



Kant and Kierkegaard on Duty and Inclination

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bated whether to pass a graduate student on his preliminary examinations. The main argument against doing so was that a pass would commit the department to the supervision of the student's dissertation, and no one who knew this particular student was willing to read his thesis. The affirmative carried when two members volunteered to direct the dissertation themselves. One year later, however, one of these sponsors had died and the other had taken employment elsewhere. Thus, *no member* was willing to supervise this student, and the department as a whole had to renege on its promise. No member felt personally bound by the promises of his departed colleagues, which had been made to the student in no one's name but the department's. No legal action, of course, was possible; but if the department had been *forced* to honor its word, this would have been an excellent example of nondistributive group fault (the departmental renegeing) and consequent group liability of a necessarily distributive kind.

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KANT AND KIERKEGAARD ON DUTY AND INCLINATION *

DISCUSSIONS of Kierkegaard's ethical views have tended to focus on the highly dramatic "teleological suspension of the ethical" in *Fear and Trembling* to the neglect of his sustained discussion of the ethical life in *Either/Or* and other of his writings. In *Fear and Trembling* Kierkegaard makes the trenchant point that the ethical justification of action presupposes the validity of the ethical as such and, hence, can provide only a qualified and limited warrant. Essentially this same point has been made by a number of moralists who would not be caught with a book of Kierkegaard in their hands. But it is the other side of this point which Kierkegaard chose to emphasize, namely that, insofar as a person is ever called upon to act as an individual, he stands outside the ethical sphere and, thus, can find no ethical justification for his action. If ethical justification is equated with rational justification, then the action of the individual qua individual must presumably go without any justification whatever. It is this equation, suggested if not explicitly espoused by Kierkegaard, that has aroused the ire of rational moralists. Or, perhaps I should say of the defenders of ra-

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tional ethics, since their passion not infrequently belies their profession of rationality.

The representation of the ethical in *Fear and Trembling* is transparently Kantian. Kierkegaard takes the Kantian conception of morality as its highest possible expression in order to show that ethics cannot incorporate the individual. The religious imperative, addressed to the solitary individual, supersedes the moral imperative which speaks to man in his capacity as universally human. Kant had, of course, considered the possibility of such a conflict of imperatives, but opted decisively for the primacy of the moral. But Kant's argument begs the question by assuming the ultimate validity of the rational/universal. If man is ever called upon to act in his capacity as a unique and irreplaceable individual, he must act without the guidance of Kant's moral principles.

Kierkegaard's critique of Kantian ethics is, then, a critique of ethics as such. Accepting Kant's formulation of ethics, Kierkegaard attempts to delineate the "scope and limits" of the ethical—a task which Kant had neglected to perform. The issue raised here is not limited to the potential conflict between moral and religious imperatives. More fundamentally it concerns the nature and function of reason and its relevance or irrelevance to the decisions and behavior of the individual. In effect, Kant and Kierkegaard agree that the individual per se is beyond the ethical and, hence, exempt from the dictates of reason. The difference between them is that, whereas Kant suppresses this aspect of human decision virtually to the point of denying its possibility, Kierkegaard accords it supreme importance. Understandably enough, existentialist writers have been particularly concerned about the sphere of action that lies beyond the limits of the Kantian and, perhaps, all rationally formulated ethics. Can duty be applicable to men save with respect to that which is demanded of all men? Can reason apply to situations that are intrinsically unrepeatable? Both existentialist thinkers and their critics have, I think, been too ready to reply in the negative. In thus relegating individual decision and action to the province of the irrational, they have sold reason short. It can be argued, I believe, that in addressing himself to the situation of the individual Kierkegaard was only exploring territory clearly demarcated by Kant. He can surely be forgiven for ignoring the "no trespass" signs.

The situation in *Either/Or* is radically different. Kierkegaard's objective in this work is not to set forth the limitations of the ethical, but to defend it. The first volume is devoted to an elaborate analysis of what might be termed the "aesthetic of practical reason" and

the second volume to a defense of the ethical life in a modified Kantian form. It is unfortunate that the preoccupation with *Fear and Trembling* has obscured the fact that Kierkegaard's constructive ethical theory is intimately and directly related to Kant's and constitutes one of the most interesting and important revisions of Kant's ethical theory. It will be the burden of this paper to show that Kierkegaard offered an alternative conception of the ethical a priori and, in particular, a more satisfactory view of the relationship between duty and inclination.

