CONCLUDING
UNSCIENTIFIC POSTSCRIPT
TO PHILOSOPHICAL FRAGMENTS

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VOLUME I: TEXT

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with Introduction and Notes by

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solely on the way it is used, so that the manner of use is actually the medicine, I would be the first to promise every one of my readers a raisonnable douceur or to open to my readers, one and all, men and women, the prospect of participating in a lottery of tasteful gifts so as in this way to infuse them with the strength and courage to read my pamphlets. If those who make everything easy were ever to discern that they truly derive benefit from my fragment of difficulty, lest the easiness become like a dead calm, and if, moved and touched by thus having understood my endeavor, perhaps mediated into their own effort, they should decide to support me surreptitiously with cash donations, these will be gladly accepted, and I promise absolute secrecy, lest humankind, from whom we in coalition derive benefit and profit, find out the true connection.

What has been presented here will presumably be found quite appropriate for a subjective author. It is more remarkable when a systematician entertains us with a report that he became an adherent of the system through a miracle, something that seems to suggest that his systematic life and career do not have this in common with the system: to begin with nothing.

...
spirit like all other human beings, but if in a legitimate and honest way I could be assisted in becoming something extraordinary, the pure I-I, I would always be willing to give thanks for the gift and the good deed. If, however, it can occur only in the way mentioned earlier, by saying eins, zwei, drei, kokolorum or by tying a ribbon around the little finger and throwing it away in some remote place when the moon is full—then I would rather remain what I am, a poor existing individual human being.

The term “being” in those definitions must, then, be understood much more abstractly as the abstract rendition or the abstract prototype of what being in concreto is as empirical being. If it is understood in this way, nothing stands in the way of abstractly defining truth as something finished, because, viewed abstractly, the agreement between thinking and being is always finished, inasmuch as the beginning of the process of becoming lies precisely in the concretion that abstraction abstractly disregards.

But if being is understood in this way, the formula is a tautology; that is, thinking and being signify one and the same, and the agreement spoken of is only an abstract identity with itself. Therefore, none of the formulas says more than that truth is, if this is understood in such a way that the copula is accentuated—truth is—that is, truth is a redoubling [Forderlichkeit]. Truth is the first, but truth’s other, that it is, is the same as the first; this, its being, is the abstract form of truth. In this way it is expressed that truth is not something simple but in an entirely abstract sense a redoubling, which is nevertheless canceled at the very same moment.

Abstraction may go on by paraphrasing this as much as it pleases—it will never come any further. As soon as the being of truth becomes empirically concrete, truth itself is in the process of becoming and is indeed in turn, by intimation, the agreement between thinking and being, and is indeed actually that way for God, but it is not that way for any existing spirit, because this spirit, itself existing, is in the process of becoming.

For the existing spirit qua existing spirit, the question about truth persists, because the abstract answer is only for that abstractum which an existing spirit becomes by abstracting from himself qua existing, which he can do only momentarily, although at such moments he still pays his debt to existence by existing nevertheless. Consequently, it is an existing spirit who asks about truth, presumably because he wants to exist in it, but in any case the questioner is conscious of being an existing individual human being. In this way I believe I am able to make myself understandable to every Greek and to every rational human being. If a German philosopher follows his inclination to put on an act [skabe sig] and first transforms himself [skabe sig om] into a superrational something, just as alchemists and sorcerers bedizen themselves fantastically, in order to answer the question about truth in an extremely satisfying way, this is of no more concern to me than his satisfying answer, which no doubt is extremely satisfying—if one is fantastically dressed up. But whether a German philosopher is or is not doing this can easily be ascertained by anyone who with enthusiasm concentrates his soul on willing to allow himself to be guided by a sage of that kind, and uncritically just uses his guidance complacently by willing to form his existence according to it. When a person as a learner enthusiastically relates in this way to such a German professor, he accomplishes the most superb epigram upon him, because a speculator of that sort is anything but served by a learner’s honest and enthusiastic zeal for expressing and accomplishing, for existentially appropriating his wisdom, since this wisdom is something that the Herr Professor himself has imagined and has written books about but has never attempted himself. It has not even occurred to him that it should be done. Like the customs clerk who, in the belief that his business was merely to write, wrote what he himself could not read, so there are speculative thinkers who merely write, and write that which, if it is to be read with the aid of action, if I may put it that way, proves to be nonsense, unless it is perhaps intended only for fantastical beings.

When for the existing spirit qua existing there is a question about truth, that abstract reduplication [Reduplikation] of truth
recurs; but existence itself, existence itself in the questioner, who does indeed exist, holds the two factors apart, one from the other, and reflection shows two relations. To objective reflection, truth becomes something objective, an object, and the point is to disregard the subject. To subjective reflection, truth becomes appropriation, inwardness, subjectivity, and the point is to immerse oneself, existing, in subjectivity.

But what then? Are we to remain in this disjunction, or does mediation offer its kind assistance here, so that truth becomes subject-object? Why not? But can mediation then help the existing person so that he himself, as long as he is existing, becomes mediation, which is, after all, *sub specie aeterni*, whereas the poor existing one is existing? It certainly does not help to make a fool of a person, to entice him with the subject-object when he himself is prevented from entering into the state in which he can relate himself to it, prevented because he himself, by virtue of existing, is in the process of becoming. Of what help is it to explain how the eternal truth is to be understood eternally when the one to use the explanation is prevented from understanding it in this way because he is existing and is merely a fantasy if he fancies himself to be *sub specie aeterni*, consequently when he must avail himself precisely of the explanation of how the eternal truth is to be understood in the category of time by someone who by existing is himself in time, something the honored professor himself admits, if not always, then every three months when he draws his salary.

With the subject-object of mediation, we have merely reverted to abstraction, inasmuch as the definition of truth as subject-object is exactly the same as: the truth is, that is, the truth is a redoubling [*Fordobelse*]. Consequently, the exalted wisdom has again been absentminded enough to forget that it was an existing spirit who asked about truth. Or is perhaps the existing spirit himself the subject-object? In that case, I am obliged to ask: Where is such an existing human being who is also a subject-object? Or shall we perhaps here again first transmute the existing spirit into a something in general and then explain everything except what was asked about: How an existing subject *in concreto* relates himself to the truth, or what then must be asked about: How the individual existing subject then relates himself to this something that seems to have not a little in common with a paper kite or with the lump of sugar that the Dutch used to hang from the ceiling and everyone would lick.

We return, then, to the two ways of reflection and have not forgotten that it is an existing spirit who is asking, simply an individual human being, and are not able to forget, either, that his existing is precisely what will prevent him from going both ways at once, and his concerned questions will prevent him from light-mindedly and fantastically becoming a subject-object. Now, then, which of the ways is the way of truth for the existing spirit? Only the fantastical *I-I* is simultaneously finished with both ways or advances methodically along both ways simultaneously, which for an existing human being is such an inhuman way of walking that I dare not recommend it.

Since the questioner specifically emphasizes that he is an existing person, the way to be commended is naturally the one that especially accentuates what it means to exist.

The way of objective reflection turns the subjective individual into something accidental and thereby turns existence into an indifferent, vanishing something. The way to the objective truth goes away from the subject, and while the subject and subjectivity become indifferent [*ligegyldig*], the truth also becomes indifferent, and that is precisely its objective validity [*Gyldighed*], because the interest, just like the decision, is subjectivity. The way of objective reflection now leads to abstract thinking, to mathematics, to historical knowledge of various kinds, and always leads away from the subjective individual, whose existence or nonexistence becomes, from an objective point of view, altogether properly, infinitely indifferent, altogether properly, because, as Hamlet says, existence and nonexistence have only subjective significance. At its maximum, this way will lead to a contradiction, and to the extent
that the subject does not become totally indifferent to himself, this is merely an indication that his objective striving is not objective enough. At its maximum, it will lead to the contradiction that only objectivity has come about, whereas subjectivity has gone out, that is, the existing subjectivity that has made an attempt to become what in the abstract sense is called subjectivity, the abstract form of an abstract objectivity. And yet, viewed subjectively, the objectivity that has come about is at its maximum either a hypothesis or an approximation, because all eternal decision is rooted specifically in subjectivity.

But the objective way is of the opinion that it has a security that the subjective way does not have (of course, existence, what it means to exist, and objective security cannot be thought together). It is of the opinion that it avoids a danger that lies in wait for the subjective way, and at its maximum this danger is madness. In a solely subjective definition of truth, lunacy and truth are ultimately indistinguishable, because they may both have inwardness.* But one does not become lunatic by becoming objective. At this point I might perhaps add a little comment that does not seem superfluous in an objective age. Is the absence of inwardness also lunacy? The objective truth as such does not at all decide that the one stating it is sensible; on the contrary, it can even betray that the man is lunatic, although what he says is entirely true and especially objectively true.

I shall here allow myself to relate an incident that, without any modification whatever by me, comes directly from a madhouse. A patient in such an institution wants to run away and actually carries out his plan by jumping through a window. He now finds himself in the garden of the institution and wishes to take to the road of freedom. Then it occurs to him

* Even this is not true, however, because madness never has the inwardness of infinity. Its fixed idea is a kind of objective something, and the contradiction of madness lies in wanting to embrace it with passion. The decisive factor in madness is thus not the subjective, but the little finitude that becomes fixed, something the infinite can never become.

(shall I say that he was sagacious enough or lunatic enough to have this whimsical idea?): When you arrive in the city, you will be recognized and will very likely be taken back right away. What you need to do, then, is to convince everyone completely, by the objective truth of what you say, that all is well as far as your sanity is concerned. As he is walking along and pondering this, he sees a skittle ball lying on the ground. He picks it up and puts it in the tail of his coat. At every step he takes, this ball bumps him, if you please, on his r——, and every time it bumps him he says, "Boom! The earth is round." He arrives in the capital city and immediately visits one of his friends. He wants to convince him that he is not lunatic and therefore paces up and down the floor and continually says, "Boom! The earth is round!" But is the earth not round? Does the madhouse demand yet another sacrifice on account of this assumption, as in those days when everyone assumed it to be as flat as a pancake? Or is he lunatic, the man who hopes to prove that he is not lunatic by stating a truth universally accepted and universally regarded as objective? And yet, precisely by this it became clear to the physician that the patient was not yet cured, although the cure certainly could not revolve around getting him to assume that the earth is flat. But not everyone is a physician, and the demand of the times has considerable influence on the question of lunacy. Now and then, one would indeed almost be tempted to assume that the modern age, which has modernized Christianity, has also modernized Pilate's question,262 and that the need of the age to find something in which to repress declares itself in the question: What is lunacy? When an assistant professor, every time his coattail reminds him to say something, says de omnibus dubitandum est [everything must be doubted]263 and briskly writes away on a system in which there is sufficient internal evidence in every other sentence that the man has never doubted anything—he is not considered lunatic.

Don Quixote is the prototype of the subjective lunacy in which the passion of inwardness grasps a particular fixed finite idea. But when inwardness is absent, parroting lunacy sets in, which is just as comic, and it would be desirable for an imag-
how a particular individual relates himself to it, and, good Lord, of course no human being is more than a particular individual.

If the existing person could actually be outside himself, the truth would be something concluded for him. But where is this point? The I-I is a mathematical point that does not exist at all; accordingly anyone can readily take up this standpoint—no one stands in the way of anyone else. Only momentarily can a particular individual, existing, be in a unity of the infinite and the finite that transcends existing. This instant is the moment of passion. Modern speculative thought has mastered everything to enable the individual to transcend himself objectively, but this just cannot be done. Existence exercises its constraint, and if philosophers nowadays had not become pencil-pushers serving the trifling busyness of fantastical thinking, it would have discerned that suicide is the only somewhat practical interpretation of its attempt. But pencil-pushing modern speculative thought takes a dim view of passion, and yet, for the existing person, passion is existence at its highest—and we are, after all, existing persons. In passion, the existing subject is infinized in the eternity of imagination and yet is also most definitely himself. The fantastical I-I is not infinitude and finitude in identity, since neither the one nor the other is actual; it is a fantastical union with a cloud, an unfruitful embrace, and the relation of the individual I to this mirage is never stated.

