

Chapter 1 : Søren Kierkegaard (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

Jacob Howland, Kierkegaard and Socrates: A Study in Philosophy and Faith, Cambridge University Press, , pp., \$ (hbk), ISBN Reviewed by George Pattison, Oxford University Jacob Howland's study is an essentially modest and exegetical work that, in large part, delivers what it.

His father, Michael Pederson Kierkegaard, was a Lutheran Pietist , but questioned how God could let him suffer so much. One day, he climbed a mountain and cursed God. For this sin , Michael believed that a family curse was placed upon him, that none of his children would live a full life. He decided not to become a pastor or a professor either because if he had he would have had to write under the authority of the State or the Church. He craved freedom and for that reason he wrote "without authority". He also believed in Christ as the ultimate authority in matters of personal faith. He was against beginning a "new religion", unlike Hegel , the religion of reason, and Schelling , the religion of nature. He always wrote to students of religion as a student of religion. The essence of the universe is the life of the totality of all things, not their sum. As the life of man is not the sum of his bodily and mental functions, the whole man being present in each and all of these, so must the universe be conceived as omnipresent in each of its parts and expressions. The evolution of the universe is thus the evolution of God himself. The task of philosophy, then, as Hegel conceives it, is to portray in systematic form the evolution of the World-Spirit in all its necessary ramifications. What does the task look like in everyday life, for I continually have my favorite theme in mind: As for my own insignificant person, the reader will please recall that I am the one who finds the issue and the task so very difficult, which seems to suggest that I have not carried it out, I, who do not even pretend to be a Christian by going beyond it. But it is always something to point out that it is difficult, even if it is done, as it is here, only in an uplifting divertimento, which is carried out essentially with the aid of a spy whom I have go out among people on weekdays, and with the support of a few dilettantes who against their will come to join in the game. Philosophers, theologians, historians, and anthropologists tend to go beyond themselves and apply what they learn to the course of world history or national history. This point was brought home by Kierkegaard in his book, *Thoughts on Crucial Situations in Human Life* and in by Ronald Gregor Smith in his book, *J G Hamann A Study In Christian Existence*. A poet has indeed said that a sigh without words ascending Godward, is the best prayer, and so one might also believe that the rarest of visits to the sacred place, when one comes from afar, is the best worship, because both help to create an illusion. A sigh without words is the best prayer when the thought of God only sheds a faint glow over existence, like the blue mountains far distant on the horizon; when the lack of clarity in the soul is satisfied by the greatest possible ambiguity in the thought. But if God is present in the soul, then the sigh will find the thought and the thought will find the word-but also the difficulty, which is not dreamed of when God is at a distance. In our day we hear it proclaimed, to the verge of nonsense, that the highest task is not in living in the stillness, where there is no danger-, because the danger exists there quite as much as in the confusion of life, and the great thing, in short, is neither to live in solitude nor amidst the confusion, but the great thing is to overcome the danger. And the most mediocre things is to work oneself weary in considering which is the most difficult; such labor is useless trouble and has no relevance, like the laborer himself who is neither in the solitude nor the confusion, but in the busy absent-mindedness of reflection. The connections between the two will be apparent to any student of Kierkegaard. Intellectual scholarship in Christianity was becoming more and more like Hegelianism , which he called Christian "evolution", [3] rather than Christianity. This made the scholars of religion and philosophy examine the Gospels from a supposedly higher objective standpoint in order to demonstrate how correct reasoning can reveal an objective truth. This was outrageous to Kierkegaard because this presupposed that an infinite God and his infinite wisdom could be grasped by finite human understanding. Kierkegaard believed that Christianity was not a doctrine to be taught, but rather a life to be lived. He considered that many Christians who were relying totally on external proofs of God were missing out a true Christian experience, which is precisely the relationship one individual can have with God. To state it as simply as possible using myself in an imaginatively constructing way: I now ask how I may enter into relation to this doctrine. But in

that respect I find myself free of all guilt, because it is not I who of my own accord have become so audacious; it is Christianity itself that compels me. It attaches an entirely different sort of importance to my own little self and to every-so-little self, since it wants to make him eternally happy and that precisely within this single individual it presupposes this infinite interest in his own happiness as condition *sin qua non* [the indispensable condition], an interest with which he hates father and mother and thus probably also makes light of systems and world-historical surveys. His audience was any single individual who is laboring to become what God wants him to become. The invitation to a religious address is quite simply this: Come here, all you who labor and are burdened [4] -and the address presupposes that all are sufferers-indeed that they all should be. Kierkegaard writes about the "divinely appointed teachers" of what it means to be a human being. He put it this way in his *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits* Why does the bird not have worry about making a living? Because it lives only in the moment, because there is nothing eternal in the bird. But is this indeed a perfection! On the other hand, how does the possibility of worry about making a living arise-because the eternal and the temporal touch each other in a consciousness or, more correctly, because the human being has a consciousness. In his consciousness he is eternally far, far beyond the moment; no bird flew so far away, and yet for this very reason he becomes aware of the danger the bird does not suspect-when eternity comes into existence for him, so also did tomorrow. This is why the human being has a dangerous enemy that the bird does not know-time, an enemy, yes, an enemy or a friend whose pursuits and whose association he cannot avoid because he has the eternal in his consciousness and therefore has to measure it. The temporal and the eternal can in many ways touch each other painfully in the human consciousness, but one of the especially painful contacts is worry about making a living. This worry seems infinitely remote from the eternal. God lifted the human being high above the bird by means of the eternal in his consciousness; then in turn he pressed him down, so to speak, below the bird by his acquaintance with care, the lowly, earthly care of which the bird is ignorant. Oh how noble it seems for the bird not to have worry about making a living-and yet how much more glorious it is to be able to have it! Therefore the human being can certainly learn from the bird, can in fact call the bird his teacher, yet not in the highest sense. But then, with the consciousness of being without a nest, without a place of resort, in that situation to be free from care-indeed, this is the divine prototype of the lofty creation, of the human being. In the brief moments prescribed, let us than speak about these words: While it is only all too true, as Luther says, that every human being has a preacher within him-he eats with him, drinks with him, awakens with him, sleeps with him, in short, is always around him, always with him, wherever he is and whatever he does, a preacher who is called flesh and blood, lusts and passions, habits and inclination-so it is also certain that deep within every human being there is a secret-sharer who is present just as scrupulously everywhere-the conscience. A person can perhaps succeed in hiding his sins from the world, he can perhaps be foolishly happy that he succeeds, or yet, a little more honest, admit that it is a deplorable weakness and cowardliness that he does not have the courage to become open-but a person cannot hide his sins from himself. This is impossible, because the sin that was absolutely unconditionally hidden from himself would, of course, not be sin, any more than if it were hidden from God, which is not the case of either, since a person, as soon as he is aware of himself and in everything in which he is aware of himself, is also aware of God and God is aware of him. Two of his key ideas are based on faith: Some regard Kierkegaard as a Christian Universalist, [6] writing in his journals, "If others go to Hell, I will go too. But I do not believe that; on the contrary, I believe that all will be saved, myself with them" something which arouses my deepest amazement. He presupposes the individual who has decided to become a Christian has an interest in becoming that, is interested enough to attempt to develop a relationship with Christ, and has enough faith to believe that the possibility extends to all individuals equally. Faith is what makes each individual equal before God. Now it is certainly true that the good, the truly great and noble, is different for different people, but resolution, which is the true acknowledgment, is still the same. This is a very upbuilding thought. Someone who wants to erect a tower sits down and roughly estimates how high he can erect the tower. Alas, how different it appears at the time of the rough estimate, but how similar in the moment of resolution, and if there is no resolution there will be no tower, however imaginary or however really splendid the estimate was! To do everything one is capable of doing-what blessed equality, since every human being is indeed capable of that. Only in the