Before turning to Kierkegaard's ethics, it may be useful to take note of a few salient and highly controversial features of the Kantian theory. The abstract character of the moral law and the formalism it engenders have caused endless and seemingly incurable difficulty for Kant's readers. Pure practical reason appears to be so pure in its a priori domicile, that putting it to work with the material contents of volition is a frightfully difficult undertaking. In spite of counter-tendencies, Kant never finally overcame a predilection for a Platonic duality between reason and inclination (appetite) and, hence, viewed reason as performing a controlling and repressive function with respect to inclination. This Platonic bias may well account for the fact that Kant saw no need for an Aesthetic of practical reason and neglected almost entirely to analyze inclination and empirical desire in the Second Critique. An aesthetic of practical reason would concern itself with those concrete empirical processes for which reason is legislative. Moreover, it would provide a foundation for a transcendental deduction of the principles of practical reason. It can be argued that such an aesthetic is just as important for ethics as the aesthetic of theoretical reason is for empirical cognition. Indeed, many of the difficulties with respect to Kant's formalism can be traced to the absence of a detailed analysis of moral sensibility. In attempting to offer such an aesthetic, as I believe he did in the first volume of *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard filled in a crucially important hiatus in Kant's theory.

Another important feature of Kant's ethics is the impersonality that seems to be required for the sake of objectivity and universality. We are enjoined to treat ourselves and others as ends and not as means merely; yet, no account is given of the way in which we are involved with or come to know other persons. Moreover, for the harmonious ordering of the social community, Kant relies on the highly indirect device of commitment to identical rational principles. Integration of persons into a common world is achieved by the constraining force of external forms rather than the mutual accom-

modation of competing human interests. If successful, Kant's program offers a rather neat way of avoiding personal involvement. So long as we follow the same score, we don't need to hear one another to be in tune. Kant's pessimism about the material component of human action and interaction accounts for his exaggerated stress on the role of reason in morality. Only if one despairs of the possibility of achieving a community of persons through the intercourse of everyday life need one rely so exclusively on the harmony of volition at the abstract level.

Kant's theory of duty and inclination is sufficiently familiar that I need not delineate it in this paper. I wish to argue that Kierkegaard's analysis of the aesthetic life can be used for the interpretation and, perhaps, revision of Kant's ethics. Even to approach Kierkegaard one needs Kant's ethical theory as background material for understanding such concepts as desire, duty, apriority, etc. But it is with Kierkegaard's use of these concepts that I will be primarily concerned.

The most interesting and for our purposes the most important thesis of Kierkegaard's exposition in *Either/Or* is that the ethical life presupposes the aesthetic mode and represents a transformation of it. Although there is, in one sense, a radical discontinuity between the aesthetic and the ethical, the discontinuity of the either/or disjunction is superseded by the transition to the ethical. The argument of the second volume is that the ethical life *relativizes* and thereby transcends the aesthetic while losing nothing of its concreteness. Indeed, the argument is even stronger, namely that the ethical is necessary for the preservation of the aesthetic which might otherwise succumb to despair. The development of aesthetic sensibility is necessary for the ethical life even though the ethical represents a leap beyond it. Unlike Kant, who seems to have regarded inclination as a necessary though somewhat regrettable feature of human existence, Kierkegaard views it as an essential and praiseworthy aspect of human life. The more developed is one's aesthetic sensibility, the richer the content of one's existence and the more significant the individual. Elsewhere Kierkegaard asserts that: "the more consciousness the more self." Thus the more his wants, needs, and desires are developed, the more self he possesses. The reason is that man's sensibility is an integral aspect of his consciousness and an essential manifestation of his existence. Whereas Kant's view of the moral sensibility was more or less Platonic and repressive, Kierkegaard's is Hegelian and ringingly affirmative.