All essential knowing pertains to existence, or only the knowing whose relation to existence is essential is essential knowing. Essentially viewed, the knowing that does not inwardly in the reflection of inwardness pertain to existence is accidental knowing, and its degree and scope, essentially viewed, are a matter of indifference. That essential knowing is essentially related to existence does not, however, signify the above-mentioned abstract identity between thinking and being, nor does it signify that the knowledge is objectively related to something existent [Tilvarende] as its object, but it means that the knowledge is related to the knower, who is essentially an existing person [Existerende], and that all essen-
tial knowing is therefore essentially related to existence and to existing. Therefore, only ethical and ethical-religious knowing is essential knowing. But all ethical and all ethical-religious knowing is essentially a relating to the existing of the knower.

Mediation is a mirage, just as the I-I is. Viewed abstractly, everything is nothing becomes. Mediation cannot possibly find its place in abstraction, since it has movement as its presupposition. Objective knowledge can certainly have the existent [Tilverende] as its object, but since the knowing subject is existing [existerende] and himself in the process of becoming by existing, speculative thought must first explain how a particular existing subject relates himself to the knowledge of mediation, what he is at the moment, whether, for example, he is not at that very moment rather absentminded, and where he is, whether he is not on the moon. There is this continual talk about mediation and mediation. Is mediation, then, a human being, just as Per Degrn assumes Imprimatur to be a human being? How does a human being go about becoming something of that sort? Is this dignity, this great philosophicum, attained by studying? Or does the magistrate give it away as he gives away sexton and gravemarker positions? Just try to become involved with these and other similar simple questions raised by a simple human being, who would so very much like to be mediation if he could become that in a legitimate and honorable manner, and not either by saying eins, zwei, drei, kokolorum or by forgetting that he himself is an existing human being, for whom existing is consequently something essential, and for whom existing ethically-religiously is a suitable quantum satis [sufficient amount]. To a speculative thinker it may seem abgeschmackt [in bad taste] to ask questions in this way, but it is especially important not to polemize in the wrong place and hence not to begin fantastically-objectively a pro and contra as to whether or not there is mediation, but firmly to maintain what it means to be a human being.

In order to clarify the divergence of objective and subjective reflection, I shall now describe subjective reflection in its search back and inward into inwardness. At its highest, inwardness in an existing subject is passion; truth as a paradox corresponds to passion, and that truth becomes a paradox is grounded precisely in its relation to an existing subject. In this way the one corresponds to the other. In forgetting that one is an existing subject, one loses passion, and in return, truth does not become a paradox; but the knowing subject shifts from being human to being a fantastical something, and truth becomes a fantastical object for its knowing.

When the question about truth is asked objectively, truth is reflected upon objectively as an object to which the knower relates himself. What is reflected upon is not the relation but that what he relates himself to is the truth, the true. If only that to which he relates himself is the truth, the true, then the subject is in the truth. When the question about truth is asked subjectively, the individual's relation is reflected upon subjectively. If only the how of this relation is in truth, the individual is in truth, even if he in this way were to relate himself to untruth.

Let us take the knowledge of God as an example. Objectively, what is reflected upon is that this is the true God; subjectively, that the individual relates himself to a something in such a way that his relation is in truth a God-relation. Now, on which side is the truth? Alas, must we not at this point resort to mediation and say: It is on neither side; it is in the mediation? Superbly stated, if only someone could say how an existing person goes about being in mediation, because to be in mediation is to be finished; to exist is to become. An existing person cannot be in two places at the same time, cannot be subject-object. When he is closest to being in two places at the same time, he is in passion; but passion is only momentary, and passion is the highest pitch of subjectivity.

The existing person who chooses the objective way now enters upon all approximating deliberation intended to bring forth God objectively, which is not achieved in all eternity.

* The reader will note that what is being discussed here is essential truth, or the truth that is related essentially to existence, and that it is specifically in order to clarify it as inwardness or as subjectivity that the contrast is pointed out.
because God is a subject and hence only for subjectivity in inwardness. The existing person who chooses the subjective way instantly comprehends the whole dialectical difficulty because he must use some time, perhaps a long time, to find God objectively. He comprehends this dialectical difficulty in all its pain, because he must resort to God at that very moment, because every moment in which he does not have God is wasted.* At that very moment he has God, not by virtue of any objective deliberation but by virtue of the infinite passion of inwardness. The objective person is not bothered by dialectical difficulties such as what it means to put a whole research period into finding God, since it is indeed possible that the researcher would die tomorrow, and if he goes on living, he cannot very well regard God as something to be taken along at his convenience, since God is something one takes along à tout prix [at any price], which, in passion's understanding, is the true relationship of inwardness with God.

It is at this point, dialectically so very difficult, that the road swings off for the person who knows what it means to think dialectically and, existing, to think dialectically, which is quite different from sitting as a fantastical being at a desk and writing about something one has never done oneself, quite different from writing de omnibus dubitandum and then as an existing person being just as credulous as the most sensate human being. It is here that the road swings off, and the change is this: whereas objective knowledge goes along leisurely on the long road of approximation, itself not actuated by passion, to subjective knowledge every delay is a deadly peril and the decision so infinitely important that it is immediately urgent, as if the opportunity had already passed by unused.

* 279In this way God is indeed a postulate, but not in the loose sense in which it is ordinarily taken. Instead, it becomes clear that this is the only way an existing person enters into a relationship with God: when the dialectical contradiction brings passion to despair and assists him in grasping God with "the category of despair" (faith). 276 so that the postulate, far from being the arbitrary, is in fact necessary defense [N o d v e r g e], self-defense; in this way God is not a postulate, but the existing person's postulating of God is—a necessity [Nødvendighed].

Now, if the problem is to calculate where there is more truth (and, as stated, simultaneously to be on both sides equally is not granted to an existing person but is only a beatiifying delusion for a deluded I-I), whether on the side of the person who only objectively seeks the true God and the approximating truth of the God-idea or on the side of the person who is infinitely concerned that he in truth relate himself to God with the infinite passion of need—then there can be no doubt about the answer for anyone who is not totally botched by scholarship and science. If someone who lives in the midst of Christianity enters, with knowledge of the true idea of God, the house of God, the house of the true God, and prays, but prays in untruth, and if someone lives in an idolatrous land but prays with all the passion of infinity, although his eyes are resting upon the image of an idol—where, then, is there more truth? The one prays in truth to God although he is worshiping an idol; the other prays in untruth to the true God and is therefore in truth worshiping an idol.

If someone objectively inquires into immortality, and someone else stakes the passion of the infinite on the uncertainty—where, then, is there more truth, and who has more certainty? The one has once and for all entered upon an approximation that never ends, because the certainty of immortality is rooted in subjectivity; the other is immortal and therefore struggles by contending with the uncertainty.

Let us consider Socrates. These days everyone is dabbling in a few proofs or demonstrations—one has many, another fewer. But Socrates! He poses the question objectively, problematically: if there is an immortality. 277 So, compared with one of the modern thinkers with the three demonstrations, was he a doubter? Not at all. He stakes his whole life on this "if"; he dares to die, and with the passion of the infinite he has so ordered his whole life that it might be acceptable—if there is an immortality. Is there any better demonstration for the immortality of the soul? But those who have the three demonstrations do not order their lives accordingly. If there is an immortality, it must be nauseated by their way of living—is there any better counterdemonstration to the three demon-
relations? The "fragment" of uncertainty helped Socrates, because he himself helped with the passion of infinity. The three demonstrations are of no benefit whatever to those others, because they are and remain slugs and, failing to demonstrate anything else, have demonstrated it by their three demonstrations.

In the same way a girl has perhaps possessed all the sweetness of being in love through a weak hope of being loved by the beloved, because she herself staked everything on this weak hope; on the other hand, many a wedded matron, who more than once has submitted to the strongest expression of erotic love, has certainly had demonstrations and yet, strangely enough, has not possessed quod erat demonstrandum (that which was to be demonstrated). The Socratic ignorance was thus the expression, firmly maintained with all the passion of inwardness, of the relation of the eternal truth to an existing person, and therefore it must remain for him a paradox as long as he exists. Yet it is possible that in the Socratic ignorance there was more truth in Socrates than in the objective truth of the entire system that flirts with the demands of the times and adapts itself to assistant professors.

Objectively the emphasis is on what is said; subjectively the emphasis is on how it is said. This distinction applies even esthetically and is specifically expressed when we say that in the mouth of this or that person something that is truth can become untrue. Particular attention should be paid to this distinction in our day, for if one were to express in a single sentence the difference between ancient times and our time, one would no doubt have to say: In ancient times there were only a few individuals who knew the truth; now everyone knows it, but inwardness has an inverse relation to it.* Viewed esthetically, the contradiction that emerges when truth becomes untrue in this and that person's mouth is best interpreted comically. Ethically-religiously, the emphasis is again on: how. But this is not to be understood as manner, modulation of voice, oral delivery, etc., but it is to be understood as the relation of the existing person, in his very existence, to what is said. Objectively, the question is only about categories of thought; subjectively, about inwardness. At its maximum, this "how" is the passion of the infinite, and the passion of the infinite is the very truth. But the passion of the infinite is precisely subjectivity, and thus subjectivity is truth. From the objective point of view, there is no infinite decision, and thus it is objectively correct that the distinction between good and evil is canceled, along with the principle of contradiction, and thereby also the infinite distinction between truth and falsehood. Only in subjectivity is there decision, whereas wanting to become objective is untrue. The passion of the infinite, not its content, is the deciding factor, for its content is precisely itself. In this way the subjective "how" and subjectivity are the truth.

But precisely because the subject is existing, the "how" that is subjectively emphasized is dialectical also with regard to time. In the moment of the decision of passion, where the road swings off from objective knowledge, it looks as if the infinite decision were thereby finished. But at the same moment, the existing person is in the temporal realm, and the subjective "how" is transformed into a striving that is motivated and repeatedly refreshed by the decisive passion of the infinite, but it is nevertheless a striving.

When subjectivity is truth, the definition of truth must also contain in itself an expression of the antithesis to objectivity, a memento of that fork in the road, and this expression will at the same time indicate the resilience of the inwardness. Here is such a definition of truth: An objective uncertainty, held fast through appropriation with the most passionate inwardness, is the truth, the highest truth there is for an existing person. At the point where the road swings off and where that is cannot be stated objectively, since it is precisely subjectivity), objective knowledge is suspended. Objectively he then has only uncertainty, but this is precisely what intensifies the infinite passion of inwardness, and truth is precisely the daring venture of choosing the objective uncertainty with the passion of the infinite. I observe nature in order to find God, and I do indeed

* See Stages on Life's Way, p. 366 fn. 380
see omnipotence and wisdom, but I also see much that troubles and disturbs. The *summa summarum* [sum total] of this is an objective uncertainty, but the inwardsness is so very great, precisely because it grasps this objective uncertainty with all the passion of the infinite. In a mathematical proposition, for example, the objectivity is given, but therefore its truth is also an indifferent truth.

But the definition of truth stated above is a paraphrasing of faith. Without risk, no faith. Faith is the contradiction between the infinite passion of inwardsness and the objective uncertainty. If I am able to apprehend God objectively, I do not have faith; but because I cannot do this, I must have faith. If I want to keep myself in faith, I must continually see to it that I hold fast the objective uncertainty, see to it that in the objective uncertainty I am "out on 70,000 fathoms of water" and still have faith.

The thesis that subjectivity, inwardsness, is truth contains the Socratic wisdom, the undying merit of which is to have paid attention to the essential meaning of existing, of the knower's being an existing person. That is why, in his ignorance, Socrates was in the truth in the highest sense within paganism. To comprehend this, that the misfortune of speculative thought is simply that it forgets again and again that the knower is an existing person, can already be rather difficult in our objective age. "But to go beyond Socrates when one has not even comprehended the Socratic—that, at least, is not Socratic." See "The Moral" in *Fragments*.264

Just as in *Fragments*, let us from this point try a category of thought that actually does go beyond. Whether it is true or false is of no concern to me, since I am only imaginatively constructing, but this much is required, that it be clear that the Socratic is presupposed in it, so that I at least do not end up behind Socrates again.

