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HUME - KIERKEGAARD - NIETZSCHE

ON

EXISTENCE AND EXISTENTIAL EPISTEMOLOGY

by

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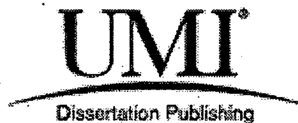

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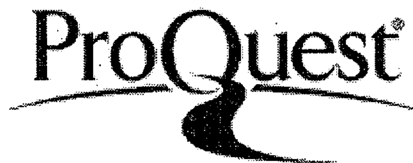

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PREFACE

Modern Philosophy was conceived with an epistemological bent. It began with the Cartesian quest for knowledge of Reality which was certain and beyond doubt. Descartes set the stage for Modern Philosophy and wrote the first act of the play. He had thought that his act was enough; and that Reality could be seen clearly and distincly as the curtain fell. The act ended with man's reasoning abilities and razor-sharp logic being acclaimed as victor in man's quest for certain knowledge of the Real.

We may object to the sudden ending of Descartes' first act and demand to see the remainder of the play. But we must admit that Descartes' staging was adequate. Within the Cartesian Philosophy we can find the seeds out of which have sprung rationalism, empiricism, idealism, and existentialism in their modern forms.

This essay will approach epistemology from an existential point of view. This means that we must come to grips with existence when raising epistemological questions. This existential approach to epistemology will also mean that at least a relative skepticism regarding matters external to one's own consciousness is imperative.

When we find an epistemological skeptic seriously at work, we can rest assured that the problem or some problem of existence is occupying his attention. He is concerned about what <u>he</u> can or cannot know. When he affirms a skeptical attitude toward knowledge of Reality, the skepticism can be traced to some problem involving the nature of his own existence.

It would indeed be ridiculous to ask myself what I can know if I don't know *what* "I" am, or even *that* "I" am. The essay will be attempting to validate the claim that one's own existence can never be known through the medium of logical reasoning alone. This is why an existential epistemology will be at least relatively skeptical.

In making this approach to epistemology I will be relying on the works of three modern epistemological skeptics: David Hume, Soren Kierkegaard, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Hume was primarily interested in epistemological problems and, consequently, found that he could not avoid the problems of existence. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were primarily interested in the nature and meaning of existence, and found that this problem involved them in epistemological problems. The two problems are inseparable.

"Existence" and "knowledge." The essay will attempt to permit these three thinkers to struggle with these problems: Hume working primarily with and from the problem of "knowledge," Kierkegaard and Nietzsche working primarily with and from the problem of "existence."

CHAPTER I

THE PARADOXICAL NATURE OF EXISTENCE

David Hume, in contrast to Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, was a thorough-going skeptic. Such a distinction may be made because Hume was skeptical even about the nature of his own existence. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche could not have been more certain about anything than when they affirmed the paradoxical* nature of existence.

But having made this distinction, we should not draw the conclusion that Hume did not concern himself with existence. His vision was clear enough to see that existence is by nature paradoxical. He tried to reconcile the paradoxical elements of existence. But failing to do so, he remained skeptical even in regard to the nature of his own existence. The existential thinker must stand in gratitude to Hume for his insights into the nature of existence. Hume refused to claim the final word in the matter, and pleads his ignorance in this manner:

> Most philosophers seem inclin'd to think, that personal identity *arises* from consciousness; and consciousness is nothing

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*That which is "paradoxical" is *seemingly* contradictory. E.g. The apparent contradiction under consideration relates to the question of how it is possible in existence "to be" and "to become" at the same time. This is an apparent contradiction yet it is possible to hold that "being" and "becoming" are simultaneously present in existence. If one does this, as is the case with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, a strict logical interpretation of existence must give way and admit the "paradoxical."

but a reflected thought or perception. . . . But all my hopes vanish, when I come to explain the principles, that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness. I cannot discover any theory, which gives me satisfaction on this head.

In short there are two principles, which I cannot render consistent; nor is it in my power to renounce either of them, viz. <u>that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences</u>, and <u>that the mind never perceives any real connexion among</u> distinct existences. . . . For my part, I must plead the privilege of a sceptic, and confess, that this difficulty is too hard for my understanding. I pretend not, however, to pronounce it absolutely insuperable. Others, perhaps, or myself, upon more mature reflexions, may discover some hypothesis, that will reconcile those contradictions.[1]

Kant, and after him, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche occupied themselves with "this difficulty." They helped to "reconcile those contradictions" for the existential thinker, if for no one else; not by a logical reconciliation of the contradictions but rather by accepting the paradoxical nature of existence.*

<u>Paradox Betrays Logic</u>

The foregoing must now be explicated. The attempt must be made to visualize, metaphorically speaking, the paradoxical character of existence. The language of logic will forever fall short in making such an attempt. Hume was attempting the impossible when he tried to "reconcile those contradictions" by rational means. It was indeed a strange twist that Hume, who labored so strenuously to

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[1]David Hume, A <u>Treatise of Human Nature</u>, (New York, Bombay, and Calcutta: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909), I, 559-60.

*Hume seemed to assume that further reflection might resolve the apparent contradiction present in existence ("being" and "becoming" at the same time). Through his penetrating analysis of the nature of consciousness, he suggested to others, although not to himself, that the concept of "the paradoxical" applies to existence.

destroy the tenets of rationalism, should demand rationality when considering the nature of existence. Existence is not logical. Its nature is not rational. The language of the poet and the insights of the artist are necessary to plumb its depths. Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche saw themselves in such artistic roles.

"How One Becomes What One Is"

"How one becomes what one is." This is the subtitle of Nietzsche's Ecce Homo. In this phrase, we can sense the paradoxical nature of existence which we are attempting to describe.

"How one becomes" affirms that existence is becoming, movement, change, uncertain, temporal. "What one is" affirms that existence has being, or some kind of unity and continuity. "To be" and "to become" simultaneously is precisely what constitutes the paradox of existence.

We find a similar approach to existence in the writings of Kierkegaard. He too speaks of "becoming what one is." For Kierkegaard, however, "becoming what one is" is an ethical task, unconditionally given in existence. The following definition of the self from Kierkegaard's The Sickness Unto Death includes this ethical aspect in its description of the paradoxical nature of existence.

> Man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short it is a synthesis. A synthesis is a relation between two factors. So regarded, man is not yet a self.[8]

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[8]Soren Kierkegaard, Fear And Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1955), p. 147.

"To be" and "to become" simultaneously constitutes the problem. That is, "one is" and "one is not yet." Perhaps the discipline of psychology can serve us as an analogy in glimpsing the paradox. The psychiatric professional works for a patient's self-acceptance. This means that the patient is to accept himself for what he is. The patient is to accept his given potentialities as he actualizes those potentialities through becoming. The patient is to strive to become what he is. His own unique potentialities, or power of being, are to be accepted and actualized. The patient's striving must not be over-enthusiastic or too lazy. It must be just right.

But what is just right? The ethical and the nature of the ethical has entered the picture. For both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, man's ethical task lies in the individual's striving to fulfill his own power of being. This ethical goal is grounded in the individual's own nature - beyond mere morality. In the following passage of Kierkegaard it would be difficult to know which of the two is speaking if the source were not identified:

> The true ethical enthusiasm consists in willing to the utmost limits of one's powers, but at the same time being so uplifted in divine jest as never to think about the accomplishment. As soon as the will begins to look right or left for results, the individual begins to become immoral. . . the individual demands something else than the ethical itself. A truly great ethical personality would seek to realize his life in the following manner. He would strive to develop himself with the utmost exertion of his powers; in so doing he would perhaps produce great effects in the external world. But this would not seriously engage his attention, for he would know that the external result is not in his power, and hence that it has no significance, either pro or contra. . . . He would therefore keep himself in ignorance of his accomplishment by a resolution of the will; and even in the hour of death he would will not

to know that his life had any other significance than that he had ethically striven to further the development of his own self.[3]

The abhorrence of taking pride in external achievement as one becomes what one is can be seen time and again in Nietzsche's works. We see it in the following excerpt from one of his letters to Georg Brandes.

> And as far as I personally am concerned I believe that I am a tremendous happening in the crisis of value judgments. However, this could be an error and, moreover, even stupidity. I wish I did not _have_ to believe anything regarding myself.[4]

Brandes, a Danish literary critic, was the man largely responsible for bringing Kierkegaard's works to light some twenty years after the latter's death.[5] This same letter from which we have just quoted gives evidence that Brandes was probably a link between Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. For in the same letter Nietzsche writes:

> For my next trip to Germany I have planned occupying myself with the psychological problem of Kierkegaard and, likewise, to renew my acquaintance with your older literature.[6]

Regardless of whether or not Nietzsche knew Kierkegaard's works, we find in these two thinkers an infinite interest in the nature of existence.

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[3]Soren Kierkegaard, _Concluding Unscientific Postscript To The Philosophical Fragments_, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 121.

[4]Friedrich Nietzsche, _Nietzsche Unpublished Letters_, trans. Kurt F. Leidecker (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 129.

[5]Robert Bretall (ed.), _A Kierkegaard Anthology_, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. xviii.

[6]Nietzsche, _loc. cit._

Aristotelian Influence

Relative to what has been said up to this point, we can find many similarities within Aristotle's writings. With Aristotle's emphasis on the individual and his penetrating analysis of existence, it is not surprising to hear an Aristotelian speak of him as "the first existentialist."[7] The paradoxical nature of existence which has been occupying our attention finds a prominent place within Aristotelian philosophy.