In his *Aesthetic of Pure Reason* Kant had excluded feeling and

volition. This move precluded the possibility of a unitary sensibility by dichotomizing the cognitive and affective faculties. For Kierkegaard, on the other hand, sensibility is unitary and inclusive. It represents the sentience of the total person rather than any special perceptual faculty or apparatus. The basic phenomenon to be analyzed in the aesthetic mode is what Kierkegaard termed the "sensuous erotic." Thus the stages in the development of the sensuous erotic are stages in the development of the individual human being. As sensuous, man is concretely and materially alive to himself and his world; as erotic he seeks for ends and objects that lie beyond him. Kierkegaard adopted the then current notion of *Geist*, or spirit, to designate the individual person. As for Hegel, all categories are thus categories of spirit, though for Kierkegaard they apply only to finite human subjects.

In referring to man as spirit, Kierkegaard was only making the point that man is essentially a self or person and to be understood by the use of categories appropriate to his existence. As undeveloped, man is only an immediate self—but a self nonetheless. In calling attention to his sensuous erotic nature, Kierkegaard sought to emphasize that this is the immediate form of existence. The term 'immediacy' is, of course, another Hegelian category, but a singularly useful one. It enabled Kierkegaard to preserve the unity of the self while attempting to account for its development. Moreover, it avoids the philosophically fatal identification of the self with one of its presumed "higher" faculties. Although the language used here is rather highflown, the concept is quite simple. It is the whole self that is concrete and sensible and, thus, the whole self that develops in, with, and through the development of the sensuously concrete. Other philosophers, such as Merleau-Ponty, have made a similar point by emphasizing the centrality of the body. So long as it is a conscious and sentient body and the body of a person about which we are talking, it makes little difference whether we use the more Hegelian language of Kierkegaard or the language of Merleau-Ponty.

One further point about the sensuous erotic must be noted. As has been observed, it is immediate in the sense that it is undeveloped and capable of development. But in another sense the sensuous erotic is immediate however fully it may be developed. Kierkegaard's handling of these concepts is somewhat confusing in that he uses immediacy both as a category ranging over the entire sensible/concrete aspect of existence and as a stage within immediacy. He talks about immediate stages of immediacy, and this is confusing unless one keeps clearly in mind that immediacy in the more general sense

means the sensuous as such and in the specific sense refers to an undeveloped phase of the former. He could have used different terms, but then it would have been more difficult for him to make the rather subtle dialectical point that any internal development of the immediate is just that, namely a blown-up immediacy. Kierkegaard was enough of a Hegelian to regard mediation as requiring negation. Thus we are not beyond the immediate until it has been radically questioned and transcended. Aesthetic immediacy is preserved within the ethical mode but with a change of signature, as it were.

The sensuous erotic is immediate in that it is the given concrete empirical aspect of existence. There is, of course, nothing particularly novel about this aspect of Kierkegaard's anthropology. Virtually all moralists from Plato on have included an irreducible empirical component in their conception of human existence. It is not, therefore, the fact that Kierkegaard stresses the sensuous erotic as foundational for ethics that is most significant. It is rather the way in which he relates aesthetic immediacy to other components in existence that makes it philosophically interesting.

As was noted earlier, Kant regarded empirical desire as radically contingent and more or less external to the rational will. He could not view it as altogether beyond the scope of practical reason, else he would not have been able to demonstrate that reason can be effective in controlling action. Reason can impose an order on man's empirically given nature even though it cannot transform it from within. Over and over Kant gives us examples to show that, no matter what our impulses may be, we can follow the dictates of reason. Morally viewed, our affective life is required to conform to rational canons which it does not supply from itself and which it may on occasion find harshly constraining. Whatever the ends of inclination may be, they are never to be viewed as moral ends. Nor can they be transformed into moral ends by an internal focusing. This does not mean, as some of Kant's interpreters have concluded, that moral virtue *requires* an opposition between inclination and duty. It does mean that, however closely the ends of inclination and the requirements of duty converge, they can never be fused or share a common end.

