effect inference is not justified. Greater difficulty does not always cause greater effort. It might be better to

make men feel a need for God, or have men feel that God is a loving Father. A number of different courses could bring men away from indifference and toward an intense personal involvement in a God-man relationship. The God-man paradox of Jesus Christ is not necessary to motivate an intense, personal faith commitment.

One last objection that might be raised here is why the Christian Paradox of God become man is chosen over a multitude of paradoxical beliefs which are conceivable. If all that is needed is "an expression for the antithesis to objectivity,"[38] why must this expression be found in Christianity? One answer that Kierkegaard gives is that the best antithesis would be a logical absurdity. This would leave out such paradoxes that the fanatic might posit, for example, the paradoxical belief that material wealth in this world implies salvation in the next. This is not a logical paradox; i.e. it contradicts no rules of logic. Kierkegaard's example of a logical paradox is that God could be God and not God at the same time. But, there are other logical paradoxes available for belief. One might believe that a three sided figure had four interior angles, or to stay within the context of God beliefs, one might believe that God is good and not good at the same time. Kierkegaard gives no defense for his choice of the Christian God-man Paradox. He has taken Christianity for granted as one of his basic assumptions.

Leaving these objections behind and continuing with a presentation of Kierkegaard's concept of a God-man relationship one comes to his idea of suffering. For Kierkegaard a basic requirement of the proper God-man relationship is that it be entered into with a great intensity

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[38] CUP, p. 182.

of commitment. This commitment must acknowledge the fact that the God being related to is an objective uncertainty. Further, the objective paradox of God becoming man must be held before the individual as a doctrine to increase his intensity and his inward faith commitment. Kierkegaard states that because of the above elements the Christian life will be one of suffering. In the next chapter Kierkegaard's arguments on suffering as the Christian way of life will be explored.

## CHAPTER IV

## SUFFERING AS THE DEFINITIVE LIFE EXPRESSION OF THE GOD-MAN RELATIONSHIP

Throughout the works of Kierkegaard one finds great emphasis put on suffering, melancholy, fear and trembling, dread and characteristics such as these. It would be an extremely complex task to delineate how Kierkegaard uses these terms and to explain why he believes these attributes surface in the development of the individual character. In this chapter an attempt will be made to deal only with that suffering in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript, which Kierkegaard defines as necessarily accompanying the life expression of the individual Christian. The term Christian must be taken here in a very special sense. Kierkegaard does not mean any member of a Christian sect. He is refering to the man who has appropriated a God-man relationship in the manner that has been described above.

For the religious man there appears to be three main sources of suffering: (1) To be religious is to attend to the things of the inner man, which involves suffering the denial of the outward, immediate world; (2) A persistence of suffering is necessary so that the individual understands that he is on the right path to God; (3) Man must exist in time and God is eternal, therefore man suffers a separation from his happiness.

The first source of suffering whose emphasis is a "dying away from immediacy"[39] is presented by Kierkegaard as the main reason why the

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[39] CUP, p. 414.

religious man must suffer. Kierkegaard, as we have seen, equates subjectivity with inwardness.[40] When he states "to exist essentially is inwardness"[41] he is refering to the argument that the individual who is seeking God must leave objectivity behind him and find a relationship with God by appropriating in faith the paradox of the God-man. Maintaining this type of belief in a paradox that human reason rejects is a difficult task. The individual is accustomed to relating to external reality in a very straightforward manner. Yet when he is confronted by a higher reality, which negates all the logic to which he is accustomed, the result is suffering. Kierkegaard speaks of this conflict in terms of immediacy vs. religious inwardness:

> In the immediate consciousness there is rooted the wish to have the power to do everything, and ideally its faith is that it can do everything, its factual inability being apprehended as due to an obstacle which comes from without, ... Religiously it is the task of the individual to understand that he is nothing before God, or to become wholly nothing and to exist thus before God; this consciousness of impotence he requires constantly to have before him, and when it vanishes the religiosity also vanishes.[42]

Kierkegaard sees man as ambitious by nature. Man desires to have power over the world which he sees about him. He believes he is meant to have dominion over nature and that it is within his power to bring all things into subjection. If he finds that he cannot easily exercise this power, he does not question the power but merely assumes he is being kept from using it. To develop religious inwardness the individual must accept

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[40] Cf. above, p. 28.