moment of the rough estimate is there difference. Or consider someone who wants to do an act of mercy-can he do more than give all that he possesses-and did not the widow give infinitely more than the rich man gave out of his abundance! Indeed, someone who has an ear for judging how large the gift is detects the difference just by hearing the jingle of the coins, but compassion and the temple box understand it differently. Do they not both reach heaven? Or when one person, a stranger to internal enemies, aggressively directs his mind and thoughts toward humankind in the service of the good and wins thousands, and when another, retreating in internal battles, in the moment of resolution saves himself, whose tower then becomes higher? So I prefer to remain where I am, with my infinite interest, with the issue, with the possibility. In other words, it is not impossible that the individual who is infinitely interested in his own eternal happiness can some day become eternally happy; on the other hand, it is certainly impossible that the person who has lost a sense for it and such a sense can scarcely be anything but an infinite concern can become eternally happy. Indeed, once lost, it is perhaps impossible to regain it. Page 16 And reinforced the same idea in his book, *Practice in Christianity*: When in sickness I go to a physician, he may find it necessary to prescribe a very painful treatment-there is no self-contradiction in my submitting to it. No, but if on the other hand I suddenly find myself in trouble, an object of persecution, because, because I have gone to that physician: The physician has perhaps announced that he can help me with regard to the illness from which I suffer, and perhaps he can really do that-but there is an "aber" [but] that I had not thought of at all. The fact that I get involved with this physician, attach myself to him-that is what makes me an object of persecution; here is the possibility of offense. So also with Christianity. Now the issue is: If you will believe, then you push through the possibility of offense and accept Christianity on any terms. So it goes; then forget the understanding; then you say: Whether it is a help or a torment, I want only one thing, I want to belong to Christ, I want to be a Christian. Both can lead to an intellectual understanding devoid of passionate involvement in the act of becoming a Christian. Richard McKeon thought the imitators of Plato had misapplied his ideas and left the passions out of philosophy in favor of intellectualism. He wrote the following in his book *Thought, Action, and Passion*: The theme of love, rather than the Idea of the Good, or the One, or the Beautiful, is suited to the focus in human action on motivation and inspiration instead of on the rational analysis of means and ends; and the techniques of poetry, religion, rhetoric, and drama, which find their perfection in dialectic and philosophy, are appropriate to focus attention on the persuasion of men to action instead of on analysis of truths by which love operates and by which it finds its ultimate justification. They represent the intellectual side of the human being and Abraham in *Fear and Trembling* represented the passion of inwardness because he was alone with God. Abraham believed in the actuality of God and could say nothing either artistically or ethically about it. Yet neither the Young Man nor Abraham is the prototype for the Christian, because the Christian is to follow Christ as the example. Even greater than these is the knight of faith who dares to say to the noble one who wants to weep for him: We forget the anxiety the distress, the paradox. Was it such a simple thing not to make a mistake? Was it not terrifying that this man walking around among the others was God? Was it not terrifying to sit down to eat with him? Was it such an easy matter to become an apostle? But the result, the eighteen centuries-that helps, that contributes to this mean deception whereby we deceive ourselves and others. I do not wish to be brave enough to be contemporary with events like that, but I do not for that reason severely condemn those who made a mistake, nor do I depreciate those who saw what was right. But I come back to Abraham. During the time before the result, either Abraham was a murderer every minute or we stand before a paradox that is higher than all mediation. The story of Abraham contains, then, a teleological suspension of the ethical. As the single individual he became higher than the universal.

Chapter 2 : Socrates or Jesus? - Catholic Stand

Kierkegaard vs. Socrates February 11, Elly Leave a comment Søren Kierkegaard was a Danish philosopher and theologian of XIX Century, who almost whole his life spent in Copenhagen and who is considered to be one of the first existentialists.

Next Work This is a deeply personal work which exists semantically on two distinct planes. Ostensibly it is about the "teleological suspension of the ethical", that is, the suspension of the moral law for the sake of a higher law. Kierkegaard cites Genesis, where Abraham is commanded by God to kill his son Isaac. Although God must be obeyed, murder is immoral it is not technically against the Mosaic law since it had not yet been delivered—but no matter, it is against our conscience. The ethical is thus suspended for a higher goal telos. On another level, this work is about his failed engagement to Regine Olsen. He is Abraham and she is Isaac, whom he must sacrifice, that is, divorce himself from, since he deems himself unfit for her—although some commentators reverse their roles. Kierkegaard attempted to undermine uncritical repose in the ethical, but has sometimes been interpreted as paving the way to nihilism. It is not necessary, however, to take this position. Kierkegaard begins with a quote from Hamann. What Tarquinius Superbus said in the garden by means of the poppies, the son understood but the messenger did not p. Hong provides background for this quote. When the son of Tarquinius Superbus had craftily gotten Gabii in his power, he sent a messenger to his father asking what he should do with the city. Tarquinius, not trusting the messenger, gave no reply but took him into the garden, where with his cane he cut off the flowers of the tallest poppies. The son understood from this that he should eliminate the leading men of the city. A similar story about Periander is found in Aristotle The epigraph is discussed by G. The son understood because of his special relationship to his father. Similarly, the man of faith will see the same data that a regular man will see, but he will see something else there, because of his faith. To a "normal" person, Abraham attempts murder. Through the eyes of faith, he is obeying God. The father-son relationship is significant too. Preface In the preface the pseudonym Johannes informs the reader of his place as a writer. The present author is by no means a philosopher. He has not understood the system, whether there is one, whether it is completed; it is already enough for his weak head to ponder what a prodigious head everyone must have these days when everyone has such a prodigious idea. Even if someone were able to transpose the whole content of faith into conceptual form, it does not follow that he has comprehended faith, comprehended how he entered into it or how it entered into him. He is poetice et eleganter [poetically and with discrimination] a supplementary clerk who neither writes the system nor gives promises of the system, who neither exhausts himself on the system nor binds himself to the system. He writes because it is to him a luxury that is all the more pleasant and apparent the fewer there are who buy and read what he writes p. Kierkegaard thought such a task ridiculous as well as logically impossible, since the philosopher lives within the system he is seemingly evaluating from the outside. While Kierkegaard considered himself to be a poet, and indeed while Johannes avers he is no philosopher, elsewhere he says "I am not a poet, and I go at things only dialectically" p. The subtitle of the work is "Dialectical Lyric". The poet or orator can do nothing that the hero does; he can only admire, love, and delight in him. Yet he, too, is happy—no less than that one is, for the hero is, so to speak, his better nature, with which he is enamored—yet happy that the other is not himself, that his love can be admiration. Indeed they were published at his own expense. Each emphasizes an alternative viewpoint that illuminates the text. But first the exordium begins by telling how a man probably Kierkegaard heard the story of Abraham as a child, and how he often returned to this story as he grew to be a man. That man was not a thinker. He did not feel any need to go beyond faith; he thought that it must be supremely glorious to be remembered as its father, an enviable destiny to possess it, even if no one knew it. That man was not an exegetical scholar. He did not know Hebrew; if he had known Hebrew, he perhaps would easily have understood the story of Abraham p. Note again that Johannes declines to be known as a scholar or thinker of any proportion. While he claimed not to know Hebrew, Kierkegaard did, as has been determined from his personal library. In the first version of the Genesis account, Abraham prepares to sacrifice Isaac. I am an idolater. Editors have seen here the relationship