When subjectivity, inwardsness, is truth, then truth, objectively defined, is a paradox; and that truth is objectively a paradox shows precisely that subjectivity is truth, since the objectivity does indeed thrust away, and the objectivity's repulsion, or the expression for the objectivity's repulsion, is the resilience and dynamometer of inwardsness. The paradox is the objective uncertainty that is the expression for the passion of inwardsness that is truth. So much for the Socratic. The eternal, essential truth, that is, the truth that is related essentially to the existing person by pertaining essentially to what it means to exist (viewed Socratically, all other knowledge is accidental, its degree and scope indifferent), is a paradox. Nevertheless the eternal, essential truth is itself not at all a paradox, but it is a paradox by being related to an existing person. Socratic ignorance is an expression of the objective uncertainty; the inwardsness of the existing person is truth. In anticipation of what will be discussed later, the following comment is made here: Socratic ignorance is an analogue to the category of the absurd, except that there is even less objective certainty in the repulsion exerted by the absurd, since there is only the certainty that it is absurd, and for that very reason there is infinitely greater resilience in the inwardsness. The Socratic inwardsness in existing is an analogue to faith, except that the inwardsness of faith, corresponding not to the repulsion exerted by ignorance but to the repulsion exerted by the absurd, is infinitely deeper.

Viewed Socratically, the eternal essential truth is not at all paradoxical in itself, but only by being related to an existing person. This is expressed in another Socratic thesis: that all knowing is a recollecting. This thesis is an intuition of the beginning of speculative thought, but for that very reason Socrates did not pursue it; essentially it became Platonic. This is where the road swings off, and Socrates essentially emphasizes existing, whereas Plato, forgetting this, loses himself in speculative thought. Socrates' infinite merit is precisely that of being an existing thinker, not a speculative thinker who forgets what it means to exist. To Socrates, therefore, the thesis that all knowing is a recollecting has, at the moment of parting and as a continually annulled possibility of speculating, a double significance: (1) that the knower is essentially integer [uncorrupted] and that for him there is no other dubiouness with regard to knowledge of the eternal truth than this, that he exists, a dubiousness so essential and decisive to him that it sig-
The great merit of the Socratic was precisely to emphasize that the knower is an existing person and that to exist is the essential. To go beyond Socrates by failing to understand this is nothing but a mediocre merit. This we must keep in mente [in mind] and then see whether the formula cannot be changed in such a way that one actually does go beyond the Socratic.

So, then, subjectivity, inwardness, is truth. Is there a more inward expression for it? Yes, if the discussion about “Subjectivity, inwardness, is truth” begins in this way: “Subjectivity is untruth.” But let us not be in a hurry. Speculative thought also says that subjectivity is untruth but says it in the very opposite direction, namely, that objectivity is truth. Speculative thought defines subjectivity negatively in the direction of objectivity. The other definition, however, puts barriers in its own way at the very moment it wants to begin, which makes the inwardness so much more inward. Viewed Socratically, subjectivity is untruth if it refuses to comprehend that subjectivity is truth but wants, for example, to be objective. Here, on the other hand, in wanting to begin to become truth by becoming subjective, subjectivity is in the predicament of being untruth. Thus the work goes backward, that is, backward in inwardness. The way is so far from being in the direction of the objective that the beginning only lies even deeper in subjectivity.

But the subject cannot be untruth eternally or be presupposed to have been untruth eternally; he must have become that in time or he becomes that in time. The Socratic paradox consisted in this, that the eternal truth was related to an existing person. But now existence has accentuated the existing person a second time; a change so essential has taken place in him that he in no way can take himself back into eternity by

Now, I think there would be no objection to speaking of the paradox in connection with Socrates and faith, since it is quite correct to do so, provided that it is understood correctly. Besides, the ancient Greeks also used the word noûs [faith], although by no means in the sense of the imaginary construction, and use it as to make possible some very illuminating observations bearing upon its dissimilarity to faith sensu eminenti, especially with reference to one of Aristotle’s works where the term is employed.
Socratically recollecting. To do this is to speculate; to be able to do this but, by grasping the inward deepening in existence, to annul the possibility of doing it is the Socratic. But now the difficulty is that what accompanied Socrates as an annulled possibility has become an impossibility. If speculating was already of dubious merit in connection with the Socratic, it is now only confusion.

The paradox emerges when the eternal truth and existing are placed together, but each time existing is accentuated, the paradox becomes clearer and clearer. Viewed Socratically, the knower was an existing person, but now the existing person is accentuated in such a way that existence has made an essential change in him.

Let us now call the individual's untruth sin. Viewed eternally, he cannot be in sin or be presupposed to have been eternally in sin. Therefore, by coming into existence (for the beginning was that subjectivity is untruth), he becomes a sinner. He is not born as a sinner in the sense that he is presupposed to be a sinner before he is born, but he is born in sin and as a sinner. Indeed, we could call this hereditary sin. But if existence has in this way obtained power over him, he is prevented from taking himself back into eternity through recollection. If it is already paradoxical that the eternal truth is related to an existing person, now it is absolutely paradoxical that it is related to such an existing person. But the more difficult it is made for him, recollecting, to take himself out of existence, the more inward his existing can become in existence; and when it is made impossible for him, when he is lodged in existence in such a way that the back door of recollection is forever closed, then the inwards becomes the deepest. But let us never forget that the Socratic merit was precisely to emphasize that the knower is existing, because the more difficult the matter becomes, the more one is tempted to rush along the easy road of speculative thought, away from terrors and decisions, to fame, honor, a life of ease, etc. If even Socrates comprehended the dubiousness of taking himself speculatively out of existence back into eternity, when there was no dubiousness for the existing person except that he existed and, of course, that existing was the essential—now it is impossible. He must go forward; to go backward is impossible.

Subjectivity is truth. The paradox came into existence through the relating of the eternal, essential truth to the existing person. Let us now go further; let us assume that the eternal, essential truth is itself the paradox. How does the paradox emerge? By placing the eternal, essential truth together with existing. Consequently, if we place it together in the truth itself, the truth becomes a paradox. The eternal truth has come into existence in time. That is the paradox. If the subject just mentioned was prevented by sin from taking himself back into eternity, now he is not to concern himself with this, because now the eternal, essential truth is not behind him but has come in front of him by existing itself or by having existed, so that if the individual, existing, does not lay hold of the truth in existence, he will never have it.

Existence can never be accentuated more sharply than it has been here. The fraud of speculative thought in wanting to recollect itself out of existence has been made impossible. This is the only point to be comprehended here, and every speculation that insists on being speculation shows eo ipso [precisely thereby] that it has not comprehended this. The individual can thrust all this away and resort to speculation, but to accept it and then want to cancel it through speculation is impossible, because it is specifically designed to prevent speculation.

When the eternal truth relates itself to an existing person, it becomes the paradox. Through the objective uncertainty and ignorance, the paradox thrusts away in the inwards of the existing person. But since the paradox is not in itself the paradox, it does not thrust away intensely enough, for without risk, no faith; the more risk, the more faith; the more objective reliability, the less inwards (since inwards is subjectivity); the less objective reliability, the deeper is the possible inwards. When the paradox itself is the paradox, it thrusts away by virtue of the absurd, and the corresponding passion of inwards is faith.

But subjectivity, inwards, is truth; if not, we have forgotten the Socratic merit. But when the retreat out of exis-
tence into eternity by way of recollection has been made impossible, then, with the truth facing one as the paradox, in the anxiety of sin and its pain, with the tremendous risk of objectivity, there is no stronger expression for inwardness than—to have faith. But without risk, no faith, not even the Socratic faith, to say nothing of the kind we are discussing here.

When Socrates believed that God is, he held fast the objective uncertainty with the entire passion of inwardness, and faith is precisely this contradiction, in this risk. Now it is otherwise. Instead of the objective uncertainty, there is here the certainty that, viewed objectively, it is the absurd, and this absurdity, held fast in the passion of inwardness, is faith. Compared with the earnestness of the absurd, the Socratic ignorance is like a witty jest, and compared with the strenuousness of faith, the Socratic existential inwardness resembles Greek nonchalance.

What, then, is the absurd? The absurd is that the eternal truth has come into existence in time, that God has come into existence, has been born, has grown up, etc., has come into existence exactly as an individual human being, indistinguishable from any other human being, inasmuch as all immediate recognizability is pre-Socratic paganism and from the Jewish point of view is idolatry. Every qualification of that which actually goes beyond the Socratic must essentially have a mark of standing in relation to the god’s having come into existence, because faith, sensu strictissimo [in the strictest sense], as explicated in Fragments, refers to coming into existence. When Socrates believed that God is [er til], he no doubt perceived that where the road swings off there is a road of objective approximation. For example, the observation of nature, world history, etc. His merit was precisely to shun this road, where the quantifying siren song spellbinds and tricks the existing person. In relation to the absurd, the objective approximation resembles the comedy Misforståelse paa Misforståelse [Misunderstanding upon Misunderstanding], which ordinarily is played by assistant professors and speculative thinkers.

It is by way of the objective repulsion that the absurd is the dynamometer of faith in inwardness. So, then, there is a man who wants to have faith; well, let the comedy begin. He wants to have faith, but he wants to assure himself with the aid of objective deliberation and approximation. What happens? With the aid of approximation, the absurd becomes something else; it becomes probable, it becomes more probable, it may become to a high degree and exceedingly probable. Now he is all set to believe it, and he dares to say of himself that he does not believe as shoemakers and tailors and simple folk do, but only after long deliberation. Now he is all set to believe it, but, lo and behold, now it has indeed become impossible to believe it. The almost probable, the probable, the to-a-high-degree and exceedingly probable—that he can almost know, or as good as know, to a higher degree and exceedingly almost know—but believe it, that cannot be done, for the absurd is precisely the object of faith and only that can be believed.

Or there is a man who says he has faith, but now he wants to make his faith clear to himself; he wants to understand himself in his faith. Now the comedy begins again. The object of faith becomes almost probable, it becomes as good as probable, it becomes probable, it becomes to a high degree and exceedingly probable. He has finished; he dares to say of himself that he does not believe as shoemakers and tailors or other simple folk do but that he has also understood himself in his believing. What wondrous understanding! On the contrary, he has learned to know something different about faith than he believed and has learned to know that he no longer has faith, since he almost knows, as good as knows, to a high degree and exceedingly almost knows.

Inasmuch as the absurd contains the element of coming into existence, the road of approximation will also be that which confuses the absurd fact of coming into existence, which is the object of faith, with a simple historical fact, and then seeks historical certainty for that which is absurd precisely because it contains the contradiction that something that can become historical only in direct opposition to all human understanding has become historical. This contradiction is the absurd, which can only be believed. If a historical certainty is ob-
tained, one obtains merely the certainty that what is certain is not what is the point in question. A witness can testify that he has believed it and then testify that, far from being a historical certainty, it is in direct opposition to his understanding, but such a witness repels in the same sense as the absurd repels, and a witness who does not repel in this way is *eo ipso* a deceiver or a man who is talking about something altogether different; and such a witness can be of no help except in obtaining certainty about something altogether different. One hundred thousand individual witnesses, who by the special nature of their testimony (that they have believed the absurd) remain individual witnesses, do not become something else *en masse* so that the absurd becomes less absurd. Why? Because one hundred thousand people individually have believed that it was absurd? Quite the contrary, those one hundred thousand witnesses repel exactly as the absurd does.

But I do not need to develop this further here. In *Fragments* (especially where the difference between the follower at first hand and the follower at second hand is annulled\(^{299}\)) and in *Part One* of this book, I have with sufficient care shown that all approximation is futile, since the point is rather to do away with introductory observations, reliabilities, demonstrations from effects, and the whole mob of pawnbrokers and guarantors, in order to get the absurd clear—so that one can believe if one will—I merely say that this must be extremely strenuous.

If speculative thought wants to become involved in this and, as always, say: From the point of view of the eternal, the divine, the theocentric, there is no paradox—I shall not be able to decide whether the speculative thinker is right, because I am only a poor existing human being who neither eternally nor divinely nor theocentrically is able to observe the eternal but must be content with existing. This much, however, is certain, that with speculative thought everything goes backward, back past the Socratic, which at least comprehended that for an existing person existing is the essential; and much less has speculative thought taken the time to comprehend what it means to be *situated* in existence the way the existing person is in the imaginary construction.