It is within the framework of his continuity concept that we find his analysis of existence set forth. In defining what he means by 'contiguous,' Aristotle begins by first defining the words 'succession' and 'contiguous.' That which comes immediately after something else is said to be 'in succession.' That which is 'in succession' and touches or is in contact with that which precedes it is said to be 'contiguous.' E.g. The last book on my bookcase is touching the one immediately preceding it. Therefore, in the sequence of my view, the last book is 'contiguous' to the other. Aristotle says that 'contiguous' is related to 'continuous' but the two are not the same.

> The 'continuous' is a subdivision of the contiguous: things are called continuous when the touching limits of each become one and the same and are, as the word implies, contained in each other; continuity is impossible if the extremities are two.[8]

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[7] Opinion expressed by Dr. Martin Foss in personal conversation.

[8] Richard McKeon (ed.), The Basic Works of Aristotle, (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 307.

That which is continuous forms a whole, a unity. There is a unity to motion, or becoming, because it is continuous. Later on in the *Physics*, Aristotle speaks of continuity as an infinite potential division without actually being divided.[9] We see here the stirring of a process philosophy in which "being" is identified with "becoming." There is an affinity here with Nietzsche's doctrine of the Eternal Return. We will touch on this point later.

As Aristotle analyzes the unity of becoming, he is in fact beautifully describing what we have been referring to in speaking of the paradoxical nature of existence.

> There are three classes of things in connexion with which we speak of motion, the 'that which', the 'that in which', and the 'that during which'. I mean that there must *be* something that is in motion, e.g. a man or gold, and it must be in motion *in* something, e. g. a place or an affection, and *during* something, for all motion takes place during a time. Of these three, it is the thing in which the motion takes place that makes it one generically, or specifically, it is the thing moved that makes the motion one in subject, and it is the time that makes it consecutive: but *it* is the three together that makes it one without qualification.[10]

Although the thing which is in motion is always changing we must remember from the above quotation that there is something permanent, namely, "the thing moved that makes the motion one in subject." The adjective "simple" is the word that Aristotle uses in describing this underlying subject.

Motion is primary for Aristotle. All things are in motion or are becoming. Or to put the matter in his words, the potential which

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[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 383-87.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 309.

is inherent in a thing strives to become actual. This striving, or _entelechy_, belongs to the nature of a thing. Here too, existence is described as "becoming what one is."

For Kierkegaard, "to become what one is" means to take upon one's self the _task_ of "becoming subjective." In other words, man's potency is not like that of gold. For Kierkegaard, man's actualizing his potential takes place by means of his own ethical freedom. Therefore, Kierkegaard objected to treating human existence objectively as though one were describing the becoming of a tree. He criticized Aristotle for doing this.[11] Kierkegaard would have said that existence in general can be treated objectively. Even one's own existence can be treated objectively. But when "I" become infinitely interested in _my_ existence, then "I" become subjective. The following words of Kierkegaard drive the point home:

> It is commonly assumed that no art or skill is required in order to be subjective. To be sure, every human being is a bit of a subject, in a sense. But now to strive to become what one already is: who would take the pains to waste his time on such a task, involving the greatest imaginable degree of resignation? Quite so. But for this very reason alone it is a very difficult task, the most difficult of all tasks in fact, precisely because every human being has a natural bent and passion to become something more and different.[12]

The complaint about one's wanting "to become something more and different" than subjective is leveled at those who wish to objectify everything including their own existence. These "objectifiers" want knowledge in the sense of objective truth above all else,

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[11]Soren Kierkegaard, _Philosophical Fragments_, trans. David F. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), pp. 60-62.

[12]Kierkegaard, _Concluding Unscientific Postscript_, p. 116.

and thus forget what it means to exist subjectively. We will listen to Nietzsche make a similar complaint very shortly.

We have noted that motion was the primary and unifying factor of existence for Aristotle. He pointed out that Zeno had forgotten this point when chopping up a continuous flow of an object in motion into segments of time and space. For Aristotle, time and space were relative to motion. A thing in motion is actually "one in subject." The subject cannot be chopped up. That which is continuous is continuous, without division. My own existence is continuous, a stream or a flow. I even refer to it as "a stream of consciousness."

Consciousness, however, has content. The content of consciousness is partially made up of things or entities in time and space. As such, these entities seem to break up or chop up my continuous stream of consciousness into segments of consciousness. Consequently, I tend to lose my continuity or sense of continuity. This poses a difficulty for the existing individual. Kierkegaard puts it this way:

> . . .The difficulty facing an existing individual is how to give his existence the continuity without which everything simply vanishes. An abstract continuity is no continuity, and the very existence of the existing individual is sufficient to prevent his continuity from having essential stability; while passion gives him a momentary continuity, a continuity which at one and the same time is a restraining influence and a moving impulse. The goal of movement for an existing individual is to arrive at a decision, and to renew it. The external is the factor of continuity; but an abstract eternity is extraneous to the movement of life, and a concrete eternity within the existing individual is the maximum degree of his passion. All idealizing passion is an anticipation of the eternal in existence functioning so as to help the individual to exist.[13]

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[13] *Ibid.*, p. 277.

We can notice from this quotation that there are three ways in which "the eternal"* can be considered: concretely, abstractly, and ideally. "The eternal" can be experienced concretely, or immanently, in existence. A totally abstract consideration of "the eternal" is abstracted from existence and has nothing whatsoever to do with existence. An "idealizing" consideration of the eternal abstracts from existence, yet is intimately related to existence in so far as it supplies existence with a telos. Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche speak of "the eternal," and we will see shortly that they concerned themselves with both the "concrete" and the "idealized" aspects of "the eternal."

It is extremely important that we take the time and the space in trying to glimpse the meaning that Kierkegaard and Nietzsche give to "the eternal." The matter has a bearing on answers to questions which we will be considering in the last chapter.

Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche experienced "the eternal" concretely, or immanently. These experiences were of vital importance to both men. It is on the basis of these concrete experiences that further idealizing of "the eternal" takes place. Nietzsche has referred to his experience as "The Great Noon." We will refer to it

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*A distinction must be made between "the eternal" as immanently experienced, and "the eternal" as thought or "idealized." When Kierkegaard and Nietzsche experienced "the eternal" immanently or concretely the ecstatic experience (as will be noted) involved the suspension of time. On the other hand, the individual who is in the process of becoming can only relate himself to "the eternal" through thinking by relating "the eternal" to futurity or the future.

by the phrase "At Noon," and to Kierkegaard's experience as "At One O'clock" for reasons which will be self-evident.

"At Noon"

If we can take Nietzsche at his word, all his literary effort was expended for one purpose:

> My life-task is to prepare for humanity one supreme moment in which it can come to its senses, a Great Noon in which it will turn its gaze backwards and forwards, in which it will step from under the yoke of accident and of priests, and for the first time set the question of the Why and Wherefore of humanity as a whole -[14]

While many students who occupy themselves with Nietzsche's "Great Noon" concept concentrate on the poem which concludes Beyond Good and Evil, the writer finds Nietzsche in his mystic heights more easily in "At Noon" of Zarathustra, Part IV. The Great Noon concept is central in Nietzsche's work. As Kurt Leidicker puts it in his introduction to Nietzsche's Unpublished Letters:

> The "Great Noonday" of Nietzsche's is a mythologizing conception of the first magnitude and many writers have occupied themselves with it with varying success. . . .it is around it that Nietzsche's spiritual biography develops.[15]

It will be sufficient to recapitulate the "At Noon" event in the life of Zarathustra and to quote the pertinent passages in order to sense Nietzsche's apprehension of "the eternal."

It was "At Noon" when the sun stood directly overhead that Zarathustra came upon an "old crooked and knotty tree." A grapevine

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[14] Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1924), p. 93.

[15] Nietzsche, Nietzsche Unpublished Letters, p. 19.

weighted with yellow grapes embraced the tree. He wanted to pick a grape but another desire took precedence - sleep. And so Zarathustra laid himself down on the ground under the tree and slept. . .

> . . .Only his eyes remained open: for they did not tire of seeing and praising the tree and the love of the grapevine. Falling asleep, however, Zarathustra spoke thus to his heart:
>
> Still! Still! Did not the world become perfect just now? . . . sleep dances on me. My eyes he does not close, my soul he leaves awake. . .
>
> Like a ship that has sailed into its stillest cove - now it leans against the earth, tired of the long voyages and the uncertain seas. Is not the earth more faithful? The way such a ship lies close to, and nestles to, the land - it is enough if a spider spins its thread to it from the land: no stronger ropes are needed now. Like such a tired ship in the stillest cove, I too rest now near the earth, faithful, trusting, waiting, tied to it with the softest threads. . . .
>
> What happened to me? Listen! Did time perhaps fly away? Do I not fall? Did I not fall - listen! - into the well of eternity? . . . . Did not the world become perfect just now? . . . .

The wonder of the sense of "the eternal!" But Zarathustra will not take his repose in wonder -

> . . . . (And here Zarathustra stretched and felt that he was asleep.)
>
> "Up!" he said to himself; "you sleeper! You noon napper! Well, get up, old legs! It is time and overtime; many a good stretch of road still lies ahead of you. Now you have slept out - how long? Half an eternity! Well! Up with you now, my old heart! After such a sleep, how long will it take you to wake it off?". . . . "Leave me alone! Still! Did not the world become perfect just now? Oh, the golden round ball!
>
> "Get up!" said Zarathustra, "you little thief, you lazy little thief of time! What? Still stretching, yawning, sighing, falling into deep wells? Who are you? Oh my soul!" (At this point he was startled, for a sunbeam fell from the sky onto his face.) "O heaven over me!" he said, sighing, and sat up. "You are looking on? You are listening to my strange soul? When will you drink this drop of dew which has fallen upon all earthly things? When will you drink this strange soul? When, well of eternity? Cheerful, dreadful abyss of noon! When will you drink my soul back into yourself?"