The relationship between Kant and Kierkegaard is highly complex since they agree on certain fundamental points while differing sharply on others. Kierkegaard agrees fully with Kant that the sensuous erotic can never generate moral duties. Moreover, Kierkegaard agrees with Kant that we simply desire what we desire, and though our desires posit ends for action they never establish ends with the

force of moral constraint. But here the agreement ends. Unlike Kant, Kierkegaard views the sensuous erotic as developed through the agency of reason and imagination and as an expression of the total person rather than merely of the "natural" component of his nature.

Still, the contrast between them should not be exaggerated, for Kant did assign to practical reason an instrumental role in the definition of happiness as an end. Since all inclinations are, on Kant's view, conscious and involve a representation of an end, they share common features with rational volition. It is true, also, that happiness as the natural end of human striving is included within the highest good. The fact remains, however, that the moral good is the supreme end of human volition and a condition for the realization of happiness. Only a virtuous man is worthy of happiness, but virtue does not guarantee and may not facilitate the achievement of happiness. Nor does the attainment of happiness witness to the attainment of a virtuous life. The harmony between these two components of the complete good for man depends upon a subordination of the natural to the moral component rather than to an integration of the two. Kant's conception of duty requires that we maintain the distinction between natural and moral ends even where happiness and virtue coincide in a human life. Kant might well have developed his ethical theory along different lines to provide for a stronger unity of the natural and moral good for man; but to do so he would have had to make some basic revisions in his anthropology.

The chief difference between Kant and Kierkegaard is, then, that Kierkegaard makes much of the role of consciousness in the development of inclination whereas Kant virtually ignored it. Had Kant devoted to it anything like the attention he paid to the relation between sensible intuition and understanding, he might well have given us something like Kierkegaard's analysis of aesthetic immediacy. I am convinced that an adequate interpretation of Kant's ethics requires a careful formulation of the aesthetic on which it is based. And that can be done by looking to his lectures on anthropology and the many scattered references he makes to what might be termed "moral sensibility" throughout his writings. It is not our objective to undertake that important and much neglected task in this paper. Suffice it to say that a "deduction of the categories of practical reason" might well have assigned to imagination, understanding, and reason the same sort of role in the development of empirical desire that Kant had assigned them in the case of sensible intuition.

In his analysis of the sensuous erotic Kierkegaard attempts to preserve both the empirically determinate and the plastic character of

inclination. As was noted earlier, he regards desire as concrete and contingent but, yet, as in need of articulation and development. He thus rejects a familiar tenet of empiricism that what is contingently given must be completely determinate. The issue here is precisely the same as the problem that has plagued sense-datum theories. There are some advantages in treating the distinction between the empirically determinate and the conceptually indeterminate as substantive. But it is by no means necessary and creates more problems than it solves. Precisely the same phenomenon may be empirically given as this or that while still subject to further determination. Such determination might take the form, as in many epistemological theories, of construing what is given by subsuming it under higher-order forms. An alternative and altogether plausible theory is to view the process of determination as the development of themes intrinsic to the empirical datum itself. It is the latter alternative for which Kierkegaard opts. This means in effect that the empirical process must supply the categories necessary for its own development and interpretation. And it entails that to understand, evaluate, and criticize an empirical process we must adopt a position within rather than outside the process itself. We cannot hope, in other words, to be a successful *observer* to our own desires any more than we can observe our sensations. As I hope to point out, this way of viewing sensibility has interesting implications for the formulation of ethical norms.

Sartre adopts a basically Kierkegaardian point of view in his analysis of the "pour soi." *Facticity* and *transcendence* are regarded as polar categories which apply to one and the same phenomenon. It follows from this conception of existence that no segment of human life is ever devoid of concreteness such that it cannot be characterized and described in detail. But neither can it be exhaustively described within an objective frame. It is what it is but, also, what it may yet become. The situation is somewhat like the writing of a novel where at any point the language is quite definite and the action determinate. Yet, at no point could the novel be written in one and only one way—nor in just any way whatever. We must wait to see how the initial themes will be developed before we can finally assess the meaning of the characters and the action. The novel succeeds or fails as judged by what it attempts to do with the materials it has selected.