[41] CUP, p. 388.

[42] CUP, p. 412.

that he is not all powerful. God is omnipotent and man, in comparison, is nothing. But to give up the ambition that is his by nature is a very difficult thing. To admit that one is nothing before God and to hold this attitude constantly causes an inward suffering that is not overcome. Kierkegaard holds that this suffering itself is a sign that the individual has given up the ambition and vanity of the immediate man and is existing in religious inwardness. He states:

> ...to exist essentially is inwardness, and action in inwardness is suffering, for the individual cannot make himself over, any such attempt becoming, like imitation, a mere affectation, and it is for this reason that suffering is the highest action in inwardness. And how difficult this enterprise is will be understood even by one who has merely a small share of the impatience of immediacy, which wants out, not in.[43]

Suffering then is a necessary accompaniment of inwardness. The individual cannot make himself humble and unambitious for that would be to deny his nature. He must live in the conflict between his desire for power and his recognition that before God he is powerless. This conflict is a constant source of suffering for the religious man.

Kierkegaard's definition of inwardness is "the relationship of the individual to himself before God."[44] In this definition can be seen the connection between inwardness and subjectivity. In subjectivity also the individual is concerned with himself. He takes his own inner being into consideration. Kierkegaard maintains that when the individual turns inward examining his self before God he becomes aware that he is nothing. In the outside world man can take matter in hand and momentarily become

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[43] CUP, p. 388.

[44] CUP, p. 391.

master. In the world of man's own inner self accomplishments are made only by God. Man is powerless to form a union between himself and his God. The initiative must come from God. It is man's task to open himself--"to become wholly nothing and to exist thus before God."[45] This emptying, this recognition of impotence is a source of great suffering. Man desires to turn outward and accomplish but instead he must turn inward and wait.

Kierkegaard sees a second source of suffering. This is based upon the idea that suffering is a sign to the religious man that he is on the right path toward God. Kierkegaard states: "the persistence of the suffering guarantee[s] that the individual remains in the correct position and preserves himself in it."[46] Kierkegaard maintains here that the suffering of religious inwardness in only genuine if it persists. If an individual should rejoice in his nothingness before God, this would be a sure sign that he has departed from sincere religiosity. This is because rejoicing in one's nothingness would be to take credit, to feel an accomplishment, to be presumptious that one is pleasing to God because of one's nothingness. But in this attitude of accomplishment one is denying one's own impotence. This is not existing as nothing before God.

The persistence of suffering reassures the individual that he is doing his part to effect a God-man relationship. But this reassurance is not a cause for joy--it does not transform the suffering into joyousness. Kierkegaard claims that the individual cannot make this transformation because of his status as existing.

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[45] CUP, p. 412.

[46] CUP, p. 397.

> For to be in existence is always a somewhat embarrassing situation, and the question is whether this again is not one of the pressures exerted by existence, namely, that the existing individual cannot effect the dialectical exchange which turns the suffering into joy, In the eternal happiness itself there is no suffering, but when an existing individual establishes a relationship thereto, this relationship is quite rightly expressed through suffering.[47]

For the individual to be in existence means that he is caught in time. He must live moment by moment. He cannot suffer at one moment and during the same moment realize that his suffering should be a cause of joy. This kind of realization would presuppose some vantage point from which the individual could look at his own suffering, reflect upon it, and discover that his suffering is a reason for rejoicing. Kierkegaard maintains that the existing individual has access to no such vantage point. He is caught within his own time and space. All he can understand and experience is the suffering of the here and now. A realization that this suffering may lead to eternal happiness does not effect the happiness at that moment. To have the ability to transform his suffering into joy would be to have the vision of God who is not hampered by time and space but sees all things as one. But man does not have the power to make himself God. Kierkegaard states:

> If an existing individual, through knowing that his suffering means the relationship, were capable of elevating himself above the suffering, then he would also be able to transform his status from that of an existing individual to that of an eternal being; but this he will scarcely wish to attempt. But if he cannot do this, he is again in the situation of suffering, because this knowledge must be held fast in the medium of existence.[48]

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[47] CUP, pp. 404-5.