> Thus spoke Zarathustra, and he got up from his resting place at the tree as from a strange drunkenness; and behold, the sun still stood straight over his head. But from this one might justly conclude that Zarathustra had not slept long.[16]

This is but one of the many passages in which Nietzsche attempts to describe the immanent experience of "the eternal" within his existence.

"At One O'Clock"

Zarathustra's glimpse of "the eternal" reached its zenith "at noon." Kierkegaard reports that the stopping of the clock occurred for him "at one o'clock." We find this report in his book entitled Repetition. The similarities are striking. There is the new love for existence which the "Moment" produces and the despair at being cast back into existence and time, and then there is the recurring striving "to become what one is." It will be worth our time to quote Kierkegaard's attempted description of the "Moment" in order to see these similarities.

> . . . . Everyone who has thoroughly considered the matter will agree with me that it is never granted to a man in his whole life, even for so much as half an hour, to be absolutely content in all imaginable ways. That for this more is required than having food and clothing, I surely do not need to say.
>
> Once I was very close to it. I got up in the morning feeling uncommonly well. This sense of well-being increased out of proportion to all analogy during the forenoon. Precisely at one o'clock I was at the highest peak and surmised the dizzy maximum which is not indicated on any scale of well-being, not even

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[16] Walter Kaufmann (ed.), The Portable Nietzsche, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Viking Press, 1946), pp. 387-90.

on the poetical thermometer. The body had lost all its earthly heaviness, it was as though I had no body, just for the reason that every function enjoyed its completest satisfaction, every nerve tingled with delight on its own account and on account of the whole, while every pulsation, as a disquietude in the organism, only suggested and reported the sensuous delight of the instant. My gait became a glide, not like the flight of a bird that cleaves the air and leaves the earth behind, but like the billows of the wind over a field of grain, like the yearning bliss of the cradling waves of the sea, like the dreamy gliding of the clouds. My very being was transparent, like the depths of the sea, like the self-contented silence of the night, like the quiet monologue of midday. Every feeling of my soul composed itself to rest with melodious resonance. Every thought proffered itself freely, every thought proffered itself with festal gladness and solemnity, the silliest conceit not less than the richest idea. Every impression was surmised before it arrived and was awakened within me. The whole of existence seemed to be as it were in love with me, and everything vibrated in preordained rapport with my being. In me all was ominous, and everything was enigmatically transfigured in my microcosmic bliss, which was able to transform into its likeness all things, even the observations which were most disagreeable and tiresome, even disgusting sights and the most fatal collisions. When precisely at one o'clock I was at the highest peak, where I surmised the ultimate attainment, something suddenly began to chafe one of my eyes, whether it was an eyelash, a mote, a bit of dust, I do not know; but this I know, that in that selfsame instant I toppled down almost into the abyss of despair - a thing which everyone will understand who has been up so high as I was, and when he was at that point has been engaged with the generic question how nearly absolute contentment can be attained. . . .[17]

These experiences happened to Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. That is, they were concrete or immanent. They became a constitutive element within the existence of each man.

The most important point for us to note is the fact that such an experience stamps the individual undergoing the experience with

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[17] Soren Kierkegaard, Repetition, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), pp. 74-76.

meaning.* Not only does the individual come to believe that his present mode of existence is meaningful, but also that his existence has meaning in terms of destiny. As to the source of such an experience, and the resulting consequence of the experience, Martin Buber's words are quite descriptive:

> What is the eternal, primal phenomenon, present here and now, of that which we term revelation? It is the phenomenon that a man does not pass, from the moment of the supreme meeting, the same being as he entered into it. The moment of meeting is not an "experience" that stirs in the receptive soul and grows to perfect blessedness; rather, in that moment something happens to the man. At times it is like a light breath, at times like a wrestling-bout, but always - it happens. . . . The reality is that we receive it in such a way that we know it has been given to us. . . . In the language of Nietzsche, who in his account remains loyal to reality, "We take and do not ask who it is there that gives."
>
> Man receives, and he receives not a specific "content" but a Presence, a Presence as power. . . . First, there is the whole fulness of real mutual action, of being raised and bound up in relation: the man can give no account at all of how the binding in relation is brought about, nor does it in any way lighten his life - it makes life heavier, but heavy with meaning.
>
> Secondly, there is the inexpressible confirmation of meaning. Meaning is assured. Nothing can any longer be meaningless. The question about the meaning of life is no longer there. But were it there, it would not have to be answered. . . . Thirdly, this meaning is not that of "another life," but that of this life of ours, not one of a world "yonder" but that of this world of ours, and it desires its confirmation in this life and in relation with this world. This meaning can be received, but not explained.[18]

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*This is not to say that these questions regarding the meaning of one's own existence cannot be asked and answered (either affirmatively or negatively) apart from such an experience. Such an experience is merely an assist toward affirming that existence has meaning.

[18]Martin Buber, I And Thou, (second edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), pp. 109-10.

A man must either affirm or deny his own existence. It was the "moment" that enabled Nietzsche to say "yes" to his own existence. It was a result of the "moment" that enable Nietzsche to see himself as a truly distinguished individual, a being of worth and value to himself. He says:

> It is not works but "faith" that here decides, that determines the order of rank - to reactivate an old religious formula in a new and deeper sense. There is some kind of basic certainty about itself which a distinguished soul possesses, something which cannot be sought nor found nor perhaps lost. The distinguished soul has reverence for itself.[19]

"Reverence for itself." The distinguished soul has "some kind of basic certainty about itself." It is able to accept itself with joy. Nietzsche uses the doctrine of Justification by Faith in describing how certainty about one's self is attained. He believes he is giving the formula a "new and deeper sense." But if we stop to analyze the importance of the "At One O'clock" event in the life of Kierkegaard, we can see that Nietzsche is using the doctrine in much the same sense as Kierkegaard would have used it. Walter Lowrie,[20] the late Kierkegaardian scholar, believed that this event was the conversion experience in Kierkegaard's life which took place on May 19, 1838.

Both experiences which have been previously described come

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[19] Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good And Evil, trans. Marianne Cowan (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1955), pp. 228-29.

[20] Walter Lowrie, A Short Life Of Kierkegaard, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), pp. 125-27.

under the heading of what Kierkegaard called "Religiousness A."[21] "Religiousness A" is the religion of immanence; or that which is given concretely within an individual's existence. What Kierkegaard calls "Religiousness B" or the religion of transcendence, is transcendent or outside the existence of the individual. As such, it can only be thought or imagined; or as we previously put it, "idealized." Therefore, it can never be known except as a possibility. Whenever we attempt to give answer in ultimate terms to Nietzsche's question as to the "Why and Wherefore of humanity as a whole" we are in the domain of the imagination, or transcendental thinking. Whenever any existentialism attempts to answer Nietzsche's question, it must do so outside the analyses of existence. These words of Paul Tillich describe the situation:

> The distinction has been made between atheistic and theistic existentialism. Certainly there are existentialists who could be called "atheistic," at least according to their intention; and there are others who can be called "theistic." But, in reality, there is no atheistic or theistic existentialism. Existentialism gives an analysis of what it means to exist. It shows the contrast between an essentialist description and an existentialist analysis. It develops the question implied in existence, but it does not try to give the answer, either in atheistic or theistic terms. Whenever existentialists give answers, they do so in terms of religious or quasi-religious traditions which are not derived from their existentialist analysis. Pascal derives his answers from the Augustinian tradition, Kierkegaard from the Lutheran, Marcel from the Thomist, Dostoevski from the Greek Orthodox. Or the answers are derived from humanistic traditions, as with Marx, Sartre, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Jaspers.[22]

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[21] Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, pp. 493 ff.

[22] Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), II, 25-26.

Students delving into the philosophies of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche will probably be perplexed on first reading - or forever - when finding "the eternal" spoken of in relation to existence. But to understand these philosophers is to have a glimpse of the reality at which they pointed when they spoke of "the eternal." Therefore we must try to ascertain what they meant and did not mean when using the term.

They too were perplexed, intellectually speaking. To reconcile logically this experience of the eternal with the temporal nature of existence was impossible. Existence was for them a paradoxical mystery incapable of being completely objectified by thought forms. Kierkegaard put the problem in these words:

> All logical thinking employs the language of abstraction, and is *sub specie aeterni*. To think existence logically is thus to ignore the difficulty, that is, of thinking the eternal as in process of becoming. But this difficulty is unavoidable, since the thinker himself is in process of becoming. It is easier to indulge in abstract thought than it is to exist. . . .[23]

Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche knew that a momentary flight into eternity did not miraculously change them into gods with the privilege of viewing existence *sub specie aeterni*. Kierkegaard rebelled against such delusions as can be seen from the following:

> To think existence *sub specie aeterni* and in abstract terms is essentially to abrogate it. . . . It is impossible to conceive existence without movement, and movement cannot be conceived *sub specie aeterni*.[24]

The question concerning death quite naturally follows: If eternity is experienced within the framework of existence, how will

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[23] Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 273.

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 273-74.

existence be affected at death? The existing individual, while existing, is unable to answer this question in any knowledgeable manner. If we answer it at all, we are in the transcendental, or idealising, realm of thought. Such thought can only posit possibilities.

Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were not Platonists. The experience of eternity within their respective existences did not in itself give them any assurance that their existences must survive death. Kierkegaard's words on this subject are very penetrating. To students of Heidegger, they will have a familiar ring. . . .

> I would thus have to ask whether it is in general possible to have an idea of death, whether death can be apprehended and experienced in an anticipatory conception, or whether its only being is its actual being. And since the actual being of death is a non-being, I should have to ask whether it follows as a consequence that death is only when it is not; or whether, in other words, the ideality of thought can overcome death by thinking it. . . .
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> This difficulty can also be expressed as follows: Is it the case that the living individual is absolutely excluded from the possibility of approaching death in any sense whatever, since he cannot experimentally come near enough without comically sacrificing himself upon the altar of his own experiment. . . . If the answer is given that one cannot apprehend death by means of any conception of it, the case is by no means closed. A negative answer is dialectically just as much in need of development and further determination as a positive answer, and only children and naive people are satisfied with a "das weiss man nicht." The thinker demands to know more, not indeed positively about what by supposition can be answered only negatively; but he demands to have it made dialectically clear that the answer must be negative. . . .
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> . . . .We wish to know what it means to prepare for death, since here again one must distinguish between its actual presence and the thought of it. This distinction appears to make all my preparation insignificant, if that which really comes is not that for which I prepare myself; and if it is the same, then my preparation is in its perfection identical with death itself. And I must take into account the fact that death may come in the

> very moment that I begin my preparation. The question must be raised of the possibility of finding an ethical expression for the victory over death; one needs a solving word which explains its mystery, and a binding word by which the individual defends himself against the ever recurrent conception; for surely we dare scarcely recommend mere thoughtlessness and forgetfulness as wisdom.[25]

Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche took their existences seriously enough to believe that existence is incomplete without meaning in terms of destiny. This meant that they both needed "a solving word which explains its (death's) mystery." They needed a doctrine by which they could defend themselves "against the ever recurrent conception."

There are many such doctrines, or thoughts, which have occupied man's mind as possibilities. The absolute extinction and dissolution of existence into nothingness is one death possibility. What serious thinker has not had this possibility enter his head? The doctrine of reincarnation is another possibility. And the possibility of Nirvana is still another.

If we accept Kierkegaard's definition of himself as one who was becoming a Christian, we can assume that he clung to the possibility of the Christian doctrine of resurrection which entails a belief in a continuing form of personal existence, together with a linear interpretation of history.

The doctrine which Nietzsche held in defense of his death possibility was what he named "The Eternal Return." It will be enough for our present purpose to say that The Eternal Return

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[25] *Ibid.*, pp. 150-51.

doctrine holds to a cyclic interpretation of history. That is, history is but one huge circle of time which churns on infinitely. According to this doctrine, one's existence is a part of this circle. Therefore, one's existence will occur an infinite number of times in exactly the same manner. And, so, the meaning of one's existence is identical with one's existence.

It was previously pointed out that Nietzsche's Eternal Return doctrine has an affinity with Aristotelian philosophy in that it moves toward the identification of being and becoming. Viewed sub specie aeterni, that is logically, being is the huge circle of time and includes within itself all becoming. In this sense, becoming is being, or being is becoming. Such a doctrine very neatly rules out a God who has set a goal for history, and stands over and at the end of history. Existence is forever its own goal, its own meaning.

And, so, an existing individual cannot speak with certainty concerning his own existence after death even though the eternal has been experienced in the present. The experience tends to convince one of life's meaning and value, but just what the meaning is in terms of destiny remains unknown. Doctrines pertaining to the death possibility can only be believed. They are never known as certain. The student of Nietzsche is well aware that when Nietzsche writes of the Eternal Return, it is spoken of as a doctrine, a possibility, a thought, not a certainty.

We previously said that we would be hearing Nietzsche attacking the "objectifiers" - those who wish to objectify everything

including existence. It is fitting that we close this present section with that attack.

> We knowers are unknown to ourselves. . . . Our treasure lies in the beehives of our knowledge. We are perpetually on our way thither, being by nature winged insects and honey gatherers of the mind. The only thing that lies close to our heart is the desire to bring something home to the hive. As for the rest of life - so-called "experience" - who among us is serious enough for that? Or has time enough? When it comes to such matters, our heart is simply not in it - we don't even lend our ear. Rather, as a man divinely abstracted and self-absorbed into whose ears the bell has just drummed the twelve strokes of noon will suddenly awake with a start and ask himself what hour has actually struck, we sometimes rub our ears after the event and ask ourselves, astonished and at a loss, "What have we really experienced?" - or rather, "Who are we, really?" And we recount the twelve tremulous strokes of our experience, our life, our being, but unfortunately count wrong. The sad truth is that we remain necessarily strangers to ourselves, we don't understand our own substance, we _must_ mistake ourselves; the axiom, "Each man is farthest from himself," will hold for us to all eternity. Of ourselves we are not "knowers". . . .[26]

Hume On Personal Identity

Hume was well aware that he was not a _knower_ of himself. He admitted _feeling_ the continuity of the self, but could not reconcile this _feeling_ with the succession of impressions and ideas which he believed added up to make all experience. Hume's denial of self identity was not dogmatic. The problem of the self perplexed him no end. When we stop to consider that most of Hume's immediate philosophical predecessors and contemporaries took the "substantial ego"

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[26] Friedrich Nietzsche, _The Birth of Tragedy_ and _The Genealogy of Morals_, trans. Francis Golffing (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1956), p. 149.

for granted we can marvel at his honest questioning regarding the nature of the self.

All that Hume knew of his consciousness was what he experienced, together with a logical relation of his ideas. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche would not have disagreed on this point. We will see in the next chapter, however, that the various aspects or types of consciousness seem to be rated differently in importance by the three men. Be that as it may, these words of Nietzsche could have come from Hume's pen:

> All human knowledge is either experience or mathematics.[27]

As we have already noted, in consciousness our experiences seem to be chopped up. Experience is given to us in "chunks" of time and space. Hume experienced the chunks but could see no continuity. Aristotle would have said that Hume did to consciousness what Zeno did to the flying arrow. Both allowed the experiences of time and space to chop up a continuous flow of an object in motion. In doing so, the underlying subject which is a continuous unity disappears.

Hume was not fundamentally interested in analyzing existence. He was not an Existentialist. The writer, however, has the conviction that Hume's presentation of the problems of self-knowledge forms an important link in the emergence of philosophical Existentialism.

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[27] Friedrich Nietzsche, Will To Power, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1924), II, 45.

Hume occupied himself primarily with epistemological problems. But self-knowledge too is an epistemological problem, as we have been attempting to point out throughout this entire first chapter. That is why Hume had to deal with the problem of the self even though it wasn't his primary concern. If *I* am to know, it must be *I* who am to know. But what am *I*? In effect, Hume answered: "I am the content of my consciousness." An existential epistemology will agree that such a statement is fact, at least as far as it goes. An existential epistemology will be as subjective as Hume's was. It will also be as skeptical in matters pertaining to certain, verifiable, objective truth. This was the case with the epistemologies of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. As we now examine the epistemologies of these three philosophers, we will see striking similarities in their approaches to the question of knowledge. All three were subjective epistemologists.

CHAPTER II

SUBJECTIVE EPISTEMOLOGY

We come now to the epistemologies of Hume, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. The question, "What can I know?" will be answered by all three in the same subjective vein. We can imagine that their answer to this epistemological question would run something like this: "All that I can know are my experiences."*

Experience is the content of consciousness, and all three thinkers were in fundamental agreement as to what the content of consciousness includes. Therefore, if we begin by asking what the content of consciousness includes, we will begin to sense an agreement which is basic to their respective epistemologies. Following this approach, we will also see where the three differ. The differences will be brought out more fully in the last chapter.

What, then, is the content of consciousness? Or more specifically, what does the content of *my* consciousness include?

First, consciousness includes what Hume called "impressions and ideas." It includes trees, humans, tables, chairs, colors, hardness, etc.. Under this heading of "impressions and ideas," Hume also included the emotions: hate, love, anger, joy, sorrow, etc..

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*Nietzsche said, "All human knowledge is either experience or mathematics." Hume said the same thing. But we need not bring into the discussion the question of mathematics as knowledge since it has no bearing on the arguments of the thesis.

Secondly, the tying together of these "impressions and ideas" into what we call a logical sequence also occurs within consciousness. This aspect of consciousness is usually given that misleading label of "our power of reason."

Thirdly, consciousness is aware of asking questions about itself. It asks why it is. It asks what the goal and meaning of consciousness is, or if it has a goal and meaning. Consciousness is also aware of imagining answers to these questions. These questions and answers go beyond, or transcend our impressions and our ideas of impressions in the sense that Hume used those words. For instance, I may believe in a theory of reality which is an attempt to answer questions regarding the nature of my consciousness, its origin, meaning, destiny, etc.. The asking of these questions and the consequent answers that I expound in my theory of reality transcend "impressions and ideas," even though they have arisen at least partially from experiencing "impressions and ideas." Questions and answers relating to my destiny, my death, immortality, God, and the world all illustrate this aspect of consciousness.

Fourthly, the feelings help to make up the content of consciousness. What can we say about the feelings? The term is so nondescript. There are such a variety of kinds. They refer to the inner attitudes we hold regarding ethical and aesthetic matters. I have a feeling of what is good. I have a feeling of what is beautiful. They refer to the inner attitudes of what is believed to be true. E. g. Hume's feeling of the continuity of the self. The feelings are legion.