of Kierkegaard and Regine Olsen, his once betrothed. In fact, when Kierkegaard soon determined his unsuitability as a husband, he got the notion to convince Regine that he was a scoundrel, lest she enter into such a relationship. By this interpretation, he considered himself to be Abraham and her to be Isaac. He needed to sever the relationship by painting himself with black strokes, all in order to preserve her. In version two of the Genesis account, Abraham sacrifices the ram, and thus preserves Isaac. From that day henceforth, Abraham was old; he could not forget that God had ordered him to do this. In version three, Abraham goes alone, and throws himself on the ground, begging God to forgive him for having contemplated sacrificing Isaac, and for forgetting his ethical duty. In version four, Abraham cannot bring himself to slay Isaac, and they walk home together. Isaac loses faith because of this. The exordium closes with Johannes saying, "No one was as great as Abraham. Who is able to understand him? Here is the first addendum. When the child is to be weaned, the mother blackens her breast. It would be hard to have the breast look inviting when the child must not have it. So the child believes that the breast has changed, but the motherâ€”she is still the same, her gaze is tender and loving as ever. How fortunate the one who did not need more terrible means to wean the child! The child the reader needs to grow into the religious mindset capable of understanding the Genesis account. Just as Johannes is the child who first heard the story of Abraham, perhaps Kierkegaard himself is the mother who must blacken her breast, so that the reader can understand. For this task he will have to be a poet who speaks dialectically. Again, Kierkegaard may have the rejection of Regine Olsen in mind. Eulogy on Abraham Kierkegaard describes the faith of Abraham, the extreme nature of his willingness to follow God in the face of testing. Abraham was promised a son, but had to wait decades for the realization of that promise. Now God would command Abraham to sacrifice that very son. Yet Abraham believed in God. Seventy years of trusting expectancy, the brief joy over the fulfillment of faith Is there no sympathy for this venerable old man, none for the innocent child? Now everything would be lost! But Abraham had faith and did not doubt; he believed the preposterous. If Abraham had doubted, then he would have done something else, something great and glorious, for how could Abraham do anything else but what is great and glorious! He would have gone to Mount Moriah, he would have split the firewood, drawn the knife. He would have cried out to God, "Reject not this sacrifice; it is not the best that I have, that I know very well, for what is an old man compared with the child of promise, but it is the best I can give you. Let Isaac never find this out so that he may take comfort in his youth. He would have been admired in the world, and his name would never be forgotten; but it is one thing to be admired and another to become a guiding star that saves the anguished. Hong points out that Kierkegaard emphasizes that Abraham waited 70 years for the child of promise, and that he was years old. This means that Isaac, according to this reckoning, was 30 years old when he was to be sacrificedâ€”the very age Kierkegaard was when he wrote this work. Kierkegaard presents the situation from both the ethical and religious viewpoints. The ethical expression for what Abraham did is that he meant to murder Isaac; the religious expression is that he meant to sacrifice Isaacâ€”but precisely in this contradiction is the anxiety that can make a person sleepless, and yet without this anxiety Abraham is not who he is p. Resignation is an act of the will, not helpless abdication. The Knight of Infinite Resignation is no coward. He is a man committed by a volitive act to perform some deed or adhere to some ethical code. The Knight of Faith is a man who is also brave, but in a different way. He adheres by faith to some impossible absurd telos [end, goal]. It is here in Fear and Trembling that Kierkegaard introduces his concept of "faith by virtue of the absurd". Abraham is not only a man of resignation resolve , but is the father of faith, the supreme example of faith against the absurd. God had promised him a son. Then God commands Abraham to sacrifice this long-awaited son. Somehow, Abraham had the faith to obey God, knowing that God would deliver his son. In later works Kierkegaard would advance the concept of the paradoxical Philosophical Fragments , Concluding Unscientific Postscript , and the dichotomy of faith versus offence Practice In Christianity. The knights of the infinite resignation are easily recognizableâ€”their walk is light and bold. But they who carry the treasure of faith are likely to disappoint, for externally they have a striking resemblance to bourgeois philistinism, while infinite resignation, like faith, deeply disdains p. Infinite resignation is the last stage before faith, so that anyone who has not made this movement does not have faith, for only in infinite resignation do I become conscious of my eternal validity, and only then can one speak of grasping existence by virtue of faith Precisely because

resignation is antecedent, faith is no esthetic emotion but something far higher; it is not the spontaneous inclination of the heart but the paradox of existence p. Johannes de Silentio does not, however, denigrate resignation. But as important as resignation is, faith is infinitely more important. It is entirely underrated.

Chapter 3 : Kierkegaard, D. Anthony Storm's Commentary on - The Single Individual

Søren Kierkegaard's two heroes were Socrates and Jesus Christ. When explaining what he took his purpose as a philosopher to be, Kierkegaard said, "My task is a Socratic task" to rectify the concept of what it means to be a Christian." 1 This nineteenth-century Danish philosopher () is perhaps best known as the father of existentialism, a school of philosophical thought most.

His father, Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard, was a prosperous but retired businessman who devoted the later years of his life to raising his children. He was a man of deep but gloomy and guilt-ridden piety who was haunted by the memory of having once cursed God as a boy and of having begun his family by getting his maid pregnant and then marrying her shortly after the death of his first wife. Kierkegaard enrolled at the University of Copenhagen in but did not complete his studies until Like the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel , whose system he would severely criticize, Kierkegaard entered university in order to study theology but devoted himself to literature and philosophy instead. His thinking during this period is revealed in a journal entry, which is often cited as containing the germ of his later work: The thing is to find a truth which is true for me, to find the idea for which I can live and die. While a student at the university, Kierkegaard explored the literary figures of Don Juan , the wandering Jew , and especially Faust , looking for existential models for his own life. The first collision occurred during his student days: On the one hand, he often seemed to be moving away from the faith of his father and back toward it at virtually the same time. On the other hand, he often stressed that conversion is a long process. He saw becoming a Christian as the task of a lifetime. He took his doctoral exams and wrote his dissertation, *Om begrebet ironi med stadigt hensyn til Socrates* On the Concept of Irony, with Constant Reference to Socrates , completing it in June of and defending it in September. In between, he broke his engagement with Regine Olsen, thus initiating the second major collision of his life. They had met in , when she was only 15 years old, and had become engaged in What is clear is that this relationship haunted him for the rest of his life. Saying in his will that he considered engagement as binding as marriage, he left all his possessions to Regine she did not accept them, however, since she had married long before Kierkegaard died. It is also clear that this crisis triggered a period of astonishing literary productivity, during which Kierkegaard published many of the works for which he is best known: Even after acknowledging that he had written these works, however, Kierkegaard insisted that they continue to be attributed to their pseudonymous authors. The pseudonyms are best understood by analogy with characters in a novel, created by the actual author to embody distinctive worldviews; it is left to the reader to decide what to make of each one. Kierkegaard had intended to cease writing at this point and become a country pastor. But it was not to be. The first period of literary activity was followed by a second . Instead of retiring, he picked a quarrel with *The Corsair*, a newspaper known for its liberal political sympathies but more famous as a scandal sheet that used satire to skewer the establishment. Although *The Corsair* had praised some of the pseudonymous works, Kierkegaard did not wish to see his own project confused with that of the newspaper, so he turned his satirical skills against it. *The Corsair* took the bait, and for months Kierkegaard was the target of raucous ridicule, the greatest butt of jokes in Copenhagen. Better at giving than at taking, he was deeply wounded, and indeed he never fully recovered. If the broken engagement was the cloud that hung over the first literary period, the *Corsair* debacle was the ghost that haunted the second. The final collision was with the Church of Denmark Lutheran and its leaders, the bishops J. As long as Mynster, the family pastor from his childhood, was alive, Kierkegaard refrained from personal attacks. These are not developmental stages in a biological or psychological sense a natural and all-but-automatic unfolding according to some DNA of the spirit. But there is a directionality in the sense that the earlier stages have the later ones as their telos, or goal, while the later stages both presuppose and include the earlier ones as important but subordinate moments. The personages Kierkegaard creates to embody the aesthetic stage have two preoccupations, the arts and the erotic. It is tempting to see the aesthete as a cultured hedonist a fairly obvious offshoot of the Romantic movement who accepts the distinction made by Immanuel Kant between artistic and sensuous pleasure while combining them in a single existential project. This clue helps