The difference between the Socratic position and the position that goes beyond the Socratic is clear enough and is essentially the same as in *Fragments*, for in the latter nothing has changed, and in the former the matter has only been made somewhat more difficult, but nevertheless not more difficult than it is. It has also become somewhat more difficult because, whereas in *Fragments* I set forth the thought-category of the paradox only in an imaginary construction, here I have also latently made an attempt to make clear the necessity of the paradox, and even though the attempt is somewhat weak, it is still something different from speculatively canceling the paradox.

\(^{299}\)Christianity has itself proclaimed itself to be the eternal, essential truth that has come into existence in time; it has proclaimed itself as *the paradox* and has required the inwardness of faith with regard to what is an offense to the Jews, foolishness to the Greeks\(^{297}\)—and an absurdity to the understanding. It cannot be expressed more strongly that subjectivity is truth and that objectivity only thrusts away, precisely by virtue of the absurd, and it seems strange that Christianity should have come into the world in order to be explained, alas, as if it were itself puzzled about itself and therefore came into the world to seek out the wise man, the speculative thinker, who can aid with the explanation. It cannot be expressed more inwardly that subjectivity is truth than when subjectivity is at first untruth,\(^{298}\) and yet subjectivity is truth.

Suppose that Christianity was and wants to be a mystery, an utter mystery, not a theatrical mystery that is revealed in the fifth act, although the clever spectator [Tilkuer] already sees through [gemeinskue] it in the course of the exposition. Suppose that a revelation *sensu strictissimo* [in the strictest sense] must be a mystery and be recognizable just by its being a mystery, whereas a revelation *sensu laxiori* [in the broader sense], the withdrawing into the eternal through recollection, is a revelation in the direct sense. Suppose that the difference in intellectual endowment is the difference in being able to
state more and more clearly that it is and remains a mystery for existing human beings. Suppose that the intellectual endowment in relation to misunderstanding differs according to the individual's ability more and more deceptively to give the appearance of having understood the mystery. Suppose that it is nevertheless a blessing that, situated at the extremity of existence, one relates oneself to this mystery without understanding it, only having faith. Suppose that Christianity does not at all want to be understood; suppose that, in order to express this and to prevent anyone, misguided, from taking the road of objectivity, it has proclaimed itself to be the paradox. Suppose that it wants to be only for existing persons and essentially for persons existing in inwardness, in the inwardness of faith, which cannot be expressed more definitely than this: it is the absurd, adhered to firmly with the passion of the infinite. Suppose that it does not want to be understood and that the maximum of any eventual understanding is to understand that it cannot be understood. Suppose that it so decisively accentuates existing that the single individual becomes a sinner, Christianity the paradox, and existence the time of decision. Suppose that speculating is a temptation, the most precarious of all. Suppose that the speculator is not the prodigal son, for this is what the concerned God presumably would call the offended one whom he continues to love nevertheless, but the naughty child who refuses to stay where existing human beings belong, in the children's nursery and the education room of existence where one becomes adult only through inwardness in existing, but who instead wants to enter God's council, continually screaming that, from the point of view of the eternal, the divine, the theocentric, there is no paradox. Suppose that the speculative thinker is the restless resident who, although it is obvious that he is a renter, yet in view of the abstract truth that, eternally and divinely perceived, all property is in common, wants to be the owner, so that there is nothing to do except to send for a police officer, who would presumably say, just as the subpoena servers say to Gert Westphal: We are sorry to have to come on this errand.299

Has being human now become something different from what it was in the old days, is the condition not the same: to be an individual existing being, and is not existing the essential as long as one is in existence? "But people know so much more now." "Quite right, but suppose that Christianity is not a matter of knowing; then much knowledge is of no benefit, except to ease a person more readily into the confusion of regarding Christianity as a matter of knowledge." And if people do know more now—and we are not speaking of the knowledge of railroads, machines, and kaleidoscopes, but of knowing more of the religious—how have they come to know more? Presumably, through Christianity. So this is how Christianity is rewarded. One learns something from Christianity, misunderstands it, and in new misunderstanding uses it against Christianity.

If the terror in the old days was that one could be offended, the terror these days is that there is no terror, that one, two, three, before looking around, one becomes a speculative thinker who speculates about faith. About what faith? Is it about the faith that he has and especially about whether he does or does not have it? Alas, no, that is too little for an objective speculator. Consequently, he speculates about objective faith. What does that mean—objective faith? It means a sum of tenets. But suppose Christianity is nothing of the kind; suppose that, on the contrary, it is inwardness, and therefore the paradox, in order to thrust away objectively, so that it can be for the existing person in the inwardness of existence by placing him decisively, more decisively than any judge can place the accused, between time and eternity in time, between heaven and hell in the time of salvation. Objective faith—it is indeed as if Christianity had also been proclaimed as a little system of sorts, although presumably not as good as the Hegelian system. It is as if Christ—it is not my fault that I say it—as if Christ had been a professor and as if the apostles had formed a little professional society of scholars. Truly, if at one time it was difficult to become a Christian, I believe now it becomes more difficult year by year, because it has now become so easy to become one; there is a bit of competition only in becoming a speculative thinker. And yet the speculator is
perhaps furthest removed from Christianity, and perhaps it is preferable by far to be someone who takes offense but still continually relates himself to Christianity, whereas the speculator has understood it. To that extent there is hope that there still remains a similarity between a Christian now and in those early days and that wanting to become a Christian will once again become foolishness. In those early days, a Christian was a fool in the eyes of the world. To the pagans and Jews it was foolishness for him to want to become one. Now one is a Christian as a matter of course. If someone wants to be a Christian with infinite passion, he is a fool, just as it is always foolishness to will to exert oneself with infinite passion in order to become what one is as a matter of course, as if someone would give all his fortune to purchase a precious gem—which he owned. Formerly a Christian was a fool in the eyes of the world; now all people are Christians, but he nevertheless becomes a fool—in the eyes of Christians.

Suppose that it is this way. I say merely "suppose," and more I do not say. But since we are now admittedly growing weary of speculative thinkers who examine one another in print in the systematic rigmarole, it may at least be a change to go through the question in another way.

"But from the eternal, divine, and especially theocentric point of view, there is no paradox. True speculative thought, therefore, does not stop with the paradox but goes further and explains it." "May I now ask for a little peace and request that he not begin again? After all, I did say that I cannot become involved with the supraterrestrial and the subterranean." "The beginning and the consummation of the explanation are with me, and it is for this explanation that the eternal truth has been waiting; it is quite correct that it entered into time, but the first edition was only an imperfect attempt. Because the eternal truth required an explanation, it entered into the world and anticipated this by occasioning a discussion. Similarly, a professor publishes the outline of a system, assuming that the work, by being reviewed and debated, will come out sooner or later in a new and totally revised form. Only this second edition, when it has waited for the advice and judgment of experts, is the truth, and thus speculative thought is the true and only satisfactory edition of the provisional truth of Christianity."

By means of a few examples, we shall now illustrate how speculative thought, for the very reason that it refuses to comprehend that subjectivity is truth, has earned the gratitude of Christianity, which once and for all is the paradox and is paradoxical at every point, whereas speculative thought, remaining in immanence, which is recollection's removal of itself from existence, at every point produces a volatilization. By means of the tour de force of not thinking anything decisive about what is most decisive (which, through the decision, is specifically designed to forestall immanence) but utilizing the expression of decision as a locution, the volatilization becomes a pagan reminiscence, to which there is nothing to object if it breaks directly with Christianity but much to object if it is supposed to be Christianity.

The thesis that God has existed in human form, was born, grew up, etc. is certainly the paradox sensu strictissimo, the absolute paradox. But as the absolute paradox it cannot be related to a relative difference. A relative paradox is related to a relative difference between more or less sagacious people. But the absolute paradox, precisely because it is absolute, can be related only to the absolute difference by which a human being differs from God; it cannot be related to relative bickering between one human being and another about whether one is a little smarter than the other. But the absolute difference between God and a human being is simply this, that a human being is an individual existing being (and this holds for the best brain just as fully as for the most obtuse), whose essential task therefore cannot be to think sub specie aeterni, because as long as he exists, he himself, although eternal, is essentially an existing person and the essential for him must therefore be inwardness in existence; God, however, is the infinite one, who is eternal. As soon as I make the understanding of the paradox commensurate with the difference between being more or less intellectually endowed (a difference that still does not ever transcend being human, unless someone
were to become so brilliant that he became not only a human being but also God), my discussion of understanding *eo ipso* demonstrates that what I have understood is not the absolute paradox but a relative paradox, because the only possible understanding of the absolute paradox is that it cannot be understood. "But then speculative thought cannot ever grasp it." "Entirely correct, this is just what is said by the paradox, which thrusts away only in the direction of inwards in existence." Perhaps this is so because objectively there is no truth for existing beings, but only approximations, whereas subjectively truth for them is in inwardsness, because the decision of truth is in subjectivity.

The modern mythical allegorizing trend summarily declares Christianity to be a myth. Such a procedure is at least forthright behavior, and everyone can easily form a judgment about it. The friendliness of speculative thought is of another kind. To be on the safe side, speculative thought opposes the ungodly mythical allegorizing trend and then goes on to say, "Speculative thought, on the other hand, accepts the paradox, but it does not stop with it." "Nor is there any need for that, because when a person in faith continues to adhere firmly to it, in his existence deepening himself in the inwardsness of faith, he does not stop either." Speculative thought does not stop—what does that mean? Does it mean that Messrs. Speculators cease to be human beings, individual existing human beings, and *en famille* [as a family] become all sorts of things? If not, one is certainly obliged to stop with the paradox, since it is grounded in and is the expression for precisely this, that the eternal, essential truth relates itself to existing individuals with the summons that they go further and further in the inwardsness of faith.

What on the whole does it mean to explain something? Does explaining mean to show that the obscure something in question is not this but something else? That would be a strange explanation. I should think that by the explanation it would become clear that the something in question is this definite something, so that the explanation would remove not the thing in question but the obscurity. Otherwise the explanation is something other than an explanation; it is a correction. An explanation of the paradox makes clear what the paradox is and removes the obscurity; a correction removes the paradox and makes clear that there is no paradox. But the latter is certainly no explanation of the paradox but rather an explanation that there is no paradox. But if the paradox emerges from the placing together of the eternal and an existing individual human being, does the explanation, in removing the paradox, then also remove existing from the existing person? And if on his own, or with the assistance of another, an existing person has arrived at or has been brought almost to the point where it seems to him as if he did not exist, what is he then? Then he is absentminded. Consequently, the explanation of the absolute paradox that declares there is no paradox except to a certain degree, in other words, that there are only relative paradoxes, is an explanation not for existing individuals but for the absentminded. Well, then everything is in order. The explanation is that the paradox is the paradox only to a certain degree, and it is quite in order that it, namely, the explanation, is for an existing person who is an existing person only to a certain degree, since he forgets it every other moment, and an existing person of that kind is simply absentminded.

Then when someone speaks of the absolute paradox, which is an offense to the Jews, foolishness to the Greeks, and the absurd to the understanding, and addresses his words to speculative thought, it is not so impolite as to tell him bluntly that he is a fool but rather gives an explanation that contains a correction and thus indirectly gives him to understand that he was in error. This is the way a humane, superior intellect always behaves toward the more limited. The procedure is altogether Socratic; there would be an un-Socratic element only if the one speaking is indeed closer to the truth than the speculative explanation, for then there remains the dissimilarity that Socrates politely and indirectly took the untruth away from the learner and gave him the truth, whereas speculative thought politely and indirectly takes the truth away from the learner and gives him the untruth. But politeness still remains the common denominator. And when Christianity declares it-
self to be the paradox, the speculative explanation is not an explanation but a correction, a polite and indirect correction, such as befits a superior intellect in relation to the more limited.

Does explaining the paradox mean to turn the expression "paradox" into a rhetorical expression, into something the honorable speculative thinker indeed says has its validity—but then in turn does not have its validity? In that case, the summa summarnum [sum total] is indeed that there is no paradox. Honor be to the Herr Professor! I say this not to take his honor away from him, as if I, too, could cancel [have] the paradox. Not at all. But if the professor has canceled it, then it is of course canceled; in that case I daresay that it is canceled—unless the annulment [Ophævelse] pertains to the professor more than to the paradox, so that he, instead of canceling the paradox, himself becomes an alarming, fantastical swelling [Hævelse]. In other cases, one assumes that explaining something means to have it become clear in its significance, that it is this and not something else. To explain the paradox would then be to comprehend ever more deeply what a paradox is and that the paradox is the paradox.