"Impressions and ideas," logical reasoning, the imagination, and the feelings. All three men agreed that consciousness includes these ingredients. There would have been no argument as to the fact that all these ingredients could be called "experience," although different in type. Hume, however, refused to grant the imagination and feelings the same status which he gave to "impressions and ideas" and to logical reasoning. By making this distinction, he cut the ground from under metaphysics. And to add injury to insult, he further assaulted the metaphysician by saying that the only meaningful questioning or inquiry is the inquiry into the empirical data given by "impressions and ideas," together with the inquiry into mathematics. In Hume's eyes, any other type of inquiry is meaningless. Need we wonder why some metaphysicians see red when the name of Hume is mentioned? To have one's endeavours called meaningless and thoughtless is not exactly complimentary or charitable.

Unlike Hume, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche granted equal status to all the elements of consciousness. Both of them believed that metaphysical inquiry does have value in that an individual can and does give himself passionately to such metaphysical thought-possibilities.

Having noted this difference, we must not allow the difference to blind us from the underlying epistemological agreement of the three men. It was their own consciousness which formed the base of operation for all their philosophizing. When considering their subjective epistemologies, the fact that the different types of consciousness were granted different status by the three becomes secondary.

From a subjective point of view, it is apparent that it is impossible to know anything except one's own consciousness. Subjective epistemology is skeptical of all theories of reality. A subjective theory of knowledge admits that what I am conscious of is my consciousness. What I think is my thought. My thought may refer to or reflect a world external to my own consciousness. But if it does, I have no way of knowing with rational certainty. My rationality always remains within the framework of my consciousness.

This does not mean that the subjectivist cannot think about or believe in some theory of reality. We have said that consciousness does include the imagination, and transcendental thought. I can think about a world which is external to my consciousness. But I cannot forget that my thinking about such a world is still my thinking. I can think about the ground of my consciousness but I must remember that the thought is still mine. I can never transcend my consciousness because I am my consciousness. My thought, including my transcendental thought, is given in my consciousness. I cannot say more.

Many a man has believed that thought can be explicated beyond this point - that thought can be investigated and that its ground can be discovered. We can read and listen to physiological descriptions of how thought impulses travel through different channels of the human anatomy until they come out as consciousness. The following passage of Kierkegaard pretty well describes what the attitude of all three of our thinkers would have been regarding such master

mechanics of human consciousness.

SCIENCE

> . . .That a man should simply and profoundly say that he cannot understand how consciousness comes into existence - is perfectly natural. But that a man should glue his eye to a microscope and stare and stare and stare - and still not be able to see how it happens - is ridiculous, and it is particularly ridiculous when it is supposed to be serious. . . . If the natural sciences had been developed in Socrates's day as they are now, all the sophists would have been scientists. One would have hung a microscope outside his shop in order to attract custom, and then would have a sign painted saying: "Learn and see through a giant microscope how a man thinks" (and on reading the advertisement Socrates would have said: "that is how men who do not think behave"). An excellent subject for an Aristophanes, particularly if he let Socrates look through a microscope. (1846) [1]

Or let a man attempt to let thought reflect upon itself until the ground of thought is reached. Such an effort will be enough to produce a headache that a bottle of aspirins will not be able to cure. One begins such a process by thinking his thought. But then he realizes that he can think that he is thinking his thought, and that he thinks the fact that he is thinking that he is thinking his thought, and so on *ad infinitum*.

Our three thinkers called a halt to such reflection. Hume said that "the skeptic. . .cannot defend his reason by reason."[2] Kierkegaard said, "A scepticism which attacks thought itself cannot be vanquished by thinking it through, since the very instrument by

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[1]Robert Bretall (ed.), *A Kierkegaard Anthology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 430.

[2]David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (New York, Bombay, and Calcutta: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909), I, 430.

which this would have to be done is in revolt."[3] And Nietzsche says, ". . .A criticism of the faculty of knowledge is nonsensical: how is it possible for an instrument to criticize itself, when it is itself that exercises the critical faculty."[4]

From its inception, Modern Philosophy was obsessed with the "power of human reason." Nietzsche was right in saying that "What Descartes wanted to prove was, that thought not only had apparent reality, but absolute reality."[5] This was the predominant philosophical climate until Hume's advent. George Berkeley heralded his coming. And David Hume came upon the scene like a breath of fresh air, opening up the closed system of speculation which had been suffocating existence.

Like all great discoverers, he had the courage to challenge an assumption. The assumption on which he spent himself in challenge was, of course, that Gibraltar of first principles, the principle relating to causal relations.

Hume asked his reader to consider the experiences of human existence as primary. Having done this himself, Hume then asked himself how causal laws came to be formulated. Using this method

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[3]Soren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript To The Philosophical Fragments, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 292.

[4]Friedrich Nietzsche, Will To Power, trans Anthony M. Ludovici (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1924), II, 15.

[5]Ibid., p. 14.

of procedure, it is difficult to deny Hume's description of the matter. In our experience, one thought has followed another in the same sequence. When we have experienced fire, we have also experienced heat. Therefore, we imagine that when we experience fire in the future we will also experience heat. But, said Hume, there is no reasoning process by which we can be certain of this. It can only be inferred, and such an inference takes place because of custom or habit. The following words are typical of Hume's description of experience and the way in which causal laws came to be formulated:

> . . .If flame or snow be presented anew to the senses, the mind is carried by custom to expect heat or cold, and to believe that such a quality does exist, and will discover itself upon a nearer approach.[6]

Hume was saying that we can never be rationally certain that the sequence of our experiences will not change. "The sun will not rise tomorrow morning." Such a statement is every bit as thinkable as the statement, "The sun will rise tomorrow morning." Both statements are in the realm of possibility, not certainty.

Thoughts are merely given in consciousness. If they have an origin, a cause, or a ground, we cannot be certain. We can think various possibilities as to what the ground of our thoughts might be. We know the possibilities as possibilities, not as reality or truth.

Kierkegaard and Nietzsche agreed with Hume's interpretation

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[6]Charles Hendel (ed.), Hume Selections (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 136.

of how causal laws came to be formulated. The following quotations from Nietzsche illustrate this agreement. In the second quotation we find one of the few references in which Nietzsche mentions Hume.

> Cause and effect - On this mirror - for our intellect is a mirror - something is going on which shows regularity; a certain thing, each time, follows another certain thing. This, if we want to perceive it and give it a name, we call cause and effect. We fools! As if, in this, we understood or could understand anything! For we have seen nothing but the images of "cause and effect." And this very figurativeness makes insight into a more substantial relation than that of sequence impossible.[7]

> The question "why?" is always a question concerning the causa finalis, and the general "purpose" of things. We have no sign of the "sense of the efficient cause"; in this respect Hume is quite right, habit (but not only that of the individual) allows us to expect that a certain process, frequently observed, will follow upon another, but nothing more! That which gives us such an extraordinarily firm faith in causality, is not the rough habit of observing the sequence of processes; but our inability to interpret a phenomenon otherwise than as a result of design.[8]

When experience is considered from the subjective point of view, the establishment of first principles as certain becomes an impossibility. Without first principles there is no launching pad from which man can leave his consciousness in order to view the All of Reality sub specie aeterni. Such subjectivity cuts the ground from under any type of rationalism which attempts to posit any theory of reality as being certainly true.

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[7]Friedrich Nietzsche, The Dawn of Day, trans. Johanna Volz (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1903), p. 121.

[8]Nietzsche, Will To Power, II, 73-74.

It is possible to think more than one theory of reality. The same individual can entertain many such theories in his thinking. But theories are still theories, not truths. We will examine two theories of reality in order to sense our dilemma. We will look at the possibility of "solipsism" and also at the possibility of an external world. These are the two fundamental alternatives that consciousness faces. Under the heading of "external world," many kinds of worlds can be imagined. We will usually be speaking of "external world" in general. In doing so, the writer will be assuming that it is impossible either to prove or disprove the existence of a world which is external to consciousness, let alone ascertain what such a world is _really_ like.

The Possibility of Solipsism

In his quest for rational certainty, Descartes began by doubting everything. There was but one thing that he could not doubt. He could not doubt the fact that it was he who was doing the doubting. _Ergo_, Descartes existed for himself. At this point he admitted the possibility of solipsism. Perhaps everything that he experienced was the creation of his own mind.

But solipsism is ridiculous and unbelievable, even though its possibility has entered the head of many a man. Descartes didn't believe it either. He also recognized the possibility of an external world. He tried to bridge the gap between his own consciousness and the certain establishment of an external world by means of his own rational powers. By the standards of subjective epistemology, Descartes failed.

As we have already noted, Hume, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche were the modern protagonists of an epistemology which denies the certainty of first principles. By denying the certainity of first principles, solipsism remains a rational possibility.