one both to define the aesthetic stage and to see what a stage or sphere of existence in general is. What the various goals of aesthetic existence have in common is that they have nothing to do with right and wrong. The criteria by which the good life is defined are premoral, unconcerned with good and evil. A stage or sphere of existence, then, is a fundamental project, a form of life, a mode of being-in-the-world that defines success in life by its own distinctive criteria. What might motivate an aesthete to choose the ethical? The aesthete, he argues, fails to become a self at all but becomes, by choice, what David Hume ⁷⁶ said the self inevitably is: Moreover, the aesthete fails to see that in the ethical the aesthetic is not abolished but ennobled. Judge William presents marriage as the scene of this transformation, in which, through commitment, the self acquires temporal continuity and, following Hegel, the sensuous is raised to the level of spirit. In *Fear and Trembling* this ethical stage is teleologically suspended in the religious, which means not that it is abolished but that it is reduced to relative validity in relation to something absolute, which is its proper goal. But Hegel argued that human beings are too deeply embedded in history to attain such purity and that their grasp of the right and the good is mediated by the laws and customs of the societies in which they live. It is this Hegelian ethics of socialization that preoccupies Judge William and that gets relativized in *Fear and Trembling*. These labels do not bother Kierkegaard, because he interprets reason as human, all too human⁷⁷ as the rationale of the current social order, which knows nothing higher than itself. In the language of Karl Marx ⁸³, what presents itself as reason is in fact ideology. Kierkegaard interprets Abrahamic faith as agreeing with Hegel and Marx about this historical finitude of reason, and, precisely because of this, he insists that the voice of God is an authority that is higher than the rationality of either the current establishment Hegel or the revolution Marx. Against both Hegel and Marx, Kierkegaard holds that history is not the scene in which human reason overcomes this finitude and becomes the ultimate standard of truth. Three dimensions of the religious life The simple scheme of the three stages becomes more complex in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. The fundamental distinction is now between objectivity and subjectivity, with two examples of each. One example is the aesthetic posture, presented in earlier work; the other is the project of speculative philosophy, to which this text devotes major attention. The target is Hegelian philosophy, which takes the achievement of comprehensive, absolute knowledge to be the highest human task. But, it is argued in the first place, speculative philosophy cannot even keep its own promises. It purports to begin without presuppositions and to conclude with a final, all-encompassing system. The very idea that thought should be without presuppositions, however, is itself a presupposition, and thus the system is never quite able to complete itself. The goal of objective knowledge is legitimate, but it can never be more than approximately accomplished. Reality may well be a system for God, but not for any human knower. Secondly, even if speculative philosophy could deliver what it promises, it would have forgotten that the highest human task is not cognition but rather the personal appropriation or embodiment of whatever insights into the good and the right one is able to achieve. Becoming a self in this way is called existence, inwardness, and subjectivity. This use of existence as a technical term for the finite, human self that is always in the process of becoming can be seen as the birth of existentialism. Many scholars accordingly refer to Kierkegaard as the father of that movement. The two modes of subjectivity are not, as one might expect, the ethical and the religious stages. One does not become a self simply through successful socialization. Besides, in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, ethics is treated as already recontextualized in a religious rather than merely a social context. Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms refer to the absolute good variously as the Idea, the Eternal, or God. There is something paradoxical about Religiousness A. Socratic ignorance⁷⁸ the claim of Socrates that he is the wisest of men because, while others think that they know, he knows that he does not⁷⁹ reflects the realization that the relation of the existing, and thus temporal, individual to the eternal does not fit neatly into human conceptual frameworks. But Christianity, as Religiousness B, is more radically paradoxical, for the eternal itself has become paradoxical as the insertion of God in time. In this way the task of relating absolutely to the absolute becomes even more strenuous, for human reason is overwhelmed, even offended, by the claim that Jesus is fully human and fully divine. For example, the two halves of *Sickness unto Death* can be read as reprising Religiousness A and B, respectively, in a different voice. These works present the second, specifically Christian, ethics that had been promised as far back as *The Concept of Anxiety*. They also go beyond the religion of hidden inwardness, whether A or B, in which the

relation between God and the soul takes place out of public view. Faith, the inward God-relation, must show itself outwardly in works of love. This commanded love is contrasted with erotic love and friendship. Through its poets, society celebrates these two forms of love, but only God dares to command the love of neighbours. The celebrated loves are spontaneous: Children do not have to be taught to seek friends; nor, at puberty, do they need to be commanded to fall in love. The celebrated loves are also preferential: By contrast, commanded love is not spontaneous, and it needs to be commanded precisely because it is not preferential. For the Christian, this command comes from Christ, who is himself its embodiment to be imitated. As these themes came more clearly into focus in his writings, the attack upon Christendom with which his life ended became inevitable. Kierkegaard says that his writings as a whole are religious. They are best seen as belonging to the prophetic traditions, in which religious beliefs become the basis for a critique of the religious communities that profess them. The 20th-century theologies that were influenced by Kierkegaard go beyond the tasks of metaphysical affirmation and ethical instruction to a critique of complacent piety. In existential philosophies—which are often less overtly theological and sometimes entirely secular—this element of critique is retained but is directed against forms of personal and social life that do not take the tasks of human existence seriously enough. Thus, Friedrich Nietzsche complains that his secular contemporaries do not take the death of God seriously enough, just as Kierkegaard complains that his Christian contemporaries do not take God seriously enough.

Chapter 4 : Kierkegaard, D. Anthony Storm's Commentary on - Fear and Trembling

Kierkegaard's theological work focuses on Christian ethics, the institution of the Church, the differences between purely objective proofs of Christianity, the infinite qualitative distinction between man and God, and the individual's subjective relationship to the God-Man Jesus the Christ, which came through faith.

She was an unassuming figure: Copenhagen in the s and s had crooked streets where carriages rarely went. Kierkegaard loved to walk them. In , Kierkegaard wrote, "I had real Christian satisfaction in the thought that, if there were no other, there was definitely one man in Copenhagen whom every poor person could freely accost and converse with on the street; that, if there were no other, there was one man who, whatever the society he most commonly frequented, did not shun contact with the poor, but greeted every maidservant he was acquainted with, every manservant, every common laborer. At the other end was the Royal Theatre where Fru Heiberg performed. He is said to have believed that his personal sins, perhaps indiscretions such as cursing the name of God in his youth [26] or impregnating Ane out of wedlock, necessitated this punishment. Though five of his seven children died before he did, both Kierkegaard and his brother Peter Christian Kierkegaard outlived him. And by the same token that no one who truly believed in the forgiveness of sin would live their own life as an objection against the existence of forgiveness. This fear of not finding forgiveness is devastating. Hold not our sins up against us but hold us up against our sins so that the thought of You when it wakens in our soul, and each time it wakens, should not remind us of what we have committed but of what You did forgive, not of how we went astray but of how You did save us! He went on to study theology at the University of Copenhagen. He was then twenty-three years old; he had something quite irregular in his entire form and had a strange coiffure. His hair rose almost six inches above his forehead into a tousled crest that gave him a strange, bewildered look. Ane died on 31 July , age 66, possibly from typhus. On 11 August, Kierkegaard wrote: I so deeply desired that he might have lived a few years more Right now I feel there is only one person E. Boesen with whom I can really talk about him. Lund was a good friend of Georg Brandes and Julius Lange. At lunch one day I overturned a salt-shaker. Passionate as he was and intense as he easily could become, he began to scold so severely that he even said that I was a prodigal and things like that. Then I made an objection, reminding him of an old episode in the family when my sister Nicoline had dropped a very expensive tureen and Father had not said a word but pretended it was nothing at all. Well, you see, it was such an expensive thing that no scolding was needed; she realized quite well that it was wrong, but precisely when it is a trifle there must be a scolding. The first English edition of the journals was edited by Alexander Dru in His question was whether or not one can have a spiritual confidant. He wrote the following in his Concluding Postscript: If such a relation is assumed, it actually means that the party has ceased to be spirit. The following passage, from 1 August , is perhaps his most oft-quoted aphorism and a key quote for existentialist studies: What matters is to find a purpose, to see what it really is that God wills that I shall do; the crucial thing is to find a truth which is truth for me, to find the idea for which I am willing to live and die. Not until a man has inwardly understood himself and then sees the course he is to take does his life gain peace and meaning; only then is he free of that irksome, sinister traveling companion "that irony of life, which manifests itself in the sphere of knowledge and invites true knowing to begin with a not-knowing Socrates just as God created the world from nothing. But in the waters of morality it is especially at home to those who still have not entered the tradewinds of virtue. Here it tumbles a person about in a horrible way, for a time lets him feel happy and content in his resolve to go ahead along the right path, then hurls him into the abyss of despair. Often it lulls a man to sleep with the thought, "After all, things cannot be otherwise," only to awaken him suddenly to a rigorous interrogation. Frequently it seems to let a veil of forgetfulness fall over the past, only to make every single trifle appear in a strong light again. Often when a person has concentrated on something, a minor external circumstance arises which destroys everything. As in the case of a man who, weary of life, is about to throw himself into the Thames and at the crucial moment is halted by the sting of a mosquito. Frequently a person feels his very best when the illness is the worst, as in tuberculosis. In vain he tries to resist it but he has not sufficient strength, and it is no help to him that he has gone through the same thing many