As Kierkegaard views it, every empirical desire has an intrinsic theme. The theme constitutes what might be termed the rational or intentional form of the desire. It may be prereflective or highly re-

flective. From the outset it represents the consciousness of a self and is thus an element of self-consciousness. The full awareness of the theme depends, therefore, upon the eruption of self-consciousness from a more immediate stage in which it is embryonically present. Kierkegaard alludes to bashfulness as a paradigm of the transitional consciousness which hovers between childish innocence and the explicit awareness of sexuality. For every theme, however, there is an indefinite range of variations for its expression. Sexual desire, for example, is sexual desire no matter how varied the forms in which it is made manifest. Empirical determinacy is thus in nowise incompatible with human freedom. The theme and the materials are given, but how they are to be combined and expressed is left to our ingenuity.

Choice, too, plays a significant role in the development of the sensuous erotic. Both the end and the means must be selected from the range of available possibilities. The basic motivation, however, is always provided by the desire itself. We must focus our wants and take the necessary steps to satisfy them, though nothing more than hypothetical imperatives or conditional choices are involved. If a desire loses its urgency or dries up altogether, there is no further point in the activity it has previously supported. Here again we encounter an exceedingly subtle point on which Kierkegaard places great stress. All empirical desires are ours in a quite obvious sense no matter how we view them. But there are two quite different senses in which they may be our desires. They may be ours in that we just happen to have them as those appetites or inclinations which constitute our empirically given nature. The desires themselves have not been freely chosen nor have we assumed responsibility for the fact that we have them. In so far as we live exclusively in the mode of aesthetic immediacy, our contingent desires constitute the foundation for our existence. In its lustier and more simple forms, desire exhibits a powerful elan and affords appropriately zestful satisfactions. But all desire is subject to such hazards as boredom and apathy. Activities, including one's life work, may suddenly lose their point as interest wanes. Fortunate is the man for whom other lively appetites take over to supplant the faded appetites. Unhappy is the man who cares about nothing at all. Even a complexly ordered life that is structured by elegant taste rests on a contingent foundation and may be swept away by an alteration in or disappearance of the desire that supports it. Lacking apriority, the aesthetic life has no final defense against despair.

What happens, then, when aesthetic content is subsumed under

ethical forms? Is the differentiation between the ethical and the aesthetic a distinction without a difference? The difference must be clearly exhibited if we are to avoid the conclusion that it is only a verbal distinction. It is easy to see how eating, for example, may have ethical significance if one believes that one has a duty to nourish the body, to afford oneself pleasure, etc. We might then eat even when we feel no hunger or, in the extreme case, prefer not to exist. Kant regarded the will as capable of supporting and governing our impulsive life so as to master the inevitable contingencies involved. But Kant's answer to the problem is not Kierkegaard's, and it is Kierkegaard's solution that needs clarification. Stated formally, the difference between their respective answers is that for Kant the rational will performs the task of *directing* and *controlling* our empirical desires, whereas for Kierkegaard the will *identifies* itself with these desires as its own essential expression. In the first instance, I do not view my body or my appetites as so integral a part of my existence or so essential an aspect of my freedom as my rational will. In the second instance, I view it as *the* essential expression of my volition—indeed as my way of existing in the world. On Kierkegaard's analysis, I cannot properly regard my sensuous erotic nature as in any way accidental, a mere instrumentality that I must make use of in order to exist. Ethically speaking, I am my own concrete immediacy; in affirming my inclinations as essentially mine I am only choosing myself.