[48] CUP, p. 405.

The suffering of religious inwardness persists as long as the individual is in existence. The individual recognizes that suffering is a sign that he is turning from immediacy toward inwardness. He realizes that he must suffer impatience because he is powerless to effect a relationship between himself and God. His suffering is the only sign he has that he is doing all he can, existing as nothing before God, to effect his eternal happiness. He cannot see the relationship from God's viewpoint and realize that in his suffering is already the promise of eternal happiness. Therefore the suffering of the religious man persists.

The distinction that Kierkegaard draws between man existing in time while his eternal happiness is in the realm of eternity leads to a third cause of why the religious man must suffer--he is separated from his happiness. The religious man has formed a relationship with God but cannot consumate that relationship because his own existence is in an entirely different medium than that of God. Kierkegaard describes this suffering of separation in the following manner:

> And as one who is sick and cannot move because he feels pain everywhere, and as one who is sick and cannot keep from moving as long as he lives, although he feels pain everywhere--so the religious individual lies fettered in the finite with the absolute conception of God present to him in human frality.[49]
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> But there is always a meanwhile--and meanwhile the impotence returns.[50]
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> Men say it is a hardship when lovers are separated; should not then such separation be a heavy thing for the religious individual to bear, and is it less heavy because it is a

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[49] CUP, p. 432.

[50] CUP, p. 433.

> diversion rather than a toilsome task that separates them, when the necessity for diversion is precisely the most unequivocal indication of his lowliness?[51]

Thus man is caught in the finite, powerless to achieve his goal of union with God and powerless to give up that goal. The religious man lives for the time when eternal happiness will be his, but in the meantime he sees only his powerlessness to effect that happiness. Kierkegaard believes that there will be moments when the religious individual feels a close union with God, but that the matters of day to day existence will always drag him back to his finite existence.

> But one ingredient in the lowliness of a human being is that he is temporal, and cannot endure to lead uninterruptedly the life of the eternal in time. And if his life is in time, then it is eo ipso piecemeal; and if it is piecemeal, it is sprinkled with diversions and distractions; and in the diversion the human being is absent from his God-relationship, or present in it, yet not as in the strong moment.[52]

The religious individual suffers the separation from his eternal happiness because he lies fettered in temporal existence.

In summary then, suffering defines the life of the religious individual because he must suffer the denial of his natural ambition and vanity and exist in an attitude of powerlessness before God. He cannot effect a God-man relationship but can only maintain an attitude of readiness for such a relationship. This he does by turning from the external world where his ambitions to accomplish lie, and turn inward where he recognizes that his is a role of impotence before God. Because he is powerless and therefore cannot change his role, the suffering of

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[51] CUP, p. 439.

[52] Ibid.

religious inwardness persists. Man stands open to God but powerless to effect a permanent God-man relationship which would be his eternal happiness. He suffers a painful separation from his happiness.

# CHAPTER V

## CONCLUSION

Kierkegaard's concept of a God-man relationship in Concluding Unscientific Postscript is more a concept of what ought to be the proper attitude of the religious man. If relationship is conceived of in terms of an interchange between two or more persons, then Kierkegaard has no concept of a God-man relationship. Man cannot presume that God will enter into an active interchange with an individual. Kierkegaard believes that all that man can do in his attempt to establish contact with God is to put himself in a proper attitude of inwardness.

The first requisite that Kierkegaard sees for developing a proper religious attitude is that one maintain an infinite interest in one's eternal happiness.

> It is not entirely impossible that one who is infinitely interested in his eternal happiness may sometime come into possession of it. But it is surely quite impossible for one who has lost a sensibility for it (and this can scarcely be anything else than the infinite interest), ever to enjoy an eternal happiness.[53]

Those individuals who have no interest in an eternal happiness or who take it for granted that they already have a relationship to their eternal happiness do not, in Kierkegaard's opinion, have even the possibility of establishing a proper God-man relationship.