times; the kind of practice acquired in this way does not apply here. Abrupt changes in thought, repetitive writing, and unusual turns of phrase are some among the many tactics he used to throw readers off track. Consequently, there are many varying interpretations of his journals. Kierkegaard did not doubt the importance his journals would have in the future. In December, he wrote: Kierkegaard and Olsen met on 8 May and were instantly attracted to each other, but sometime around 11 August he had second thoughts. In his journals, Kierkegaard wrote idealistically about his love for her: You, sovereign queen of my heart, Regina, hidden in the deepest secrecy of my breast, in the fullness of my life-idea, there where it is just as far to heaven as to hell—unknown divinity! O, can I really believe the poets when they say that the first time one sees the beloved object he thinks he has seen her long before, that love like all knowledge is recollection, that love in the single individual also has its prophecies, its types, its myths, its Old Testament. Everywhere, in the face of every girl, I see features of your beauty He soon felt disillusioned about his prospects. He broke off the engagement on 11 August, though it is generally believed that the two were deeply in love. In his journals, Kierkegaard mentions his belief that his "melancholy" made him unsuitable for marriage, but his precise motive for ending the engagement remains unclear. The university panel considered it noteworthy and thoughtful, but too informal and witty for a serious academic thesis. Kierkegaard employed the same technique as a way to provide examples of indirect communication. In writing under various pseudonyms to express sometimes contradictory positions, Kierkegaard is sometimes criticized for playing with various viewpoints without ever committing to one in particular. He has been described by those opposing his writings as indeterminate in his standpoint as a writer, though he himself has testified to all his work deriving from a service to Christianity. *De omnibus dubitandum est* Latin: The book is basically an argument about faith and marriage with a short discourse at the end telling them they should stop arguing. *Eremita* thinks "B", a judge, makes the most sense. Kierkegaard stressed the "how" of Christianity as well as the "how" of book reading in his works rather than the "what". Swenson first translated the works in the 1840s and titled them the *Edifying Discourses*; however, in 1909, Howard V. Hong translated the works again but called them the *Upbuilding Discourses*. The discourse or conversation should be "upbuilding", which means one would build up the other person, or oneself, rather than tear down in order to build up. *Fear and Trembling* was published under the pseudonym *Johannes de Silentio*. He tries to see if the new science of psychology can help him understand himself. *Constantin Constantius*, who is the pseudonymous author of that book, is the psychologist. At the same time, he published *Three Upbuilding Discourses*, under his own name, which dealt specifically with how love can be used to hide things from yourself or others. Kierkegaard questioned whether an individual can know if something is a good gift from God or not and concludes by saying, "it does not depend, then, merely upon what one sees, but what one sees depends upon how one sees; all observation is not just a receiving, a discovering, but also a bringing forth, and insofar as it is that, how the observer himself is constituted is indeed decisive. Theologians, philosophers and historians were all engaged in debating about the existence of God. This is direct communication and Kierkegaard thinks this might be useful for theologians, philosophers, and historians associations but not at all useful for the "single individual" who is interested in becoming a Christian. Kierkegaard always wrote for "that single individual whom I with joy and gratitude call my reader" [83] The single individual must put what is understood to use or it will be lost. Reflection can take an individual only so far before the imagination begins to change the whole content of what was being thought about. Love is won by being exercised just as much as faith and patience are. He also wrote several more pseudonymous books in 1843. He used indirect communication in the first book and direct communication in the rest of them. His love for Regine was a disaster but it helped him because of his point of view. Then he turns from logic to ethics and finds that Hegelian philosophy is negative [90] [91] rather than positive. He always stressed deliberation and choice in his writings and wrote against comparison. To be clothed, then, means to be a human being—and therefore to be well clothed. Worldly worry is preoccupied with clothes and dissimilarity of clothes. Should not the invitation to learn from the lilies be welcome to everyone just as the reminder is useful to him! Alas, those great, uplifting, simple thoughts, those first thoughts, are more and more forgotten, perhaps entirely forgotten in the weekday and worldly life of comparisons. The one human being compares himself with others, the one generation compares itself with the other, and thus the heaped up pile of

comparisons overwhelms a person. As the ingenuity and busyness increase, there come to be more and more in each generation who slavishly work a whole lifetime far down in the low underground regions of comparisons. Indeed, just as miners never see the light of day, so these unhappy people never come to see the light: And up there in the higher regions of comparison, smiling vanity plays its false game and deceives the happy ones so that they receive no impression from those lofty, simple thoughts, those first thoughts. His sales were meager and he had no publicist or editor. He was writing in the dark, so to speak. Upon returning he published his Discourses of 1844 in one volume, Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses, 29 May and finished the first part of his authorship with Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments which was a rewrite of Philosophical Fragments as well as an explanation of the first part of his authorship. In he further explained himself in his Journal. The task has occupied me totally, for it has occupied me religiously; I have understood the completion of this authorship as my duty, as a responsibility resting upon me. You can keep the secret to yourself also when you profess your faith with bold confidence, and when you lie weak on your sickbed and cannot move a limb when you cannot even move your tongue, you can still have the secret within you. But the originality of faith is related in turn to the originality of Christianity. Works of Love, , Hong p. He defined this as a "special type of religious conflict the Germans call *Anfechtung*" contesting or disputing. It should help the single individual to make a leap of faith , the faith that God is love and has a task for that very same single individual. The contradiction does not consist in his being different from everyone else but the contradiction is that he, with all his inwardness hidden within him, with this pregnancy of suffering and benediction in his inner being, looks just like all the others-and inwardness is indeed hidden simply by his looking exactly like others. Honor and praise be to the eternal: You are indistinguishable from anyone else among those whom you might wish to resemble, those who in the decision are with the good-they are all clothed alike, girdled about the loins with truth, clad in the armor of righteousness, wearing the helmet of salvation! But if the consciousness of guilt is the beginning, then the beginning of doubt is rendered impossible, and then the joy is that there is always a task. The joy, then, is that it is eternally certain that God is love; more specifically understood, the joy is that there is always a task.

Chapter 5 : Table of contents for Socrates on friendship and community

Kierkegaard's rhetorical play with the inverse Christian dialectic was designed not to make the word of God easier to assimilate, but to establish more clearly the absolute distance that separates human beings from God.