But, you might say—as Kierkegaard anticipated—this is rather silly, since I cannot, after all, be anything other than myself. Isn't this typical of the high-sounding and presumably edifying slogans which pass for ethical precepts among existentialist writers? Admittedly if it means only: be what you are; and, if everyone is necessarily what he is, Kierkegaard offers us a palpably empty injunction. But the matter is not quite so simple as that. In the first place, there are conspicuous ways in which we may deny our sensuous nature. It is precisely man's ability to alienate himself from himself through such devices as repression that makes psychotherapy so important an institution in contemporary life. The fact that many philosophers deplore the exaggerated stress on human alienation hardly suffices to eliminate it as a human possibility. It would be ridiculous to maintain that all or most human beings are self-alienated. In fact, numbers are of no significance whatever. The number of alienated persons has no more bearing on the question of alienation as a human possibility than the number of liars has with respect to the possibility of distorting truth. If one is uneasy in talking about alienation

—as some people are—it is quite easy to change the terminology for characterizing the same phenomenon. In the case of Kant's ethics, for example, it is impossible to talk about moral volition without presupposing the transcendence of the rational will with respect to empirical desire. Is the morally developed man to be viewed, then, as self-alienated? I would say that, in a perfectly straightforward sense of the term, he is, and, for that reason, the moral consciousness is, in the language of Hegel, an irremediably "unhappy consciousness." But if one doesn't like those terms, one can use the familiar language of the 'empirical' and the 'transcendental', and continue to speak of duty as the necessity of bringing the empirical into conformity with the demands of the transcendental.

The transition from Kant to Kierkegaard is an easy one, since both require the development of a reflective consciousness and a will capable of making decisive choices. The important issue between them concerns the manner in which the will operates. Both of them recognize that one must be somehow distanced from one's own inclinations if one is to view them ethically. The difference between them is, as I interpret it, that for Kant a permanent distancing is essential to the moral life whereas for Kierkegaard the distance must be surmounted through an act of will which unifies the self.

The distinction does, I believe, represent a difference with regard to both the way in which one interprets the relation between moral volition and inclination, and the manner of action that follows from the interpretation. If practical reason is externally related to inclination, it can only control and direct it. But if, on the other hand, reason can operate immanently as a formative principle in the shaping of inclination, reason and the moral will can receive *expression* through the agency of empirical desire. To return to our example, I will certainly view hunger and eating differently in the two instances. If, following Kierkegaard, I regard my eating as an essential rather than an accidental feature of my existence, the manner of my eating and the meaning I give to it will be as important for me as any other activity in which I engage. Aesthetically viewed, according to Kierkegaard's representation, everything is contingent and accidental. Ethically viewed, however, everything becomes an essential expression of the individual. This does not mean that by virtue of the transition to the ethical the individual creates himself. It does mean that he assumes complete responsibility for himself, including without qualification his full sensuous nature.

The ethical consciousness thus requires as a condition not only reflective transcendence of the initial aesthetic immediacy, but an

act of resignation through which the individual chooses himself in his concrete determinacy. Resignation is not enough, however, to constitute ethical volition, which requires, also, the positive affirmation of oneself. And it is just here that the determinacy/plasticity polarity to which we alluded earlier becomes important. The sensuous erotic has its own intrinsic ends but not in so determinate a fashion that no further choice of meaning is possible. On the contrary, it is the necessity for a further definition of meaning that makes ethical volition possible. Kierkegaard placed very great stress on the *how*, that is, on the manner of willing. The very same activity may be aesthetically based or the expression of ethical resolve. The difference in manner is that in the latter case the choice involves *a-priority*. The ethically determined individual commits himself to pursue whatever end he seeks regardless of consequences. And it is, of course, this posture toward consequences which inevitably alarms the advocates of utilitarian ethics. The situation is, however, not really so bad as it seems, for consequences are not so much to be ignored as discounted in advance. But even a utilitarian is, I suppose, committed to the attempt to promote happiness even though the attempt fails and, forbid the thought, actually increases unhappiness.

Unfortunately, it will be necessary to terminate this discussion just where we have reached the point of greatest ethical interest. What difference does it make with respect to the choice of ends or of norms in pursuit of ends to view inclination and desire as an essential expression of the existing subject? The outline of an answer can be sketched as follows: (1) The individual thereby assumes responsibility for his entire affective life. It is the internal rather than the external form and meaning of his empirical desires with which he is concerned. This represents a far more stringent demand upon the moral subject than Kant thought could be reasonably defended. This point is worthy of emphasis in view of the invitation to license which is not infrequently attributed to Kierkegaard and others who hold a similar view of man's responsibility for himself. (2) The projects of the individual become *a priori* necessary in so far as they reflect a commitment of will. This consequence involves a number of difficulties which need to be sorted out. It is fairly easy to see how friendship, marriage, or a career can be the result of a decision for which the individual assumes moral responsibility. Unless he is abstracted from himself, these commitments reflect his inclinations and serve to focus and unify them. As commitments they represent material obligations for which he is responsible.