Thus God is a supreme conception that cannot be explained by anything else but is explainable only by immersing oneself in the conception itself. The highest principles for all thinking can be demonstrated only indirectly (negatively). Suppose that the paradox is the boundary for an existing person's relation to an eternal, essential truth—in that case the paradox will not be explainable by anything else if the explanation is supposed to be for existing persons. But understood speculatively, even the absolute paradox (because speculative thought is not afraid of using decisive terms; the only thing it fears is thinking something decisive with them) expresses only a relative difference between more and less gifted and educated people. In this way the shape of the world will gradually be changed. When Christianity entered into the world, there were no professors or assistant professors whatever—then it was a paradox for all. It can be assumed that in the present generation every tenth person is an assistant professor; consequently it is a paradox for only nine out of ten. And when the fullness of time finally comes, that matchless future, when a generation of assistant professors, male and female, will live on the earth—then Christianity will have ceased to be a paradox.

On the other hand, the person who takes it upon himself to explain the paradox, on the assumption that he knows what he wants, will focus directly upon showing that it must be a paradox. To explain the unutterable joy—what does that mean? Does it mean to explain that it is this and that? In that case, the predicate "unutterable" becomes just a rhetorical predicate, a strong expression, and the like. The explaining jack-of-all-trades has everything in readiness before the beginning of the performance, and now it begins. He dupes the listener; he calls the joy unutterable, and then a new surprise, a truly surprising surprise—he utters it. Suppose that the unutterable joy is based upon the contradiction that an existing human being is composed of the infinite and the finite, is situated in time, so that the joy of the eternal in him becomes unutterable because he is existing; it becomes a supreme drawing of breath that cannot take shape, because the existing person is existing. In that case, the explanation would be that it is unutterable; it cannot be anything else—no nonsense. If, however, a profound person first condemns someone or other who denies that there is an unutterable joy and then says: No, I assume that there is an unutterable joy, but I go further and utter it, then he is only making a fool of himself, and the only difference between him and the other whom he condemns is that the other is more honest and direct and says what the profound person is also saying, since they both are saying essentially the same thing.

Does explaining what is decisive mean to transform the expression into a rhetorical locution, so that one does not, like the light-minded person, deny all decision, but assumes it, yet assumes it only to a certain degree? What does it mean to assert that a decision is to a certain degree? It means to deny decision. Decision is designed specifically to put an end to that perpetual prattle about "to a certain degree." So the decision
is assumed—but, lo and behold, assumed only to a certain degree. Speculative thought is not afraid to use expressions of decision; the only thing it fears is thinking something decisive with them. And when Christianity wants to be the eternal decision for the existing subject and speculative thought explains that the decision is relative, it is not explaining Christianity but correcting it. Whether speculative thought is in the right is an entirely different question; here the question is only how its explanation of Christianity is related to the Christianity that it explains.

Does explaining something mean to annul it? I do know that the word *aufheben* has various, indeed opposite, meanings in the German language. It has often been noted that the word can mean both *tollere* [annul, annihilate] and *conservare* [preserve]. I am not aware that the Danish word *ophæve* [annul] allows any such equivocation, but I do know that our German-Danish philosophers use it like the German word. Whether it is a good quality in a word to have opposite meanings, I do not know, but anyone who wants to express himself with precision usually avoids the use of such a word in decisive places. There is a simple folk saying that humorously denotes the impossible: to have one’s mouth full of crackers and to whistle at the same time. Speculative thought accomplishes a tour de force somewhat like that by using a word that also denotes the very opposite. In order to denote very clearly that speculation knows nothing of any decision, it itself uses an ambiguous word in order to denote the kind of understanding that is speculative understanding. Upon closer inspection, the confusion becomes more evident. *Aufheben* in the sense of *tollere* means to annihilate; in the sense of *conservare*, it means to preserve [bevare] in altogether unaltered condition, to do nothing at all to what is being preserved. If the government dissolves [ophæve] a political society, it abolishes it; if a man keeps or preserves something for me, it is of particular importance to me that he make no change whatever in it. Neither of these meanings is the philosophical *aufheben*. So speculation annihilates all difficulty and then leaves me with the difficulty of understanding just what it is doing with this *aufheben*. But now let this *aufheben* mean reducing something to a relative factor, which it does mean when what is decisive, the paradox, is reduced to a relative factor, which means that there is no paradox, no decision, since the paradox and the decisive are what they are just because of their unyielding resistance. Whether speculative thought is in the right is a different question, but here what is asked is only how its explanation of Christianity is related to the Christianity that it explains.

By no means does speculative thought say that Christianity is untruth; on the contrary, it specifically says that speculation comprehends the truth of Christianity. More could certainly not be asked for. Has Christianity ever asked to be more than the truth? And when speculation comprehends it, everything is as it should be. And yet, no, that is not how it is. In relation to Christianity, systematic speculation is only a bit cunning in the use of all kinds of diplomatic locutions that bedazzle the credulous. Christianity as it is understood by the speculative thinker is something different from what is presented to the simple. To them it is the paradox, but the speculative thinker knows how to cancel the paradox. Then it is not Christianity that is and was and remains the truth, and the speculative thinker’s understanding is not the understanding that Christianity is the truth—no, it is the speculative thinker’s understanding of Christianity that is the truth of Christianity. The understanding is thus something other than the truth. It is not the case that the truth is understood only when the understanding has understood everything implied in the truth, but it is rather the case that only when that *κατά δόξαν* [potential] truth is understood in the way a speculative thinker understands it, only then—well, then it is not speculation that has become true, but it is the truth that has come into existence. Consequently, the truth is not a given and the understanding is not what is awaited, but what is awaited is that speculation’s understanding will be finished, because only then has truth come into existence. Thus speculative knowledge is not as knowledge usually is, something indifferent in relation to what is known, so that this is not changed by being known but remains the same. No, speculative knowledge is
itself the object of knowing, so that the latter is no longer the same as it was but has come into existence simultaneously with speculation as the truth.

Whether speculative thought is in the right is a different question. What is asked here is only how its explanation of Christianity is related to the Christianity that it explains. And how should they be related? Speculative thought is objective, and objectively there is no truth for an existing individual but only an approximation, since by existing he is prevented from becoming entirely objective. Christianity, on the other hand, is subjective; the inwardness of faith in the believer is the truth's eternal decision. Objectively there is no truth; an objective knowledge about the truth or the truths of Christianity is precisely untruth. To know a creed by rote is paganism, because Christianity is inwardness.

Let us take the paradox of the forgiveness of sins. Socratically, the forgiveness of sins is a paradox, inasmuch as the eternal truth relates itself to an existing person, sensu strictior [in the stricter sense], because the existing person is a sinner, a qualification by which existence is accentuated a second time, because it wants to be an eternal decision in time with retroactive power to annul the past, and because it is bound up with God's having existed in time. The individual existing human being has to feel himself a sinner (not objectively, which is nonsense, but subjectively, and this is the deepest pain). With all his understanding to the very last turn (if one person has a little more understanding than the other, it makes no essential difference, and to appeal to one's great understanding is merely to betray one's deficient inwardness, or else it runs out very soon), he must want to understand the forgiveness of sins—and then despair of understanding. With the understanding in direct opposition, the inwardness of faith must grasp the paradox, and that faith battles in just this way, as the Romans once did, blinded by the light of the sun, is the resilience of inwardness.* If any other understanding ever forces

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* That one can battle in this way, blinded by the sun, and yet see to battle, the Romans demonstrated at Zama. That one can battle in this way, blinded,
only to a certain degree, a simulated movement; he reserved part of his understanding—for the explanation. This can be called: deriving benefit from one's understanding. The believer derives no benefit whatever from his; he uses up all of it in despair. But the speculator knows how to stretch it out sufficiently; he takes one-half of it for despairing (as if it were not nonsense to despair by halves) and the other half for perceiving that there is no reason for the understanding to despair. Well, of course, then the matter becomes something different; so where is the error? In the deceitfulness of the first movement, of course, and therefore not actually in his not stopping with faith but in his never reaching it.

Now, suppose that the basis of the paradox of the forgiveness of sins is that the poor existing human being is existing, that he is half-godforsaken even when in the inwardness of faith he is victorious against the understanding. Suppose that only eternity can give an eternal certainty, whereas existence has to be satisfied with a struggling certainty, which is gained not as the battle becomes easier or more illusory but only as it becomes harder. In that case, the explanation is indeed that it is and remains a paradox, and all is lost only when one thinks that there is no paradox or only to a certain degree. But, the esteemed public may say, if the forgiveness of sins is anything like that, how, then, can one believe it? Answer: If it is not anything like that, how, then, can one believe it?

Whether Christianity is in the right is another question. Here the question is only how the speculative explanation is related to the Christianity that it explains. But if Christianity is perhaps in the wrong, this much is certain: speculative thought is definitely in the wrong, because the only consistency outside Christianity is that of pantheism, the taking of oneself out of existence back into the eternal through recollection, whereby all existence-decisions become only shadow play compared with what is eternally decided from behind. Like all simulated decision, the simulated decision of speculative thought is nonsense, because decision is the eternal protest against fictions. The pantheist is eternally reassured backward; the moment that is the moment of existence in time, the seventy years, is something vanishing. The speculative thinker, on the other hand, wants to be an existing person, but an existing person who is not subjective, not in passion, indeed, is existing sub specie aeterni—in short, he is absentminded. But what is explained in absentmindedness must not be trusted absolutely—such an explanation, and here I agree with speculative thought, is an explanation only to a certain degree.

If the speculative thinker explains the paradox in such a way that he cancels it and now consciously knows that it is canceled, that consequently the paradox is not the essential relation of eternal essential truth to an existing person in the extremities of existence, but only an accidental relative relation to limited minds—then there is an essential difference between the speculative thinker and the simple person, whereby all existence is fundamentally confused. God is insulted by obtaining a group of hangers-on, a support staff of good minds, and humankind is vexed because there is not an equal relationship with God for all human beings. The religious formula set forth above for the difference between the simple person's knowledge and the simple wise person's knowledge of the simple, that the difference is a meaningless trifle, that the wise person knows that he knows or knows that he does not know what the simple person knows—speculative thought does not respect this formula at all. Nor does it respect the equality implicit in the difference between the wise person and the simple person—that they know the same thing. That is, the speculator and the simple person in no way know the same thing when the simple person believes the paradox and the speculator knows that it is annulled. According, however, to the formula just cited, which honors God and loves human beings, the difference will be that the wise person also knows that it must be a paradox, the paradox he himself believes. Consequently, they do indeed know essentially the same thing; the wise person does not know anything else about the paradox, but he knows that he knows this about the paradox. The simple wise person will then immerse himself in comprehending
the paradox as paradox and will not become involved in explaining the paradox by understanding that it is not a paradox.

If, for example, the simple wise person spoke with a simple person about the forgiveness of sins, the simple person would most likely say, “But I still cannot comprehend the divine mercy that can forgive sins; the more intensely I believe it, the less I am able to understand it.” (Thus probability does not seem to increase as the inwardness of faith is augmented, rather the opposite.) But the simple wise person will most likely say, “It is the same with me. You know I have had the opportunity to be able to devote much time to research and reflection, and yet the summa summarum of all this is at most that I comprehend that it cannot be otherwise, that it must be incomprehensible. Look, this difference certainly cannot distress you or make you think wistfully about your own more laborious circumstances in life or about your perhaps more modest capabilities, as if I had some advantage over you. My advantage, when regarded as the fruit of study, is something both to laugh at and to weep over. Yet you are never to scorn this study, just as I myself do not regret it, since on the contrary it pleases me most when I smile at it, and just then enthusiastically resume the effort of thinking.”

Such a confession is made in all sincerity, and it is not present in the wise person merely once in a while but is essentially present in him whenever he is occupied in thinking. Once a year to consider that one ought always to thank God would hardly be a proper understanding of these words. Similarly, once in a while, on a great occasion, to consider, deeply moved, that before God all human beings are essentially equal is not truly to understand this equality, particularly if one’s daily work and striving in more than one way consign it to oblivion. But to comprehend equality most earnestly just when one is most earnestly aware of what differentiates—that is the noble piety of the simple wise person.