This work is one of three Kierkegaard wrote on his authorship. The Point of View was also published posthumously, along with this work. As a footnote indicates p. Begun in , it was heavily revised in A very brief postscript was added in with footnotes to the text. Briefly, in relation to "the numeric masses", the individual person is of infinite importance. God deals with, saves and judges individuals. The masses have no real essence. In The Single Individual he repeatedly asserts that the "crowd is untruth". He begins with the subject of politics. This is especially significant because politics emphasizes the whole, while Christianity, as proffered by Kierkegaard, emphasizes the individual before God. The Single Individual begins thusly. In these times politics is everything. Between this and the religious view the difference is heaven-wide *toto caelo* , as also the point of departure and the ultimate aim differ from it *toto caelo*, since politics begins on earth and remains on earth, whereas religion, deriving its beginning from above, seeks to explain and transfigure and thereby exalt the earthly to heaven p. In ways, Kierkegaard thought that his view was prophetic because of the sufferings that would come soon on the political scene. The effects of the French Revolution would be realized in , when domestic and foreign upheavals led to an armed conflict with Germany, in which the latter annexed some of Denmark. Kierkegaard felt that only the power of the masses could have propelled the country into such a calamity. As we noted above, Kierkegaard revised this work in and inserted notes that underscored his viewpoint in light of recent events. Perhaps there is no other work where Kierkegaard so clearly and emphatically spells out the value of the individual versus the masses. There is a view of life which conceives that where the crowd is, there is also the truth, and that in truth itself there is need of having the crowd on its side. There is another view of life which conceives that wherever there is a crowd there is untruth, so that to consider for a moment the extreme case , even if every individual, each for himself in private, were to be in possession of the truth, yet in case they were all to get together in a crowdâ€”a crowd to which any decisive significance is attributed, a voting, noisy, audible crowdâ€”untruth would at once be in evidence p. Lest he be misunderstood, Kierkegaard appends two footnotes to this passage, which we quote in part. This is to say that not only does a thing not become true simply because many or all hold it to be trueâ€”which should be obvious to any person even a little inclined to a scientific bentâ€”but as soon as any idea, even a true one, is asserted by a crowd, it becomes untruth, because the truth cannot be expressed thereby. The God-relationship is worked out in the inner man. Kierkegaard has often been criticized for being anti-clerical and anti-ecclesiastical. But in fact, he was only against clerics who falsified the truth of the Gospel, and he was against the chatter of the mindless congregation. To find an example of a more sympathetic view toward ecclesiastical gatherings, see Two Ages. There he says, When individuals each one individually are essentially and passionately related to an idea and together are essentially related to the same idea, the relation is optimal and normative p. In a worldly and temporal sense, it will be said by the man of bustle, sociability, and amicableness, "how unreasonable that only one attains the goal; for it is far more likely that many, by the strength of united effort, should attain the goal and when we are many success is more certain and it is easier for each man severally. It does away with it or transforms it into a fable, and puts in its place the modern or, we might rather say, the old pagan notion that to be a man is to belong to a race endowed with reason, to belong to it as a specimen, so that the race or species is higher than the individual, which is to say that there are no more individuals but only specimens. That means, everyone can and every one should be this oneâ€”but only one attains the goal p. There, he deliberates on the Christian dogma of hereditary sin, that is called into play whenever a man freely sins. If a man were to inherit sinfulness prior to committing an actual sin, he would be less than the race. Here, Kierkegaard continues a thought that is diametrically opposed to communism as we now know it. The state, the throng of men, the entire world combined, is less important than the solitary individual. He means any group, any number of people, who as a group lay claim to truth. Truth is true only when posited by individuals. The falsehood first of all is the notion that the crowd does what

in fact only the individual in the crowd does, though it be every individual. For every individual who flees for refuge into the crowd, and so flees in cowardice from being an individual. But let the situation be one that challenges the individual, requiring each one for himself to be alone with Him in a solitary place and as an individual to step up to Him and spit upon Him—the man never was born and never will be born with courage or insolence enough to do such a thing. This is untruth p. Kierkegaard wishes his reader to know that he is talking of eternal truth—not mathematical or anecdotal truth—which "becomes untruth when it is transferred to the intellectual, the spiritual, the religious fields" p. It is epitomized and exacerbated by the press. In this case Kierkegaard was speaking from painful experience from his affair with The Corsair see The Activity of a Traveling Esthetician. Kierkegaard always detested the press, though he did publish articles himself. The fact that an anonymous author by the help of the press can day by day find occasion to say even about intellectual, moral, and religious matters whatever he pleases to say, and what perhaps he would be very far from having the courage to say as an individual; that every time he opens his mouth or shall we say his abysmal gullet? Nay, truth—which abhors also this untruth of aspiring after broad dissemination as the one aim—is not nimble on its feet. In the first place it cannot work by means of the fantastical means of the press, which is the untruth; the communicator of the truth can only be a solitary individual. And again the communication of it can only be addressed to the individual. In politics equality is achieved by sameness and bland agreement. In Christianity equality is expressed by equally loving the neighbor as the self. As might be expected of a plan guided by a "godly deception", there were many who misunderstood him. All doubt which, be it observed parenthetically, is just simply disobedience to God—when it is ethically considered and not made a fuss about with an air of scientific superiority—all doubt has ultimately its stronghold in the illusion of temporal existence that we are a lot of us, pretty much the whole of humanity, which in the end can jolly well overawe God and be itself the Christ. And pantheism is an acoustic illusion which confounds vox populi with vox dei, an optical illusion, a cloud-picture formed out of the mists of temporal existence, a mirage formed by reflection from temporal existence and regarded as the eternal p. He also compared himself to a spy or secret agent. At the close of this work he mentions missionaries who preach the gospel to pagans, who preach, in other words, from the outside. But there is a missionary who preaches from within, preaching to those who allege that they are Christians. Though he does not actually say that he is such a missionary, he does assume that role in the coming years. In a short postscript dating from he still stands by the contents of the work. In a longer postscript from March, written a few months before his death, and while he was in the heat of his assault on the Church, he addresses a possible misgiving. It is perfectly true that Jesus had disciples, and to take a human instance that Socrates also had disciples; but not in any sense that would make my thesis false did either Christ or Socrates have disciples—ethically and ethically-religiously the crowd is untruth, the untruth of wishing to work by means of the crowd, the numerical, of wishing to make the numerical the criterion which decides what truth is p.

Chapter 6 : Søren Kierkegaard, "Truth as Subjectivity"

Kierkegaard not only believed that God existed and that Christianity was true but that the only real way to live is to choose God by a total faith commitment where a person progresses from a life of mere pleasure (aesthetic), to a life of rules and obedience.

He rarely left his hometown of Copenhagen, and travelled abroad only five times—four times to Berlin and once to Sweden. His prime recreational activities were attending the theatre, walking the streets of Copenhagen to chat with ordinary people, and taking brief carriage jaunts into the surrounding countryside. His teachers at the university included F. Martensen also had a profound effect on Kierkegaard, but largely in a negative manner. Kierkegaard regarded Martensen as one of his chief intellectual rivals. Martensen was only five years his senior, but was already lecturing at Copenhagen University when Kierkegaard was a student there. Heiberg, more than any other person, was responsible for introducing Hegelianism into Denmark. Kierkegaard spent a good deal of energy trying to break into the Heiberg literary circle, but desisted once he had found his own voice in *The Concept of Irony*. Much of the thrust of his critique of Hegelianism is that its system of thought is abstracted from the everyday lives of its proponents. This existential critique consists in demonstrating how the life and work of a philosopher contradict one another. Kierkegaard derived this form of critique from the Greek notion of judging philosophers by their lives rather than simply by their intellectual artefacts. Because of his existentialist orientation, most of his interventions in contemporary theory do double duty as means of working through events from his own life. His mother does not rate a direct mention in his published works, or in his diaries—not even on the day she died. However, for a writer who places so much emphasis on indirect communication, and on the semiotics of invisibility, we should regard this absence as significant. Kierkegaard was deeply enamoured of the Danish language and worked throughout his writings to assert the strengths of his mother-tongue over the invasive, imperialistic influences of Latin and German. With respect to the former, Kierkegaard had to petition the king to be allowed to write his philosophy dissertation *On the Concept of Irony* with constant reference to Socrates in Danish. Even though permission was granted he was still required to defend his dissertation publicly in Latin. Latin had been the pan-European language of science and scholarship. In *Repetition*, the character and pseudonymous author Constantin Constantius congratulates the Danish language on providing the word for an important new philosophical concept, viz. This may explain the sense of urgency that drove Kierkegaard to write so prolifically in the years leading up to his 34th birthday. The breaking of the engagement allowed Kierkegaard to devote himself monastically to his religious purpose, as well as to establish his outsider status outside the norm of married bourgeois life. It also freed him from close personal entanglements with women, thereby leading him to objectify them as ideal creatures, and to reproduce the patriarchal values of his church and father. The latter included viewing women in terms of their traditional social roles, particularly as mothers and wives, but also in their traditional spiritual roles as epitomes of devotion and self-sacrifice. This problem was compounded by the fact that Denmark had recently and very rapidly been transformed from a feudal society into a capitalist society. Given this problematic in this social context Kierkegaard perceived a need to invent a form of communication which would not produce stereotyped identities. On the contrary, he needed a form of rhetoric which would force people back onto their own resources, to take responsibility for their own existential choices, and to become who they are beyond their socially imposed identities. In this undertaking Kierkegaard was inspired by the figure of Socrates, whose incessant irony undermined all knowledge claims that were taken for granted or unreflectively inherited from traditional culture. In his dissertation *On the Concept of Irony* with constant reference to Socrates Kierkegaard argued that the historical Socrates used his irony in order to facilitate the birth of subjectivity in his interlocutors. Kierkegaard sought to provide a similar service for his own contemporaries. He used irony, parody, satire, humor, and deconstructive techniques in order to make conventionally accepted forms of knowledge and value untenable. He was a gadfly—constantly irritating his contemporaries with discomfiting thoughts. He was also a midwife—assisting at the birth of individual subjectivity by forcing his contemporaries to develop an inner life through critical self-reflection. Hegelianism