If we were to formulate the supreme principle governing such ob-

ligations it might be stated as: one should assume complete responsibility for whatever one chooses. Or, conversely: one should choose only that for which one is prepared to assume full responsibility. Such an imperative obviously makes personal responsibility the supreme condition of morality. In this respect the emphasis is shifted from Kant's stress on rational volition to an even stronger demand on the moral subject, namely that he be responsible for the material as well as the formal/rational features of his volition. Kierkegaard's imperative does not lay down material rules for conduct any more than does the Kantian imperative. Although more demanding, it has the advantage of including the content of sensibility within volition and, hence, avoids the Kantian problem of schematization.

One factor, however, is conspicuously missing from the Kierkegaardian ethics, namely one's responsibility toward other persons. But there is no particular difficulty in supplying this dimension along Kantian lines. Here again Kierkegaard has a potential advantage in being able to start from the concrete involvement of individuals with one another. Marriage, which Kierkegaard takes as the paradigm of the ethical in *Either/Or*, is after all an interpersonal relationship. If only the ethically developed individual can possess himself, only he can appropriate the ethical reality of another person. Other persons must be accorded the same freedom and capacity for autonomous volition that one accepts for oneself. The ethical dimension of human relationships thus constitutes a modification of the spontaneously developed interplay among persons.

There are serious problems here which Kierkegaard never faced directly, namely that our ethical projects require the consent and cooperation of other persons whose freedom always transcends our own. Sartre, Camus, and others have dealt directly with this question with varying success. As Sartre has recognized, Marxism with its stress on the role of sociohistorical conditions in stamping the moral life of individuals constitutes an important and inescapable challenge to existentialist ethics. The Kantian doctrine of individual freedom is radicalized and exaggerated by Kierkegaard and his followers. Although subjectivity is possible only through an inward turn out of one's social involvement, the individual is expected to achieve mastery over his world through an exercise of will. It is by no means clear, however, that the individual can achieve an authentic existence or fulfillment as a person regardless of the social conditions under which he lives. Individual responsibility represents an essential and, perhaps, the most fundamental aspect of the moral life; but it stands in polar relationship to the material-social world

which can neither be created nor transformed by the action of a single individual. An adequate theory of ethics must take account of both factors if it is to understand the human condition and prescribe valid principles for criticizing and transforming it. No synthesis of the polar factors may be possible; still, we must discover how we can most adequately credit each with its proper validity without losing the tension between them. We need a theory of responsibility that accords to the individual full scope for his freedom while recognizing that moral obligation shades off into the social and is shared with others.

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Abstracts of papers to be read at the Sixty-fifth Annual Meeting

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EMOTIONS AND INCORRIGIBILITY (December 27)

RETROSPECTIVE EMOTIONS

There is a class of emotion statements used in the explanation of actions which, it is alleged, cannot be recast into statements referring to objectives, aims, purposes, or the intended results of the action. Statements containing emotion words such as 'remorse', 'regret', 'gratitude', 'revenge', and the like, provide grounds, motives, or backward-looking reasons for actions, and are not exponible in terms of objectives. We may designate the emotions to which the above nonexponibility condition applies, *retrospective emotions*.

I shall want to argue that the thesis that identifies retrospective emotions with motives or grounds, ignores a sense in which the former continue to be emotions even while providing grounds for an action. In particular, the thesis ignores the relation between the object of the emotion and the objective of the action that the emotion explains.

In my paper (1) I examine three versions of the nonexponibility (NE) thesis, which will clear the ground for an appropriate characterization of the logic of retrospective terms. Thus it is shown that the NE thesis is generally applied (a) to contexts in which purpose-specifying actions have already been identified; or (b) is applied to