Much that is strange has been said about Christianity, much that is lamentable, much that is outrageous, but the most obtuse thing ever said is that it is true to a certain degree. Much that is strange has been said about enthusiasm and love, has betrayed its obtuseness, which is not, however, a matter of the understanding, since the cause of it is just that the understanding has become too large, in the same sense as the cause of liver disease is that the liver has become too large, and therefore, as another author has remarked, “It is the dullness the salt takes on when it loses its strength”—then one phenomenon still remains, and that is Christianity. If enthusiasm’s vision has been incapable of helping him break with the understanding, if love has been incapable of snatching him from bondage, let him look at Christianity. Let him be offended; even so, he is a human being. Let him despair of ever becoming a Christian himself; even so, he may be closer than he thinks. Let him to his very last drop of blood work to root out Christianity; even so, he is a human being—but if here he also has it in him to say, “It is true to a certain degree,” then he is obtuse.

Perhaps someone thinks that I shudder in saying this, that I must be prepared for a terrible chastisement from the speculative thinker. Not at all. The speculator will here again be consistent and say, “What the man is saying is true to a certain degree, except that one must not stop there.” It would indeed also be strange if an insignificant person like me were to succeed in what not even Christianity has succeeded—bringing the speculative thinker into passion. And if that should happen, well, then my fragment of philosophy would suddenly take on a significance of which I had scarcely ever dreamed. But the person who is neither cold nor hot is an abomination, and God is no more served by dud individualities than a rifleman is served by a rifle that in the moment of decision clicks instead of firing. If Pilate had not asked objectively what truth is, he would never have let Christ be crucified. If he had asked the question subjectively, then the passion of in-
wardness regarding what he in truth had to do about the decision facing him would have prevented him from doing an injustice. In that case, not only his wife would have been troubled by her frightening dream, but Pilate himself would have become sleepless. But when a person has before his eyes something as immensely big as the objective truth, he can easily cross out his fragment of subjectivity and what he as a subjective individual has to do. Then the approximation-process of the objective truth is symbolically expressed by washing one's hands, because objectively there is no decision, whereas the subjective decision demonstrates that one was nevertheless in untruth by not comprehending that the decision is indeed rooted in subjectivity.

If, however, subjectivity is truth and subjectivity is the existing subjectivity, then, if I may put it this way, Christianity is a perfect fit. Subjectivity culminates in passion. Christianity is paradox; paradox and passion fit each other perfectly, and paradox perfectly fits a person situated in the extremity of existence. Indeed, in the whole wide world there are not to be found two lovers who fit each other as do paradox and passion, and their quarrel is only like the lovers' quarrel when the quarrel is about whether it was he who awakened her passion or it was she who awakened his—and similarly here, the existing person has been situated in the extremity of existence by the paradox itself. And what is more glorious for lovers than to be granted a long time together without the occurrence of any change in the relationship except that it becomes more inward? And this is indeed granted to that very unspeculative understanding between passion and paradox, for they have been granted all of time, and not until eternity is there a change.

The speculative thinker, however, behaves differently; he believes only to a certain degree—he puts his hand to the plow and looks around in order to find something to know. In a Christian sense, what he finds to know is hardly anything good. Even if it were not the case that it cannot be otherwise, something a simple wise person seeking to understand the paradox will endeavor to show, even if there were a little rem-
nant of divine willfulness in the paradox, God, I daresay, is certainly one who is allowed to attach importance to his person, and therefore he is not constrained to reduce the price of the God-relationship because of a religious slackness (and this term is much more suitable here than when we speak of a slack grain market). And even if God were willing, the passionate one would never want it. It never occurs to a girl truly in love that she has purchased her happiness at too high a price, but rather that she has not purchased it at a price high enough. And just as the passion of the infinite is itself the truth, so it is also the case with the highest that you get what you pay for, and that a low price merely signifies poor business acumen, whereas in relation to God the highest price is no merit, since the highest price is precisely to will to do everything and yet know that this is nothing (for if it is something, the price is lower) and yet to will it.

Since I am not totally unfamiliar with what has been said and written about Christianity, I could presumably say a thing or two about it. I shall, however, not do so here but merely repeat that there is one thing I shall beware of saying about it: that it is true to a certain degree. It is indeed just possible that Christianity is the truth; it is indeed just possible that someday there will be a judgment in which the separation will hinge on the relation of inwardness to Christianity. Suppose that someone stepped forward who had to say, "Admittedly I have not believed, but I have so honored Christianity that I have spent every hour of my life pondering it." Or suppose that someone came forward of whom the accuser had to say, "He has persecuted the Christians," and the accused one responded, "Yes, I acknowledge it; Christianity has so inflamed my soul that, simply because I realized its terrible power, I have wanted nothing else than to root it out of the world." Or suppose that someone came forward of whom the accuser had to say, "He has renounced Christianity," and the accused one responded, "Yes, it is true, for I perceived that Christianity was such a power that if I gave it one finger it would take all of me, and I could not belong to it completely." But suppose, now, that eventually an active assistant professor came along
at a hurried and bustling pace and said something like this, “I am not like those three; I have not only believed but have even explained Christianity and have shown that what was proclaimed by the apostles and appropriated in the first centuries is true only to a certain degree. On the other hand, through speculative understanding I have shown how it is the true truth, and for that reason I must request suitable remuneration for my meritorious services to Christianity.”

Of these four, which position would be the most terrible? It is indeed just possible that Christianity is the truth. Suppose that its ungrateful children want to have it declared incapable of managing its own affairs and placed under the guardianship of speculative thought. Suppose, then, that Christianity, like that Greek poet whose children also insisted that their aged father be declared incompetent but who amazed the judges and the people by writing one of his most beautiful tragedies to show that he was still competent—suppose that Christianity in like manner rose rejuvenated to its feet—there would still be no one whose position would become as awkward as that of the assistant professors.

I do not deny that it is prestigious to stand so high above Christianity. I do not deny that it is comfortable to be a Christian and yet to be exempted from the martyrdom that always remains even if no external persecution is inflicted, and even if a Christian remains unnoticed as if he had never lived at all—the martyrdom of believing against the understanding, the mortal danger of lying out on 70,000 fathoms of water, and only there finding God. See, the wader feels his way with his foot, lest he go out so far that he cannot touch bottom. In the same way, with his understanding, the sensible person feels his way in probability and finds God where probability suffices and thanks him on the great festival days of probability when he has obtained a really good job and there is the probability of quick advancement to boot. And he thanks him when for a wife he finds a girl both beautiful and congenial, and even Councilor of War Marcussen says that it will be a happy marriage, that the girl has the kind of beauty that in all probability will last a long time, and that she is built in such a way that in all probability she will bear healthy and strong children. To believe against the understanding is something else, and to believe with the understanding cannot be done at all, because the person who believes with the understanding talks only about job and wife and fields and oxen and the like, which are in no way the object of faith, since faith always thanks God, is always in mortal danger in that collision of the infinite and the finite that is precisely a mortal danger for one who is composed of both. The believer cares so little for probability that he fears it most of all, since he knows very well that with it he is beginning to lose his faith.

Faith has, namely, two tasks: to watch for and at every moment to make the discovery of improbability, the paradox, in order then to hold it fast with the passion of inwardness. The improbable, the paradox, is ordinarily conceived of as something to which faith is related only passively; one will have to be satisfied temporarily with this situation, but little by little things will improve—indeed, this is probable. What wondrous confusion-compounding in speaking about faith! One is supposed to begin to believe on the basis of a confidence that there is the probability that things will surely improve. When that is done, one still manages to smuggle in probability and to keep oneself from believing. When that is done, it is easy to understand that the fruit of having had faith for a long time is that one ceases to have faith rather than, as one might think, that the fruit would be to have faith ever more inwardly. No, faith, self-active, relates itself to the improbable and the paradox, is self-active in discovering it and in holding it fast at every moment—in order to be able to believe. It already takes all the passion of the infinite and its concentration to stop with the improbable, inasmuch as the improbable and the paradox are not to be reached by the understanding’s quantifying of the more and more difficult. Where understanding despair, faith is already present in order to make the despair properly decisive, lest the movement of faith become a transaction within the haggling territory of the understanding. But to believe against the understanding is a martyrdom; to begin to enlist the understanding a little is a temptation and retrogress-
vulously.\textsuperscript{337} It was rather late, toward evening. \textsuperscript{338} Evening's taking leave of day and of the person who has experienced the day is enigmatic speech; its warning is like the caring mother's instruction to the child to come home in good time. But its invitation, even though the leave-taking is without fault in this being misunderstood, is an inexplicable beckoning, as if rest were to be found only if one remained out for a nocturnal rendezvous, not with a woman but, womanlike, with the infinite, persuaded by the night wind as it monotonously repeats itself, as it searches forest and field and sighs as if looking for something, persuaded by the distant echo of stillness within oneself, as if it had a presentiment of something, persuaded by the sublime tranquility of heaven, as if it had been found, persuaded by the audible soundlessness of the dew, as if this were the explanation and the refreshment of infinitude, like the fruitfulness of the quiet night, only half-understood like the semitransparency of the nocturnal mist.

Contrary to my usual practice, I had come out to that garden called the garden of the dead, where the visitor's leave-taking is again doubly difficult, since it is meaningless to say "once more," because the last time is already past, and since there is no reason to cease taking leave when the beginning is made after the last time is past. Most of the visitors had already gone home. Just one person disappeared among the trees. Not caring to meet anyone, he avoided me, since he was seeking the dead, not the living. In this garden there is always the beautiful agreement among the visitors that one does not go out there in order to see and to be seen, but each visitor avoids the other. One does not need company either, least of all a talkative friend, here where everything is eloquence, where the dead person calls out the brief word placed upon his grave, not as a pastor does, who preaches widely and broadly on the word, but as a silent man does, who says only this word, but says it with a passion as if the dead might burst the grave—or is it not odd to place upon his grave "We shall meet again" and then to remain down there? And yet what inwardness there is in the words just because of the contradiction. That someone who is coming tomorrow says, "We shall meet
again,” is not startling. But for someone to have everything against him, to have no direct expression for his inwardness, none, and yet to stand by his word—that is true inwardness. Inwardness is untrue in direct proportion to the ready availability of external expressions in countenance and bearing, in words and assuring protestations—not just because the expression itself is untrue, but because the untruth is that the inwardness was merely an element. The dead person remains completely quiet while time passes. The famous warrior’s sword has been laid upon his grave, and shamelessness has torn down the picket fence surrounding it, but the dead one did not rise up and draw his sword to defend himself and his resting place. He does not gesticulate, he does not protest, he does not flare up in a moment of inwardness, but, silent as the grave and quiet as a dead person, he maintains his inwardness and stands by his word. Praised be the living person who externally relates himself as a dead person to his inwardness and thereby maintains it, not as the excitement of a moment and as a woman’s infatuation, but as the eternal, which has been gained through death. Such a person is a man. It is not unlovely for a woman to bubble over in momentary inwardness, nor is it unlovely for her to forget it again very soon—the one corresponds to the other, and both correspond to the feminine nature and to what is ordinarily understood by inwardness.

Tired from walking, I sat down on a bench, a marveling witness of how that proud ruler who now for thousands of years has been the hero of the day and will continue to be that until the last day, of how the sun in its brilliant departure cast a transfiguring glow over the entire surroundings, while my eyes gazed beyond the wall enclosing the garden into that eternal symbol of eternity—the infinite horizon. What sleep is for the body, rest such as this is for the soul, so that it can exhalate properly. At that very moment, I discovered to my surprise that the trees that hid me from the eyes of others had hidden others from mine, for I heard a voice just beside me. It has always wounded my modesty to witness the expression of the kind of feeling that another person surrenders himself to only when he thinks he is not being observed, because there is an inwardness of feeling that out of decency is hidden and is manifest only to God, just as a woman’s beauty will be concealed from everyone and disclosed only to the beloved—therefore I decided to move away. But the first words I heard held me captive, and since I feared that the noise of my leaving might disturb more than my staying there quietly, I chose the latter and then became a witness of a situation that, however solemn it was, suffered no infringement because of my presence.