Another requisite for the religious man is that he leave the way of objective truth. The individual who is aspiring to acquire a

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[53] CUP, p. 20.

proper religious inwardness is already infinitely concerned about his relationship to his eternal happiness. Objective truth does not take into account the subject and therefore is a matter of indifference to the subject. Indifference cannot be the path of the infinitely concerned individual. He therefore turns to subjective reflection.

The individual's infinite interest will also lead him to recognize that God is an objective uncertainty. Once the individual realizes this he appropriates God in faith. "Faith is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncertainty."[54] The infinite concern which is expressed in subjectivity accepts the objective uncertainty that is God.

This acceptance in faith would be enough to constitute a religious attitude. But the individual can go beyond this and accept the paradox of the God-man thereby intensifying his faith. Belief in a God-man is belief in a logical impossibility. There is no objective truth in this doctrine and therefore the risk of believing it is very great. Believing this doctrine intensifies the individual's religiosity. "For without risk there is no faith, and the greater the risk the greater the faith; ... the less objective security the more profound the possible inwardness."[55]

Having acquired this attitude of infinite subjective interest it only remains for the religious individual to exist with this attitude before God. Knowing that he can do nothing else, that he is powerless before God, will cause a persistent suffering, as has been seen.

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[54] CUP, p. 182.

[55] CUP, p. 188

Kierkegaard's concept of the religious individual puts major emphasis on infinite interest and acceptance of the uncertain through faith. These two qualities appear to have a solid basis throughout Kierkegaard's philosophy and seem to be supported by human experience. Concern is a better basis for any type of relationship than is indifference. Acceptance of God does seem to depend on something more than objective rational proofs of His existence. Although concern and faith appear appropriate in a God-man relationship, it does not necessarily follow from this that paradox and suffering are also a part of religious experience.

Accepting Kierkegaard's emphasis on infinite interest and faith commitment, it is possible to include in religiosity a belief in a benevolent, all-loving God who assures a confident, joyous God-man relationship. Kierkegaard argues that the paradox of the God-man, a historical truth, should be accepted to heighten faith. It could be argued that a conviction of God as benevolent, all-loving Father might be accepted to solidify and enhance a faith commitment. Kierkegaard believes that a doctrine which is furthest removed from objective proof demands a greater risk and therefore a more intense faith commitment. It has been argued[56] that this is not necessarily true.

A religious individual who meets Kierkegaard's criteria of infinite interest and of dedication to subjective reflection might quite conceivably believe that God is a benevolent Father. This individual might also recognize that he is powerless before God but believe

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[56] Cf. above, p. 30.

that God in his goodness raises man to a participation in a relationship with Him. This relationship would be imperfect as long as man is bound to finite life in time but the promise of a perfect union in eternity would be implied in the already existing relationship.

Thus Kierkegaard's insistence on infinite interest and faith commitment for the religious man is presented in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript as a defensible position. However, the accompanying emphasis on paradox and religious suffering does not necessarily follow from the above qualities.

In closing, Kierkegaard's influence on present day theology and philosophy should be acknowledged. Kierkegaard argued against Schleiermacher and the theologians who believed that religion could be founded upon a reading of the human heart or human history. In contrast, Scripture and the transcendent God is the basis of religion for Kierkegaard. God is completely Other but known to man through Jesus Christ. Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann and the whole Protestant movement of dialectical theology were influenced by this aspect of Kierkegaard's thought. In philosophy, of course, Kierkegaard is acknowledged as one of the most important existentialists. Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Marcel drew much from Kierkegaard's philosophy, especially from the fact that Kierkegaard emphasized man as existing, finite, weak, this-worldly, and possessed of a subjective nature. This was in contrast to the prior emphasis on man's rational, objective nature as it was put forward dogmatically in theology and philosophy during the Enlightenment.

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# VITA

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