For some reason the cry of "Solipsist!" has an ominous ring to it in some philosophical quarters. So ominous in fact that even its possibility cannot be admitted. But is it the "possibility of solipsism" which is feared? Is it not rather that the consideration of possibilities is eschewed because of their being antithetical to certainty? As Nietzsche put it:

> There may be a few who really prefer a handful of "certainty" to a whole wagonload of beautiful possibilities: there may even be some puritanical fanaticists of conscience who would prefer a certain nothing to an uncertain something - for a deathbed! But this is nihilism and the token of a despairing soul, weary unto death, however brave the gestures of such virtue may look.[9]

The charge of "Solipsist!" or "Quasi-Solipsist!" is frequently leveled at each of the three thinkers in question. But they were not solipsists. None of them. If their epistemologies must be given a label it would have to be a word such as "Possibilism." They were men who saw numerous possibilities regarding the nature of reality. Solipsism was but one of the possibilities. A material or physical world which is reflected or copied by thought was another possibility. In between, a type of world such as the one Berkeley imagined was still another possibility. We can listen to Nietzsche

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[9]Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, trans. Marianne Cowan (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1955), pp. 9-10.

think all three possibilities:

> In order to work in the field of physiology with a clear conscience, one must insist that the sense organs are not phenomena in the idealist's sense - for if they were, they could not be causes! Thus we need sensualism at least as a regulative hypothesis if not as a heuristic principle. What? Others even say that the external world is the creation of our sense organs? But then our body, which is a part of the external world, would be the creation of our sense organs! But then our sense organs would be the creation of - our sense organs! This seems to me to be a thoroughgoing reductio ad absurdum, assuming that the concept causa sui is something thoroughly absurd. It follows, does it, that the external world is not the creation of our sense organs? . . .[10]
>
> The question is whether there are not a good many more ways of creating such a world of appearance. . . . The subject alone is demonstrable; the hypothesis might be advanced that subjects are all that exist, - that "object" is only a form of action of subject upon subject. . . a modus of the subject.[11]

Hume lists these three possibilities in quick order:

> By what argument can it be proved, that the perceptions of the mind must be caused by external objects, entirely different from them, though resembling them (if that be possible) and could not arise either from the energy of the mind itself, or from the suggestion of some invisible and unknown spirit, or from some other cause still more unknown to us?[12]

It is the word "reality" and certainty about reality which must be held in question. The only reality which can be known is my own consciousness. But for me, any knowledge concerning the nature of my consciousness can never be more than a possibility.

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[10] Ibid., pp. 16-17.

[11] Nietzsche, Will To Power, II, pp. 73-74.

[12] Hendel, op. cit., p. 179.

Kierkegaard puts it this way:

> If thought could give reality in the sense of actuality, and not merely validity in the sense of possibility, it would also have the power to take away existence, and to take away from the existing individual the only reality to which he sustains a real relationship, namely, his own. (To the reality of another he stands related only by way of thought. . . .) That is to say, the individual would have to be able to think himself out of existence, so that he would really cease to be.[13]

We must not confuse the "possibility of solipsism" with a declared solipsism. Such confusion merely results in name-calling. We have already stated that none of the three thinkers in question were solipsists. When we say that solipsism is a possibility, we are merely saying that from a subjective point of view no theory of reality, can neither be proved nor disproved. And we are saying further, that from a subjective point of view it is difficult if not impossible to avoid thinking the "possibility of solipsism."

Somerset Maugham has claimed no status as a professional philosopher, but he has reflected deeply on problems facing an existing individual. He has sought the answers to those problems within the writings of the professional philosophers. His following comment on the idealists is an interesting one.

> . . . .One cannot study the idealistic philosophers long without coming into touch with solipsism. Idealism is always trembling on the brink of it. The philosophers shy away from it like startled fauns, but their arguments continue to lead

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[13] Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, pp. 295-96.

> them back to it and so far as I can judge they escape it only because they will not pursue them to the end.[14]

Maugham is right. But it is not only the idealists who run from solipsism "like startled fawns." Any philosopher who believes that he has rationally proved a theory of reality has run from the obstacle of solipsism. (That is, unless the theory he believes proved is solipsism - a theory also beyond proof and disproof.) The rationalist has forgotten an important argument. To put it in Kierkegaard's terms, the rationalist is "absent-minded" when he forgets that <u>his</u> thinking and <u>his</u> theories are <u>his</u>.

One of our major difficulties has developed because of fuzzy thinking concerning the law of identity. Kierkegaard says:

> The philosophical principle of identity is precisely the opposite of what it seems to be; it is the expression for the fact that thought has deserted existence altogether, that it has emigrated to a sixth continent where it is wholly sufficient to itself in the absolute identity of thought and being. . . . Pure thought has won through to a perfect victory, and has nothing, nothing to do with existence.[15]

If we use the principle of identity for anything other than the purpose of logical reasoning we are in trouble. As a principle of logic, the law merely says that a thing is what it is. That is, a thought is what it is, namely, a thought. It has nothing whatsoever to say about reality.

In closing this section on "the possibility of solipsism" we will let Hume underline the major point that has been made.

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[14]Somerset Maugham, <u>The Summing Up</u> (New York: The Literary Guild of America, Inc., 1938), p. 258.

[15]Kierkegaard, <u>Concluding Unscientific Postscript</u>, p. 295.

> . . . .Let us fix our attention out of ourselves as much as possible: Let us chase our imagination to the heavens, or to the utmost limits of the universe; we never really advance a step beyond ourselves (writer's underlining), nor can conceive any kind of existence, but those perceptions, which have appear'd in that narrow compass.[16]

The Possibility of an External World

Many will say that nothing but repulsion is experienced when considering this type of epistemology which we have labeled "Possibilism." We can quite naturally expect this repulsive state of affairs. Our language expresses a theory of reality which takes for granted the existence of a world which is external to one's own consciousness. Every man, woman and child speaks this language. Admitting that our language speaks this theory, we are saying that it is still theory. An external world can never be proved as a rational certainty. Hume can make the point with one of his cute quips:

> . . . .Indeed, whatever convincing arguments philosophers may fancy they can produce to establish the belief of objects independent of the mind, 'tis obvious these arguments are known but to very few, and that 'tis not by them, that children, peasants, and the greatest part of mankind are induc'd to attribute objects to some impressions, and deny them to others.[17]

Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche objected to rationalizing attempts which sought to prove the existence of an external world. For this reason they both objected to Kant's attempt to posit the noumena by rational means. Actually, Kant was not too far from

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[16]Hume, op. cit., I, 371.

[17]Ibid., p. 483.

from either Kierkegaard and Nietzsche in this matter. Kant himself affirmed that noumena, or things in (themselves), cannot be known but only thought. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche would merely have expanded this statement to read: "Noumena cannot be known but only thought as possibilities."

Nietzsche was almost vicious in his attack on Kant's notion of the thing-in-itself. He said:

> We have suppressed the true (certain) world: what world survives? the apparent world perhaps? . . . Certainly not! In abolishing the true world we have also abolished the world of appearance! [18]

> Ultimately, of course, "the thing-in-itself" also disappears: for at bottom it is a conception of a "subject-in-itself." But we have seen that the subject is an imaginary thing. The antithesis "thing-in-itself" and appearance is untenable; but in this way the concept "appearance" also disappears.[19]

> The foul blemish on Kant's criticism has at last become visible even to the coarsest eyes: Kant had no right to his distinction "appearance" and "thing-in-itself," - in his own writings he had deprived himself of the right of differentiating any longer in this old and hackneyed manner. . . .[20]

In these passages Nietzsche is objecting to a philosophical language which posits a "phenomenal-noumenal" world as true. The word "appearance" implies something which appears, a "thing-in-itself." The word "phenomenon" implies the word "noumenon."

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[18] Friedrich Nietzsche, The Twilight of the Idols and The Antichrist, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), p. 25.

[19] Nietzsche, Will To Power, II, 59.

[20] Ibid., p. 63.

Nietzsche philosophized with his hammer. This was his method in knocking down the "phenomenal-noumenal" world which Kant had tried to establish as true. Nietzsche was not proposing that our language be changed in everyday living because it does not express a true theory of reality. He would have been the first to admit that there would be no language at all if this requisite be made. Language can only express and describe thoughts, possibilities, and beliefs. The following passage from Nietzsche makes this clear:

> "Appearance" is an adjusted and simplified world, in which our practical instincts have worked: for us it is perfectly true: for we live in it, we can live in it: this is the proof of its truth as far as we are concerned. . . .[21]

Kierkegaard's criticism of Kant's "thing-in-itself" was much less extensive and much more mild than Nietzsche's, but it runs on the same track. Kierkegaard said that we can "dismiss as a temptation the entire problem of a reality in the sense of a thing-in-itself." The thing-in-itself is but a possibility, and as such constitutes a temptation for belief. Like all possibilities which may tempt us to believe, it cannot be known as true. Kierkegaard asks:

> . . . Why confuse the validity of thought with reality? A valid thought is a possibility, and every further question as to whether it is real or not should be dismissed as irrelevant.[22]

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[21] Ibid., p. 73.

[22] Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 292.

CHAPTER III

BEYOND KNOWLEDGE

At this point, someone will ask, "But isn't such epistemological skepticism, or 'Possibilism' as you call it, equivalent to nihilism?" The answer is an emphatic "no!" Nihilism attempts to say something dogmatically about reality. Therefore, it is no more than another thought possibility. From the perspective of Possibilism, the declared nihilist is not permitted certain knowledge of the fact that all is meaningless. The nihilist can do no more than _believe_ that such is the case. For the individual who has been deluded into the belief that rationality is the essence of existence, it may well be that for him an awareness of Possibilism will come as such a shock that utter despair or even suicide may result. No, Possibilism is not synonymous with nihilism. It may result in nihilism, but not necessarily. None of our three thinkers in question were nihilists in the sense of believing all existence to be meaningless.

Hume, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche were epistemological skeptics. They refused to make any dogmatic assertions concerning knowledge of reality. But we must differentiate between "epistemological skepticism" and skepticism which is adhered to as a philosophy of life. All skepticism is primarily epistemological. But epistemological skepticism need not succumb to a skeptical philosophy of life. Life can concern itself with more than the question "What can I know?" One _can live_ beyond knowledge. One _must live_ beyond knowledge. Hume

Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche were not content to spend an existence sitting atop a picket fence constructed of question marks. They got down off this fence. An uncertain reason was overcome by belief, faith, and passion.