Through the leaves I saw that there were two: an old man with chalk-white hair and a child, a boy of about ten years. Both were in mourning clothes and sat beside a freshly covered grave, from which it was easy to conclude that it was a recent loss that occupied them. The old man’s August form became even more solemn in the transfiguring glow of twilight, and his voice, calm and yet fervent, rendered the words clearly and distinctly with the inwardness they had in the speaker, who paused now and then when his voice choked with weeping or his mood ended in a sigh. Mood is like the Niger River in Africa; no one knows its source, no one knows its outlet—only its reach is known. From the conversation I learned that the little boy was the old man’s grandson and the person whose grave they were visiting was the boy’s father. Presumably all the others in the family were dead, since no one was mentioned. On a later visit I verified this by reading the name on the gravestone and the names of the many dead. As they talked, the old man told the child that he no longer had a father, had no one to cling to except an old man, who was too old for him and who himself longed to leave the world, but that there was a God in heaven after whom all fatherliness in heaven and on earth is called, that there was one name in which there was salvation, the name of Jesus Christ. He paused for a moment and then said half-aloud to himself: That this consolation should become for me a terror, that he, my son, who now lies buried in the grave, could abandon it! For what purpose all my hope, for what purpose all my concern, for what purpose all his wisdom, now that his death in the midst of his error makes a believer’s soul uncertain about his salvation, brings my gray hair in sorrow to the
Concluding Postscript, Part Two

Subjective Truth, Inwardness

grave. \[341\] makes a believer leave the world in apprehensiveness, makes an old man hurry like a doubter after a certainty and look back dejected for the surviving one.

Then he spoke again with the child and told him that there was a wisdom that wanted to fly past faith, that on the other side of faith there was a wide range like the blue mountains, a specious continent, which to the mortal eye looked like a certainty greater than that of faith, but the believer feared this mirage as the skipper fears a similar mirage at sea, feared that it was a sham eternity in which a mortal cannot live, but in which, if he steadily stares into it, he will lose his faith. He became silent again, and then said to himself half-aloud: That he, my unhappy son, should have allowed himself to be deceived! For what purpose, then, all his learning, so that he could not even make himself intelligible to me, so that I could not speak with him about his error because it was too elevated for me! Then he rose and led the child to the grave, and in a voice the impression of which I shall never forget he said, "Poor boy, you are just a child, and yet you will soon be alone in the world. Do you promise me by the memory of your dead father, who, if he could speak to you now, would speak in this way and now speaks with my voice; do you promise by the sight of my old age and my gray hair; do you promise by the solemnity of this hallowed place, by the God whose name I trust you have learned to call upon, by the name of Jesus Christ, in whom alone there is salvation—do you promise me that you will hold fast to this faith in life and in death, that you will not let yourself be deceived by any phantom, no matter how the shape of the world is changed—do you promise me that?" Overcome by the impression, the little one dropped to his knees, but the old man raised him up and pressed him to his breast.

I owe it to the truth to confess that this was the most heartrending scene I have ever witnessed. What may momentarily make someone or other inclined to consider the whole thing a fiction—that an old man speaks this way with a child—was precisely what shook me most: the unhappy old man who had become solitary in the world with a child and had no one with whom to speak about his concern except a child, and had only one person to save, a child, and yet could not presuppose the maturity to understand, and yet did not dare to wait for the advent of maturity, \[342\] because he himself was an old man. It is beautiful to be an old person, gratifying for the old man to see the generation growing up around him, a joyous arithmetical task to add to the sum every time the number is increased. But if it becomes his lot to have to recalculate, if the arithmetical task becomes that of having to subtract every time death takes away and takes away, until quits [quitit] is called and the old man is left behind to give the receipt [quittitum]—what then is as hard as being an old person! Just as need can bring a person to extremities, so it seems to me that the old man's suffering found its strongest expression in what poetically might be called an improbability—that an old person has his one and only confidant in a child, and that a sacred promise, an oath, is required of a child.

Although only a spectator and a witness, I was deeply affected. At one moment it seemed to me as if I myself were the young man whom the father had buried in terror. At the next moment it seemed to me as if I were the child who was bound by the sacred promise. But I felt no urge to rush forward and emotionally express my sympathy to the old man, assuring him with tears and quivering voice that I would never forget this scene, or perhaps even beseeching him to put me under oath. Only for rash [overilede] people, barren clouds, and bursts of passing showers [flinger] is nothing more precipitous [ilsom] than to take an oath, because, being unable to keep it, they must keep on taking it. In my opinion, "to want never to forget this impression" is different from saying once in a solemn moment, "I will never forget this." The former is inwardness, the latter perhaps only momentary inwardness. And if one never forgets it, the solemnity with which it was said does not seem so important, since the sustained solemnity with which one day by day keeps oneself from forgetting it is a truer solemnity. The feminine approach is always dangerous. \[343\] A tender handshake, a passionate embrace, a tear in the eye are still not exactly the same as the quiet dedication of
resolution. Inwardness of spirit is indeed always like a stranger and foreigner in a body—why, then, gesticulations? What Shakespeare's Brutus says when the conspirators want to bind themselves by an oath to the enterprise is so true: "No, not an oath . . . let priests and cowards and ricks, marrowless oldsters and crushed souls swear . . . . but do not weaken the quiet strength of our purpose, our inner invincible fire, by thinking that our cause, our performance, needs an oath [Erd]."344 The momentary outpouring of inwardness frequently leaves behind a lethargy [Mathed] that is dangerous. Furthermore, in yet another way a simple observation has taught me circumspection with regard to making oaths and promises, so that true inwardness is even constrained to express itself with the opposite. There is nothing that hasty and easily excited people are more inclined to do than to require sacred promises, because the inner weakness needs the powerful stimulation of the moment. Having to make a sacred promise to such a person is very dubious, and therefore it is much better to forestall this solemn scene and at the same time to bind oneself with a little reservatio mentalis [mental reservation], that is, if the requirement of a promise is justified at all. One thereby benefits the other person, prevents profanation of the sacred, prevents him from becoming bound by an oath—it would all end with his breaking the oath anyway. For example, if Brutus, in view of the fact that the conspirators, with hardly a single exception, were no doubt excitable fellows and therefore precipitous in making oaths and sacred promises and requesting sacred promises, had pushed them aside and had for that reason prevented the making of a promise, and if at the same time he quietly dedicated himself, since he regarded it as a just cause and their turning to him as also somewhat justified—then it appears to me that his inwardness would have been even greater. Now he is a bit bombastic, and although there is truth in what he says,345 there is still a little untruth in his saying it to the conspirators without really making clear to himself to whom he is speaking.

Then I, too, went home. I basically understood the old man right away, because in many ways my studies had led me to notice a dubious relation between modern Christian speculative thought and Christianity, but it had not occupied me in any decisive way. Now the matter had its significance. The august old man with his faith seemed to me a totally justified individuality whom existence had wronged, inasmuch as modern speculative thought, like a monetary reform, made doubtful the property title of faith. The august old man's pain over losing his son, not only through death but, as he understood it, even more terribly through speculative thought, moved me deeply, and at the same time the contradiction in his situation, that he could not even explain how the enemy force was operating, became for me a decisive summons to find a definite clue. The whole thing appealed to me like a complicated criminal case in which the very convoluted circumstances have made it difficult to track down the truth. This was something for me. I thought as follows: You are quite bored with life's diversions, bored with girls, whom you love only in passing; you must have something that can totally occupy your time. Here it is: find out where the misunderstanding between speculative thought and Christianity lies. This, then, was my resolution. I have not spoken about it to anyone at all, and I am sure that my landlady has detected no change in me, neither the same evening nor the next day.

"But," I said to myself, "since you are not a genius and by no means have the mission of making all humankind blissfully happy at any cost, and since you have not promised anyone anything either, you can undertake the matter entirely con amore [with love] and proceed altogether methodically [methodically], as if a poet and a dialectician kept your every step under surveillance, now that you have gained a more definite understanding of your own whimsical idea that you must try to make something difficult." My studies, which had already in a sense led me to my goal, now became more definitely organized, but the old gentleman's august figure always hovered before my thoughts every time I wanted to transform my deliberations into learned knowledge. But primarily I sought through my own reflection to pick up a clue to the ultimate misunderstanding. I need not report my many mistakes, but
it finally became clear to me that the deviation of speculative thought and, based thereupon, its presumed right to reduce faith to a factor might not be something accidental, might be located far deeper in the orientation of the whole age—most likely in this, that because of much knowledge people have entirely forgotten what it means to exist and what inwardness is.

When I had comprehended this, it also became clear to me that if I wanted to communicate anything about this, the main point must be that my presentation would be made in an indirect form. That is, if inwardness is truth, results are nothing but junk with which we should not bother one another, and wanting to communicate results is an unnatural association of one person with another, inasmuch as every human being is spirit and truth is the self-activity of appropriation, which a result hinders. Suppose that the teacher, in regard to essential truth (for otherwise the direct relation between teacher and learner is entirely in order), has much inwardness and would like, as people say, to proclaim his teaching day in and day out. If he assumes that there is a direct relation between him and the learner, then his inwardness is not inwardness but a spontaneous outpouring, because respect for the learner, that he in himself is his own inwardness, is the teacher’s inwardness. Suppose that a learner is enthusiastic and in the strongest terms proclaims his praise of the teacher and thus, as we say, lays bare his inwardness; his inwardness is not inwardness but a spontaneous devotedness, because the pious, silent agreement, according to which the learner personally appropriates what is taught, distancing himself from the teacher because he turns inward into himself—precisely that is inwardness. Pathos is certainly inwardness, but it is spontaneous inwardness and therefore can be expressed. But pathos in the form of contrast is inwardness; it remains with the communicator even when expressed, and it cannot be appropriated directly except through the other’s self-activity, and the contrastive form is the dynamometer of inwardness. The more consummate the contrastive form, the greater the inwardness; and the less it is present, to the point of being direct communication, the less the inwardness. For an enthusiastic genius who would like to make all humankind blissfully happy and lead them to the truth, it can be difficult enough to learn to constrain himself in this way and to grasp the N.B. [nota bene, note well] of reduplication, because truth is not like a circular letter on which signatures are collected, but is in the valore intrinsec [intrinsic worth] of inwardness. Understanding this comes more naturally to a vagabond and frivolous person. As soon as truth, the essential truth, can be assumed to be known by everyone, appropriation and inwardness must be worked for, and here can be worked for only in an indirect form. The position of the apostle[50] is something else, because he must proclaim an unknown truth, and therefore direct communication can always have its validity temporarily.

Oddly enough, although there is so much clamoring for the positive and for the direct communication of results, it does not occur to anyone to complain about God, who as the eternal spirit, as the source of derived spirits, would seem to be able in the communication of truth to relate himself directly to the derived spirit in a quite different sense than when the relation is between derived spirits who, viewed essentially, are equals within a common derivation from God. No anonymous author can more slyly hide himself, and no maieutic can more carefully recede from a direct relation than God can. He is in the creation, everywhere in the creation, but he is not there directly, and only when the single individual turns inward into himself (consequently only in the inwardness of self-activity) does he become aware and capable of seeing God.

The direct relationship with God is simply paganism, and only when the break has taken place, only then can there be a true God-relationship. But this break is indeed the first act of inwardness oriented to the definition that truth is inwardness. Nature is certainly the work of God, but only the work is directly present, not God. With regard to the individual human being, is this not acting like an illusive author, who nowhere sets forth his result in block letters or provides it beforehand in a preface? And why is God illusive? Precisely because he is
truth and in being illusive seeks to keep a person from un-truth. The observer does not glide directly to the result but on his own must concern himself with finding it and thereby break the direct relation. But this break is the actual break-through of inwardness, an act of self-activity, the first designation of truth as inwardness.

Or is it not the case that God is so unnoticeable, so hidden yet present in his work, that a person might very well live on, marry, be respected and esteemed as husband, father, and captain of the popinjay shooting club, without discovering God in his work, without ever receiving any impression of the infinitude of the ethical, because he managed with an analogy to the speculative confusion of the ethical and the world-historically by managing with custom and tradition in the city where he lived? Just as a mother admonishes her child who is about to attend a party, “Now, mind your manners and watch the other polite children and behave as they do,” so he, too, could live on and behave as he saw others behave. He would never do anything first and would never have any opinion unless he first knew that others had it, because “the others” would be his very first. On special occasions he would act like someone who does not know how to eat a course that is served at a banquet; he would reconnoiter until he saw how the others did it etc. Such a person could perhaps know ever so much, perhaps even know the system by rote; he could perhaps live in a Christian country, know how to bow his head every time God’s name was mentioned, perhaps also see God in nature if he was in the company of others who saw God; in short, well, he could be a congenial partygoer—and yet he would be deceived by the direct relation to truth, to the ethical, to God.