promised to make absolute knowledge available by virtue of a science of logic. Kierkegaard thought this to be the hubristic attempt to build a new tower of Babel, or a scala paradisi—a dialectical ladder by which humans can climb with ease up to heaven. Instead of seeing scientific knowledge as the means of human redemption, he regarded it as the greatest obstacle to redemption. Instead of seeking to give people more knowledge he sought to take away what passed for knowledge. Instead of seeking to make God and Christian faith perfectly intelligible he sought to emphasize the absolute transcendence by God of all human categories. Instead of setting himself up as a religious authority, Kierkegaard used a vast array of textual devices to undermine his authority as an author and to place responsibility for the existential significance to be derived from his texts squarely on the reader. Kierkegaard distanced himself from his texts by a variety of devices which served to problematize the authorial voice for the reader. He used pseudonyms in many of his works both overtly aesthetic ones and overtly religious ones. He partitioned the texts into prefaces, forewords, interludes, postscripts, appendices. Sometimes Kierkegaard appended his name as author, sometimes as the person responsible for publication, sometimes not at all. Sometimes Kierkegaard would publish more than one book on the same day. These simultaneous books embodied strikingly contrasting perspectives. He also published whole series of works simultaneously, viz. All of this play with narrative point of view, with contrasting works, and with contrasting internal partitions within individual works leaves the reader very disoriented. Christian faith, for Kierkegaard, is not a matter of learning dogma by rote. This belief is offensive to reason, since it only exists in the face of the absurd the paradox of the eternal, immortal, infinite God being incarnated in time as a finite mortal. These works fall into three genres: The point of indirect communication is to position the reader to relate to the truth with appropriate passion, rather than to communicate the truth as such. It draws on irony, the comic and is high-spirited, in order to get thoughts into motion prior to action. A deliberation is a weighing-up, as a propaedeutic to action. It seeks to build up the faith that it presupposes. Kierkegaard published many of his Edifying Discourses in short collections to accompany particular pseudonymous texts, then later published them again in larger collections. These are particularly intimate addresses to the sincere Christian, who strives to deepen the subjective passion of faith through confession and through acceptance of divine forgiveness. This was aimed at subverting our focus on worldly goals in order to refocus on other-worldly goals. Our struggle to accept divine forgiveness can become mired in despair, including the second-order despair over the impossibility of forgiveness of our sins and the demonic despair of defiance in which we refuse to accept forgiveness. The first is the aesthetic, which gives way to the ethical, which gives way to the religious. The aesthetic stage of existence is characterized by the following: The figure of the aesthete in Either-Or Part One is an ironic portrayal of German romanticism, but it also draws on medieval characters as diverse as Don Juan, Ahasuerus, and Faust. Johannes the seducer is a reflective aesthete, who gains sensuous delight not so much from the act of seduction but from engineering the possibility of seduction. His real aim is the manipulation of people and situations in ways which generate interesting reflections in his own voyeuristic mind. The aesthetic perspective transforms quotidian dullness into a richly poetic world by whatever means it can. That is, the aesthete uses artifice, arbitrariness, irony, and wilful imagination to recreate the world in his own image. The prime motivation for the aesthete is the transformation of the boring into the interesting. This type of aestheticism is criticized from the point of view of ethics. It is seen to be empty self-serving and escapist. It is a despairing means of avoiding commitment and responsibility. And it is self-deceiving insofar as it substitutes fantasies for actual states of affairs. But Kierkegaard did not want to abandon aesthetics altogether in favor of the ethical and the religious. As far as the aesthetic stage of existence is concerned what is preserved in the higher religious stage is the sense of infinite possibility made available through the imagination. But this no longer excludes what is actual. Nor is it employed for egotistic ends. Aesthetic irony is transformed into religious humor, and the aesthetic transfiguration of the actual world into the ideal is transformed into the religious transubstantiation of the finite world into an actual reconciliation with the infinite. Language and all other media of representation belong to the realm of the ideal. No matter how eloquent or evocative language is it can never be the actual. Therefore, any representation of faith is always suspended in the realm of ideality and can never be actual faith. In fact Johannes Climacus acknowledges this implicitly when at the end of Concluding Unscientific

Postscript he revokes everything he has said, with the important rider that to say something then to revoke it is not the same as never having said it in the first place. His presentation of religious faith in an aesthetic medium at least provides an opportunity for his readers to make their own leap of faith, by appropriating with inward passion the paradoxical religion of Christianity into their own lives. These works include those by Anti-Climacus, who represents the Christian point of view par excellence, beyond where Kierkegaard placed himself. Kierkegaard also used many biblical figures and stories with poignant and striking effect in the religious writings he published under his own name. As a poet of the religious Kierkegaard was always preoccupied with aesthetics. In fact, contrary to popular misconceptions of Kierkegaard which represent him as becoming increasingly hostile to poetry, he increasingly referred to himself as a poet in his later years all but one of over ninety references to himself as a poet in his journals date from after Kierkegaard never claimed to write with religious authority, as an apostle. His works represent both less religiously enlightened and more religiously enlightened positions than he thought he had attained in his own existence. Such representations were only possible in an aesthetic medium of imagined possibilities like poetry. It is used to denote both: These social norms are used as reasons to make sense of, or justify, an action within a community. Even human sacrifice is justified in terms of how it serves the community, so that when Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter Iphigenia he is regarded as a tragic hero since his community understands that the sacrifice is required by the gods for the success of the Greek expedition to Troy Fear and Trembling. Kierkegaard, however, recognizes duties that cannot be justified in terms of social norms. That is, Abraham recognizes a duty to something higher than both his social duty not to kill an innocent person and his personal commitment to his beloved son, viz. However, he cannot give an intelligible ethical justification of his act to the community in terms of social norms, but must simply obey the divine command. In order to raise oneself beyond the merely aesthetic life, which is a life of drifting in imagination, possibility and sensation, one needs to make a commitment. That is, the aesthete needs to choose the ethical, which entails a commitment to communication and decision procedures. The metaethics or normative ethics are cognitivist, laying down various necessary conditions for ethically correct action. The choice of metaethics, however, is noncognitive. There is no adequate proof of the truth of metaethics. The choice of normative ethics is motivated, but in a noncognitive way. The Judge seeks to motivate the choice of his normative ethics through the avoidance of despair.

Chapter 7 : Søren Kierkegaard - Wikipedia

Kierkegaard endorsed Socrates' conflating intellectual with moral mistakes. The individual and the crowd: one becomes more of an individual through conscious choices, and one becomes less of an individual through following the crowd.