The Question of Meaning and Value

Epistemological questions must give ground to a more fundamental question, namely, the question of meaning and value. This was the basic fact that Nietzsche tried to communicate in all his epistemological considerations. We see this basic concern of his in the following passage:

> It might seem as though I had evaded the question concerning "certainty." The reverse is true: but while raising the question of the criterion of certainty, I wished to discover the weights and measures with which men had weighed heretofore - and to show that the question concerning certainty is already in itself a dependent question, a question of the second rank.
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> The question of value is more fundamental than the question of certainty: the latter only becomes serious once the question of values has been answered.[1]

It is largely because of Nietzsche that the word "value" is freighted with meaning for us today. He is the father of the philosophical discipline of Axiology. Nietzsche's axiological vocabulary was developed after Hume's and Kierkegaard's time. But in spite of this providential fact, Hume and Kierkegaard also saw that the question of meaning and value must take priority over the question of certainty.

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[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, Will To Power, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1924), II, pp. 96-97.

From Hume's subjective perspective, his epistemology crystallized into a solid skepticism. But Hume recognized the shortcoming of such a skepticism as he related it to his own existence. As an existing individual, he saw that it was necessary to break with skepticism. From the following words, we see that it was the question of meaning and value which induced the break.

> . . . .Here is the chief and most confounding objection to _excessive_ scepticism, that no durable good can ever result from it; while it remains in its full force and vigour. We need only ask such a sceptic, _What his meaning is? And what he proposes by all these curious researches?_ He is immediately at a loss, and knows not what to answer.[2]

The persistent skeptic is to be asked "What his meaning is?", and is to be shown that "no durable good can ever result from it." In this passage of Hume we see the priority that he gave to the question of meaning and value.

Hume, although he does not speak precisely in these terms, knew that existence is becoming and that a man must _act_ as he becomes. An existing individual cannot avoid action and becoming. Living, or becoming, is absolutely incompatible with a philosophy of life whose end is skepticism. Hume puts it like this:

> . . . .(The sceptic) must acknowledge, if he will acknowledge anything, that all human life must perish, were his principles universally and steadily to prevail. All discourses, all action would immediately cease; and men remain in total lethargy, till the necessities of nature, unsatisfied, put an end to their miserable existence. It is true; so fatal an event is very little to be dreaded. Nature is always too strong for principle. . . .(Men) must act and reason and believe; though they

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[2]Charles Hendel (ed.), _Hume Selections_ (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 187.

> are not able, by their most diligent enquiry, to satisfy themselves concerning the foundation of these operations, or to remove the objections, which may be raised against them.[3]

Like Hume, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche also broke with skepticism. The demand for meaning and value which existence commands of itself as it becomes was recognized by all three thinkers. Skepticism turns into idealism when it is deluded into believing that it can prevail over the nature of existence. Man _must_ act, reason, and believe. The following words of Kierkegaard sound very much like those of Hume which have just been quoted:

> All scepticism is a kind of idealism. Hence when the sceptic Zeno pursued the study of scepticism by endeavoring existentially to keep himself unaffected by whatever happened, so that when once he had gone out of his way to avoid a mad dog, he shamefacedly admitted that even a sceptical philosopher is also sometimes a man, I find nothing ridiculous in this. . . . There is no special difficulty connected with being an idealist in the imagination; but to _exist_ as an idealist is an extremely strenuous task, because existence itself constitutes a hindrance and an objection.[4]

Therefore, when a man exists or becomes through acting, reasoning, and believing, he finds it necessary to make value judgements. The fundamental questions of his existence are "What should I value?" and With what shall I concern myself?" Whether these questions are asked consciously or unconsciously, they are asked, and they are answered. In the answers to those questions, we will find disagreement between the answers given by Hume and those given by Nietzsche and Kierkegaard.

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[3] _Ibid._, pp. 187-88.

[4] Soren Kierkegaard, _Concluding Unscientific Postscript To The Philosophical Fragments_, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 315.

But there is still a more crucial question than the question of "What should I value?" It is this: "What is the meaning of my value judgements?" My value judgements are mine. They are made from my own subjective point of view, whatever "objective" validity they might have. This being the case, the objects of my valuing reflect the meaning and value that I place on my own existence. What kind of value do I place on my own existence? What is the meaning of my own existence?

In the last chapter we spoke of the contents of consciousness and included "impressions and ideas," logical reasoning, the imagination, and the feelings. Hume concerned himself with all of these. We will remember, however, that he did not bestow equal status on all these ingredients. In his eyes, only the empirical sciences and mathematics could be fit subjects for human investigation. Any investigation or reasoning which did not include quantity and number, matters of fact or existence, was not worth the time it cost. Metaphysical, or transcendental thinking, could have no place and was to be considered meaningless. We can listen to Hume's vehemence as he pronounces judgement on metaphysics:

> When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, <u>Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity and number?</u> No. <u>Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?</u> No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.[5]

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[5]Hendel, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., p. 193.

It would be difficult to deny that Hume is making an evaluation when he limits the area of human investigation. Why should one area of human consciousness be a fit subject for human reasoning while the others are not to be so considered? Does this kind of an evaluation reflect the meaning and value which Hume placed on his own existence? The writer believes that it does. Hume's valuation, if carried out, would leave behind the question of one's destiny. For Hume, life's meaning can only be found in the present mode of existence. Hume has every right to make such a judgement. But we must remember that such a judgement is, subjectively thought, is Hume's own evaluation.*

Such an evaluation was not sufficient for either Kierkegaard or Nietzsche. Each of them needed values which could give answer to the meaning of his total existence. All areas of consciousness were given equal status. We have said that both men experienced "the eternal" in an immanent way, and that these experiences stamped their beings with meaning in terms of destiny as well as in terms of the present mode of existence. Nietzsche's "Yea-saying" to existence and Kierkegaard's "infinite interest in existing" brand their respective existences with this type of meaning.

Kierkegaard and Nietzsche would have said that Hume's valuation reflects a depreciated, or one-sided, doctrine of man. Both of them recognized that empirical thought and transcendental thought must be involved in man if he is to be concerned with his destiny as well as

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*The writer, in accord with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, believes that the highest evaluation of the self includes a concern for one's destiny.

with his present, momentary existence. If man is concerned about his destiny, his transcendental thinking can form the only respite from his anxiety as he seeks his meaning in terms of his destiny. This was true for both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. If transcendental thinking is to be forgotten, one's destiny must be forgotten. The result is an ultimate nihilism.

When we say that for Kierkegaard and Nietzsche life is to be given meaning in terms of destiny, we are not saying that it is possible to know what that meaning is. Let us reiterate the words of Martin Buber which were quoted in the first chapter. When "the eternal" is experienced

> . . .there is the inexpressible confirmation of meaning. Meaning is assured. Nothing can any longer be meaningless. The question about the meaning of life is no longer there. . . . This meaning can be received, but not explained.[6]

Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were extremely critical of a doctrine of man which was one-sided in the sense of not including man's total existence, man's total consciousness. Scientism, for instance, neglects the transcendental aspects of man's consciousness. The following words of Nietzsche on such a one-sided scientism warrant our attention:

> . . .Has not man's determination to belittle himself developed space precisely since Copernicus? Alas, his belief that he was unique and irreplaceable in the hierarchy of beings had been shattered for good: he had become an animal, quite literally and without reservations; he who, according to his earlier belief, had been almost God ("child of God," God's

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[6]Martin Buber, I and Thou (second edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 110.

own image"). Ever since Copernicus man has been rolling down an incline, faster and faster, away from the center - whither?[7]

In the last section of the Genealogy of Morals, Nietzsche takes to task the ascetic approach to existence in the same way that he attacks scientism. The ascetic is also guilty of possessing a fragmentary, one-sided, doctrine of man. The ascetic concerns himself only with matters pertaining to his destiny and forgets the meaning of his present mode of existence. He depreciates the world of his senses which is integral to his existence, and thereby does not seek a meaning for his total existence or total consciousness.

After chastising the ascetic, Nietzsche does acknowledge that asceticism asks the question that is worth asking - "Why is there such a thing as man?"[8] Asceticism does ask for the meaning of man's existence. The concluding words to this section of The Genealogy of Morals reiterate the fact that existence demands of itself a meaning or a purpose.

> . . .Let me repeat, now that I have reached the end, what I said at the beginning: man would sooner have the void for his purpose than be void of purpose. . . .[9]

The Relation of Thought to Action

Having considered the question of meaning and value, we may

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[7]Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth Of Tragedy and The Genealogy Of Morals, trans. Francis Golffing (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1956), p. 292.

[8]Ibid., p. 298.

[9]Ibid., p. 299.

be inclined to draw the conclusion that our value judgements have an effect on existence as it acts or becomes. An individual reasons or thinks; he feels or believes; he acts or wills. He is aware of these ingredients which help to constitute the makeup of his existence. But what do these ingredients have to do with man's becoming? Why does it seem that these ingredients are present in different people to different degrees? And why is it that value judgements vary in different people? These questions take us into a difficult, if not an impossible area of reflection. Nietzsche has said,

> Still that most ancient of delusions lives on, that we know, precisely know in each case, how human action is brought about.[10]

The difficulty lies in the attempt to _think_ action or movement. To reiterate, if it were possible to think action logically we would have to be _sub specie aeterni_. We would have to be abstracted from our own existences which abstraction is an impossibility.

How, then, do we relate the two - thought and action? This was a problem to which all three thinkers under consideration devoted much time. The writer favors Kierkegaard's position simply out of prejudice for the Dane's particular ethical interpretation of existence with its emphasis on freedom and responsibility.