If one were to portray such a person in an imaginary construction, he would be a satire on what it is to be a human being. It is really the God-relationship that makes a human being a human being, but this is what he would lack. Yet no one would hesitate to consider him an actual human being (for the absence of inwardness is not seen directly), although he would be more like a puppet character that very deceptively imitates all the human externalities—would even have children with his wife. At the end of his life, one would have to say that one thing had escaped him: he had not become aware of God. If God could have permitted a direct relationship, he would certainly have become aware. If God had taken the form, for example, of a rare, enormously large green bird, with a red beak, that perched in a tree on the embankment and perhaps even whistled in an unprecedented manner—then our party-going man would surely have had his eyes opened; for the first time in his life he would have been able to be the first.

All paganism consists in this, that God is related directly to a human being, as the remarkably striking to the amazed. But the spiritual relationship with God in truth, that is, inwardness, is first conditioned by the actual breakthrough of inward deepening that corresponds to the divine cunning that God has nothing remarkable, nothing at all remarkable, about him—indeed, he is so far from being remarkable that he is invisible, and thus one does not suspect that he is there [er til], although his invisibility is in turn his omnipresence. But an omnipresent being is the very one who is seen everywhere, for example, as a police officer is—how illusive, then, that an omnipresent being is cognizable precisely by his being invisible,* simply and solely by this, because his very visibility would annul his omnipresence. This relation between omnipresence and invisibility is the relation between mystery and revelation, that the mystery expresses that the revelation is revelation in the stricter sense, that the mystery is the one and only mark by which it can be known, since otherwise a

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* In order to indicate how illusive the rhetorical can be, I shall show here how one could perhaps produce an effect upon a listener rhetorically, even though what was said would be a dialectical retrogression. Suppose a pagan religious orator says that here on earth the god’s temple is actually empty, but (and here the rhetorical begins) in heaven, where everything is more perfect, where water is air, and air is ether, there are also temples and shrines for the gods, but the difference is that the gods actually dwell in these temples—that the god actually dwells in the temple is dialectical retrogression, because his not dwelling in the temple is an expression for the spiritual relation to the invisible. But rhetorically it produces the effect. —Incidentally, I had in mind a specific passage by a Greek author, but I shall not quote him.
revelation becomes something like a police officer’s omnipresence.

If God [God] wants to reveal himself in human form and provide a direct relation by taking, for example, the form of a man who is twelve feet tall, then that imaginatively constructed partygoer and captain of the popinjay shooting club will surely become aware. But since God is unwilling to deceive, the spiritual relation in truth specifically requires that there be nothing at all remarkable about his form; then the partygoer must say: There is nothing to see, not the slightest. If the god [Guden] has nothing whatever that is remarkable about him, the partygoer is perhaps deceived in not becoming aware at all. But the god is without blame in this, and the actuality of this deception is continually also the possibility of the truth. But if the god has something remarkable about him, he deceives, inasmuch as a human being thus becomes aware of the untruth, and this awareness is also the impossibility of the truth.

In paganism, the direct relation is idolatry; in Christianity, everyone indeed knows that God cannot manifest himself in this way. But this knowledge is not inwardness at all, and in Christianity it can certainly happen with a rote knower that he becomes utterly “without God in the world,” which was not the case in paganism, where there was still the untrue relation of idolatry. Idolatry is certainly a dismal substitute, but that the rubric “God” disappears completely is even more mistaken.

Accordingly, not even God relates himself directly to a derived spirit (and this is the wondrousness of creation: not to produce something that is nothing in relation to the Creator, but to produce something that is something and that in the true worship of God can use this something to become by itself nothing before God); even less can one human being relate himself in this way to another in truth. Nature, the totality of creation, is God’s work, and yet God is not there, but within the individual human being there is a possibility (he is spirit according to his possibility) that in inwardness is awakened to a God-relationship, and then it is possible to see God every-

where. Compared with the spiritual relationship in inwardness, the sensate distinctions of the great, the amazing, the most crying-to-heaven superlatives of a southern nation are a retrogression to idolatry. Is it not as if an author wrote 166 folio volumes and the reader read and read, just as when someone observes and observes nature but does not discover that the meaning of this enormous work lies in the reader himself, because amazement at the many volumes and the five hundred lines to the page, which is similar to amazement at how immense nature is and how innumerable the animal species are, is not understanding.

With regard to the essential truth, a direct relation between spirit and spirit is unthinkable. If such a relation is assumed, it actually means that one party has ceased to be spirit, something that is not borne in mind by many a genius who both assists people en masse into the truth and is good-natured enough to think that applause, willingness to listen, signatures, etc. mean accepting the truth. Just as important as the truth, and of the two the even more important one, is the mode in which the truth is accepted, and it is of slight help if one gets millions to accept the truth if by the very mode of their acceptance they are transposed into untruth. And therefore all good-naturedness, all persuation, all bargaining, all direct attraction with the aid of one’s own person in consideration of one’s suffering so much for the cause, of one’s weeping over humankind, of one’s being so enthusiastic, etc.—all such things are a misunderstanding, in relation to the truth a forgery by which, according to one’s ability, one helps any number of people to acquire a semblance of truth.

Socrates was a teacher of the ethical, but he was aware that there is no direct relation between the teacher and the learner, because inwardness is truth, and inwardness in the two is precisely the path away from each other. Probably because he perceived this he was so very pleased with his advantageous appearance. What was it? Well, guess again! In our day, we say of a clergyman that he has a very advantageous appearance; we are pleased about this and understand that he is a handsome man, that the clerical gown is very becoming to
him, that he has a sonorous voice and a figure that every tailor—but what am I saying—that every listener must be pleased with. Ah, yes, when one is so equipped by nature and so dressed by the tailor, one can easily be a teacher of religion, even with success, because the conditions of teachers of religion vary greatly—indeed, more than one thinks when one hears complaints that some pastoral appointments are so opulent and others so meager. The difference is much greater—some teachers of religion are crucified—and yet the religion is fully the same! No one cares much about the reduplicated repetition of the substance of the teaching in the conception of how the teacher ought to be. Orthodoxy is set forth, and the teacher is prinked up in pagan-esthetic categories. Christ is presented in biblical expressions. That he bore the sin of the whole world will not really move the congregation; yet the speaker proclaims it, and in order to make the contrast strong, he describes Christ’s beauty (because the contrast between guiltlessness and sin is not strong enough), and the believing congregation is stirred by this totally pagan qualification of the god in human form: beauty.

But back to Socrates. He did not have an appearance as advantageous as the one described. He was very ugly, had clumsy feet, and more than that, a number of bumps on his forehead and other places, which were bound to convince everyone that he was a depraved character. This, you see, was what Socrates understood by his advantageous appearance, and he was so pleased as Punch about it that he would have considered it chicanery on the part of the god if, in order to keep him from being a teacher of morals, he had been given the pleasing appearance of a sentimental zither player, the languishing look of a Schäfer [amorous swain], the small feet of a dance director in the Friendship Society, and in toto as advantageous an appearance as a job seeker in Adressenwissen or a theological graduate who had set his hopes on a patronage appointment could possibly wish for himself. Now, then, why was that old teacher so pleased with his advantageous appearance, unless it was because he perceived that it might help to place the learner at a distance so that he would not be caught in a direct relation to the teacher, perhaps would admire him, perhaps would have his clothes made in the same way, but might understand through the repulsion of opposition, which in turn was his irony in a higher sphere, that the learner essentially has himself to deal with and that the inwardness of truth is not the chummy inwardness with which two bosom friends walk arm in arm with each other but is the separation in which each person for himself is existing in what is true.

Thus I had fully realized that every direct communication with regard to truth as inwardness is a misunderstanding, even though it can vary according to the variety of that which is responsible for it, be it a lovable predilection, a nebulous sympathy, cryptic vanity, obtuseness, brashness, and other things. But just because I had become clear about the form of communication, it did not mean that I had something to communicate, although it was nevertheless entirely in order that the form first became clear to me, because the form is indeed the inwardness.

My main thought was that, because of the copiousness of knowledge, people in our day have forgotten what it means to exist, and what inwardness is, and that the misunderstanding between speculative thought and Christianity could be explained by that. I now resolved to go back as far as possible in order not to arrive too soon at what it means to exist religiously, not to mention existing Christianly-religiously, and in that way leave dubieties behind me. If people had forgotten what it means to exist religiously, they had probably also forgotten what it means to exist humanly; therefore this would have to be brought out. But this must not on any account be done didactically, because then the misunderstanding would in a new misunderstanding instantly make capital of the explanatory attempt, as if existing consisted in coming to know something about a particular point. If this is communicated as knowledge, the recipient is mistakenly induced to understand that he is gaining something to know, and then we are back in knowledge again. Only the person who has an idea of a misunderstanding’s tenacity in assimilating even the most rigorous attempt at explanation and yet remaining a misun-
understanding, only he will be aware of the difficulty of an authorship in which care must be taken with every word, and every word must go through the process of double-reflection. Direct communication about what it means to exist and about inwardness will only have the result that the speculative thinker will benevolently take it in hand and let one slip in along with it. The system is hospitable! Just as a bourgeois—philistine, without regard to compatibility, takes along every Tom, Dick, and Harry when he goes on an excursion to the woods, inasmuch as there is room enough in the four-seated Holstein carriage, so also is the system hospitable—there is indeed plenty of room.

I will not conceal the fact that I admire Hamann, although I readily admit that, if he is supposed to have worked coherently, the elasticity of his thoughts lacks evenness and his preternatural resilience lacks self-control. But the originality of genius is there in his brief statements, and the pithiness of form corresponds completely to the desultory hurling forth of a thought. With heart and soul, down to his last drop of blood, he is concentrated in a single word, a highly gifted genius’s passionate protest against a system of existence. But the system is hospitable. Poor Hamann, you have been reduced to a subsection by Michelet. Whether your grave has ever been marked, I do not know; whether it is now trampled upon, I do not know; but I do know that by hook or by crook you have been stuck into the subsection uniform and thrust into the ranks. I do not deny that Jacobi has often inspired me, although I am well aware that his dialectical skill is not in proportion to his noble enthusiasm, but he is the eloquent protest of a noble, unadulterated, lovable, highly gifted mind against the systematic crimping of existence, a triumphant consciousness of and an inspired battling for the significance of existence as something longer and deeper than the few years during which one forgets oneself in studying the system. Poor Jacobi! Whether anyone visits your grave, I do not know; but I do know that the subsection-plow plows under all your eloquence, all your inwardness, while a few paltry words are being registered about your importance in the system. It is said of Jacobi that he represented feeling with enthusiasm; such a report ridicules both feeling and enthusiasm, which have precisely the secret that neither can be reported secondhand and therefore cannot in the form of a result conveniently make a rote parrot blissfully happy through a satu-
factio vicaria [vicarious satisfaction].

So, then, I resolved to begin, and the first thing I wanted to do in order to start from the bottom was to have the existence-
relation between the esthetic and the ethical come into existence in an existing individuality. The task was set, and I foresaw that the work would be copious enough, and above all that I would have to be prepared to remain still at times when the spirit would not support me with pathos. But what happened then I shall tell in an appendix to this chapter.

APPENDIX

A Glance at a Contemporary Effort
in Danish Literature

What happens? As I go on in this way, Either/Or is published. What I aimed to do had been done right here. I became very unhappy at the thought of my solemn resolution, but then I thought once again: After all, you have not promised anyone anything; as long as it is done, that is just fine. But things became worse for me, because step by step, just as I wanted to begin the task of carrying out my resolution by working, there appeared a pseudonymous book that did what I wanted to do. There was something strangely ironic about it all. It was good that I had never spoken to anyone about my resolution, that not even my landlady had detected anything from my behavior, for otherwise people would have laughed at my comic situation, because it is indeed rather droll that the cause I had resolved to take up is advancing, but not through