Kierkegaard begins his description of the relation by separating thought and action in existence. In doing so, he gives to

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[10] Friedrich Nietzsche, _The Dawn of Day_, trans. Johanna Volz (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1903), p. 113.

thought an "objective" frame of reference rather than maintaining its subjectivity. By this move he is affirming a theory of reality which posits a world outside his own subjective existence. His faith now clings to this possibility as reality. As he feels his way along this approach we can sense that "a leap" from possibility to reality has been made. But Kierkegaard was not afraid of "leaping." This is how he does it:

> If the content of thought were reality, the most perfect possible anticipation of an action in thought before I had yet acted, would be the action. In that manner no action would ever take place, and the intellectual would swallow the ethical. It would be stupid for anyone to suppose that I mean by this to make the external the test of action. . . .The only possible way of drawing a distinction between thought and action is to relegate thought to the sphere of the possible, the disinterested, the objective, and to assign action to the sphere of the subjective. But along this boundary there appears a twilight zone. Thus when I think that I will do this or that, this thought is not yet an action, and in all eternity it is qualitatively distinct from action; nevertheless, it is a possibility in which the interest of action and of reality already reflects itself. The disinterestedness and the objectivity of thought are on the way to being disturbed, because reality and responsibility reach out to lay hold of it. There is thus a sin in thought. The real action is not the external act, but an internal decision in which the individual puts an end to the mere possibility and identifies himself with the content of his thought in order to exist in it. This is the action.[11]

The words "decision" and "passion" are important words in the Kierkegaardian vocabulary. A decision is by nature passionate and inward. Such a decision, for Kierkegaard, is one which springs from individual freedom and involves individual responsibility. Decisions are ethical decisions. Kierkegaard may not have been Kantian in his epistemology, but we see here a real kinship regarding fundamental ethical questions.

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[11]Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, pp. 302-03.

As Kierkegaard attempts to relate thought and action in the above quotation he says, "It would be stupid for anyone to suppose that I mean by this to make the external the test of action." Kierkegaard believed in truth about reality, but it remained for him an objective uncertainty. It would be almost impossible to write a paper on Kierkegaard without quoting his definition of truth:

> An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth, the highest truth attainable for an existing individual.[12]

Truth for Kierkegaard is faith.* The definitions are the same. A clever rationalist might perhaps pounce on him now and say, "Ah, bah! You have said that truth about reality cannot be known, and now you turn about and define truth. Do you not believe that this definition is the truth?" This indeed would be a clever bit of interrogation, but Kierkegaard has already anticipated the complaint and answers:

> Subjectivity, inwardness, has been posited as the truth; can any higher expression for the truth be found which has a still higher degree of inwardness? Aye, there is such an expression, provided the principle that subjectivity or inwardness is the truth begins by positing the opposite principle; that subjectivity is untruth.[13]

Epistemologically speaking, Kierkegaard refuses to leave the ground of skepticism, or Possibilism. For him, truth is subjectivity.

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[12] *Ibid.*, p. 182.

*Kierkegaard's definition of truth has nothing to do with certainty concerning reality. Truth, for Kierkegaard, is the same as faith, or a passionate subjective commitment.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 185.

His truth is always truth *for him*. *His* truth is arrived at through his own passionate and freely made decision. Such truth is beyond rational certainty, or knowledge.

If it was in good taste to quote Kierkegaard's definition of truth, we should also feel compelled to quote David Hume's famous passage in which he describes the relation of logic to action.

> . . . .We speak not strictly and philosophically when we talk of the combat of passion and of reason. Reason is, and ought to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.[14]

Modern philosophy had been trying to combat "doubt" with "reason." But doubt cannot be overcome by reason alone. Doubt is a passion. If it is to be overcome, it must be done by its opposite passion, "belief."* Kierkegaard's words are much to the point:

> Belief is the opposite of doubt. Belief and doubt are not two forms of knowledge, determinable in continuity with one another, for neither of them is a cognitive act; they are opposite passions.[15]

Reason may assist us in either a passionate doubting or believing. But reason can never *wholly* account for either. The transition from my consciousness to a doubting or believing concerning reality takes place by a passionate leap. Doubt and belief in their

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[14]David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (New York, Bombay, and Calcutta: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909), II, 195.

*One must differentiate between intellectual "doubt" or belief and passionate "doubt" or "belief." The latter involves a person passionately in a situation or thought. The former may just be an affirmation or denial of an intellectual proposition, not effecting the individual's action at all.

[15]Soren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. David F. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 69.

most passionate states of inwardness involve action. It was Emerson who said that a man's actions illustrate a man's creed. Our actions or inactions point to our passionate beliefs and to our passionate doubts. This being the case, it would sound rather silly to speak of _almost_ acting or _almost_ believing. Belief or doubt which brings about action or inaction is decisive. Kierkegaard can explain -

> An explanation of the decisive - does such an explanation consist in transforming this expression into a rhetorical phrase, so that while one does not emulate the frivolous in denying the decisive, one yields it acknowledgment, but only to a certain degree? What does it mean to acknowledge the decisive to a certain degree? It means that one denies the decisive. The decisive is precisely what puts an end to all this everlasting prating that attaches to a certain degree.[16]

The age-old dichotomy of faith and reason is a false dichotomy. Both faith and reason are constitutive of human existence. Both elements are present in producing action, but they are not the same. Faith or doubt involves a leap. And when the leap is made, reason must be left behind. Reason helps one either to leap or not to leap, but when the action takes place, the passions have taken over. Reason can do no more than help one to prepare for action.

Hume was most impatient with a philosophy which believed that action is determined by reason alone. He says,

> . . . .In order to shew the fallacy of all this philosophy, I shall endeavour to prove _first_, that reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will; and _secondly_, that it can never oppose passion in the direction of the will.[17]

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[16]Kierkegaard, _Concluding Unscientific Postscript_, pp. 198-99.

[17]Hume, _A Treatise of Human Nature_, II, 193.

Nietzsche too uses the word "passion," but he much prefers to speak of existence as "will to power," the discharging of his inherent energy, dancing, and leaping. Whichever words we use, the existential experience is the same - i.e. life lives, and life wills to live.

We have already noted that for Nietzsche the mechanics by which existence discharges its energy is unknown. We think, and feel, and will. These are all parts of the operation. But how they are put together, we just don't know. Here is Nietzsche's attempted answer to the question, "How does action take place?"

> . . . .In the first place, . . .feeling - many kinds of feeling - is to be recognized as an ingredient in willing. Secondly, there is thinking: in every act of the will there is a thought which gives commands - and we must not imagine that we can separate this thought out of "willing" and still have something like will left! Thirdly, the will is not merely a complex of feeling and thinking but above all it is a passion - the passion of commanding.[18]

This is but an echo to Kierkegaard's words:

> . . . .There is required for a subjective thinker imagination and feeling, dialectics in existential inwardness, together with passion. But passion first and last; for it is impossible to think about existence in existence without passion.[19]

How Kierkegaardian Nietzsche sounds when saying that "in every act of the will there is a thought which gives commands." In action, the thinker relates his existence to a thought by existing in it. We listened to Kierkegaard say that there is "sin in thought." So with Nietzsche. A thought in itself is dead and "objectified." It is only

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[18]Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good And Evil, trans. Marianne Cowan (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1955), p. 20.

[19]Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 313.

when one "wills" to exist in the thought that one commences to exist.

Nietzsche asked the reader to ruminate when chewing his aphorisms. If we ruminate on the following one, we may get a description of the dying effect of stopping to think. The important thing for Nietzsche was to live - to live in the thought, to leap with all passion into the thought.

> "Bad!" Bad! Look - isn't he going backward?" Yes, but you misunderstand him if you complain of it. He is going backward like someone who is about to take a great leap.[20]

Nietzsche talked much of "opinions" and "convictions." Opinions, he said,

> evolve out of passions; indolence of intellect allows those to congeal into convictions. He, however, who is conscious of himself as a free, restless, lively spirit can prevent this congelation by constant change.[21]

> The requirement that a person must afterwards, when cool and sober, stand by what he says, promises, and resolves during passion, is one of the heaviest burdens that weigh upon mankind. . . .Are we under obligation to be faithful to our errors, even with the knowledge that by this fidelity we shall cause injury to our higher selves? No, there is no law, no obligation of that sort; we must become traitors, we must act unfaithfully and abandon our ideals again and again. We cannot advance from one period of life into another without causing these pains of treachery and also suffering from them.[22]

Is there any wonder why Nietzsche referred to himself as a disciple of Dionysus? He knew that every philosophy is a statement of personal opinions and convictions. His own philosophy was a

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[20] Nietzsche, Beyond Good And Evil, p. 225.

[21] Friedrich Nietzsche, Human All Too Human, trans. Helen Zimmern (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1926), I, 404-05.

[22] Ibid., pp. 395-96.

statement of his personal opinions and convictions. But Nietzsche was always ready to abandon his old ones for new ones if existence demanded it.

Conclusion

We have come to the end of the discourse. A look at the paradoxical nature of existence led to a skeptical epistemology. But existence also refused to leave us perched atop a question mark. Value judgements and meaning are demanded by existence for existence. This demand cannot be avoided because existence is living or becoming. But our value judgements can only be placed in an "objectified" world of thought to which existence can passionately give itself. This objectified world can never be established with rational certainty. It always remains my world. This world of my existence is becoming, changing, enlarging. New possibilities are ever opening up before me. Existence under these circumstances can be an adventure. Existence is an adventure.

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