A Study in Philosophy and Faith Published: October 08, Jacob Howland, Kierkegaard and Socrates: It should be said straightaway that the title of the book is somewhat misleading. In the light of these comments, the book would have been better titled Johannes Climacus and Socrates -- and it is certainly better read as a contribution to that more limited task. This, it should be emphasized, is not of itself a criticism of the content, merely a guideline for reading and evaluating what is being offered. As a study of Kierkegaard and Socrates, it leaves much more to be said. The Socrates-like character of Johannes Climacus derives preliminary support from the choice of name for this pseudonym originally the name of a minor Church Father, implying as it seems the idea of an ascent from the human to the divine. This is deepened by the palpable philosophical eros of the young Johannes Climacus, as represented in the eponymous autobiographical fragment. Howland acknowledges there are reasons not to conflate this Johannes Climacus with the pseudonymous author of published works, but he nevertheless sees a continuity in both style and substance that is evidenced at a number of points in the Fragments. The key points here are the role of eros, the requirement that philosophy be lived, and the notion that certain moral and religious truths gain authority from being lived with conviction, sincerity, and integrity. In particular " [that] this enterprise depends on something akin to the faith that is required for learning in accordance with the religious hypothesis p. Yet the similarity between the Christian and the Socratic is also marked by dissimilarity, as Howland concedes. In a certain perspective, Socrates too speaks from a kind of divine knowledge to other mortals, and thus participates in both the divine and the human worlds. Yet Socrates is ambiguous in both his divine and his human roles, neither unambiguously divine nor unambiguously human. The paradox of the god incarnate, however, is that He is both unambiguously divine and unambiguously human. In Fragments itself, this is what is said to be decisive for the difference between the Socratic. The problem is not just that God is in heaven and we are on earth, but that God is the holy one in whom and before whom not even the slightest blemish of unholiness can be found, whilst we are corrupt in the very centre of our being. As for Kierkegaard, it is not only here in the Fragments that he makes such a claim, in his own voice, or in the voice of one or other pseudonym. I do not say that this closes the discussion, and The Sickness unto Death will revisit the question of sin with express regard to the relationship between Christian and Socratic understandings, but it is a point that needed fuller exploration than it is given here. A further, and relatively minor point though arguably one with serious ramifications, is in the discussion of the Interlude. But this is to suggest that the issue of the Virgin Birth qua article of faith is dependent on the question of historical fact, i. There is much for readers of Kierkegaard to gain from this study, and much that is said with charm, insight, and nuance. But there is also much more to be said and much more that needs to be said before the interrelated question of the multiple relationships between Kierkegaard, Climacus, Christ, the Christian believer and Socrates is fully clarified.

Søren Kierkegaard, "Truth as Subjectivity" Brief outline of Kierkegaard's life, works, and philosophy emphasizing the stages on life's way, authenticity, and truth as subjectivity. "An existential system cannot be formulated.

His philosophy was directed to the individual human being, especially in relation to Christian faith. He wrote in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*: I conceived it as my task to create difficulties everywhere. Like Socrates, Kierkegaard used to stop the unknown people on the streets and pose them the questions, talk and challenge them by his tricky stories. Beyond that, there are many references to Socrates in the further works, including *The Moment*, where Kierkegaard states: This analogy is the philosophy of self-knowledge. Thus, Kierkegaard using irony as a Socratic tool in his philosophical discourses, turns all attention to freedom, self-knowledge and importance of the individual, he writes: To deal with such duality, Kierkegaard takes from Socrates the concept of daimon. Kierkegaard was also who uses, like Socrates, aporia to explain the complexity of human faith and doubts. Aporia is a concept of decision making, which Kierkegaard explored in his *Philosophical Fragments* and the *Postscript*. This is an important existential problem, which relates to how the singular finds his or her own way through existence. The faith is full of doubts and fear, and in them God manifests itself. The dualism of the religion itself, is defined by Kierkegaard as of two types: Socrates thinks that nothing can be thought from outside, the truth is subjective and the answers are to be found in inner human self. Same for Kierkegaard, who reduces the religious claims to absurd, explained by aporia. For him each individual is free to discover the subjective truth. In *Journals*, Kierkegaard wrote: How did I come to be here? What is this thing called the world? How did I come into the world? Why was I not consulted? And If I am compelled to take part in it, where is the director? I want to see him.

In The Single Individual he repeatedly asserts that the "crowd is untruth". He begins with the subject of politics. He begins with the subject of politics. This is especially significant because politics emphasizes the whole, while Christianity, as proffered by Kierkegaard, emphasizes the individual before God.

The full text of this article in PDF format can be obtained by clicking [here](#). Kierkegaard, however, had a passionate faith in God. He was a staunch critic of the Danish church as well as a voice urging others to consider their need for God and His place in a truly fulfilled human existence. Much of what he wrote is strikingly relevant to contemporary life. Kierkegaard is often misunderstood, in part because of the complexity of his approach as an author. Many of his works are written under particular pseudonyms. That is, Kierkegaard takes on a persona as an author and writes from a perspective different from his own. In the preface, John of silence states that he is not a philosopher. He is trying to understand a faith that he does not have. Because Kierkegaard employs pseudonyms in this way, he is often misinterpreted. Michael believed that all of his seven children would die by the age of 33, the age of Jesus at His crucifixion. In Kierkegaard became engaged to Regine Olson. His inheritance from his father, who died in , was large enough that he would not need to work, but it was not enough to support a wife and children. Ultimately, Kierkegaard broke off the engagement, which he justified as necessary to fulfill his divine calling as a writer. It is clear that his relationship with Regine had a lasting impact on him, and its ending was felt by him to be a painful sacrifice. The existentialist wants to enable people to experience and practice their freedom as they choose what to value and how to live. Second, existentialists also seek to convert their readers. They want the reader to see that she has been deluded in some way, and to take a radically new perspective. This is similar to a religious conversion, and in fact for Kierkegaard it includes such a conversion. For other existentialists, the new perspective may not include God at all, but a purely human point of view. Existentialists argue that if we accept the fact of our freedom and the responsibility that goes along with it, we will be changed. Another key component of existentialism is the belief that emotions can be a means of understanding. For example, if a person feels a sense of fidelity to a friend who has died, this points him to the existence of God, who is the source of fidelity. He approaches these issues not merely in an abstract sense, but in a way that is both practical and prophetic. In keeping with his belief that philosophy should be relevant to our daily lives and speak to our deepest concerns, Kierkegaard discusses a process by which human beings can acquire deep satisfaction and become authentic persons. The main goal of a person in this stage is to satisfy her desires. These desires could be for many different things. The hedonist in pursuit of sensual pleasures is the perfect example of life in this stage. Because she is driven by her desires, she is not truly free and fails to have a consistent character. But a problem arises, even if she gets what she wants. Given their nature, humans are not satisfied with mere pleasures, whether from food, drink, sex, or television. We need something more; this type of life is empty. Because of this, a person living in this stage will at some point experience despair. This emotion of despair, then, is a means by which she can come to know that she must change, that life as she is living it is not now and cannot ever be truly satisfying. If she does, she can make progress towards living out her freedom rather than being captive to her desires. Ethical Stage The second stage is the ethical stage, in which the primary goal is to live according to ethical truth. In this stage, there are moral limits on what one can and cannot do. The individual takes responsibility for herself and her choices, and seeks to become what she ought to be. She seeks to fulfill her duties related to her work and her relationships. The ethical life introduces sacrifice; the self is no longer at the center of everything as it was in the previous stage. However, a new problem arises that prevents her from being truly fulfilled. She reflects on her life and realizes that she does not always do what she ought to do. This leads to a new problem, the problem of guilt and the despair that it produces. These emotions show her that a further change is needed if she is to be fulfilled. In response to this, she may simply try harder to do the right thing, to be the kind of person she wants to be, or she may move to the third and final stage. Religious Stage The religious stage is where the individual finds true fulfillment, and becomes truly authentic. Here, one realizes that she cannot always do the right thing. This is a fact of human nature that she accepts. She also receives

forgiveness from God, which resolves her guilt and eradicates her despair. She is now becoming an authentic individual because she is rightly related to God by a passionate faith in Him. She has been converted; she sees her life from a new perspective. For Kierkegaard, the religious person is no sour ascetic. Instead, she realizes the goodness of creation, and takes the sensual pleasures of food, drink, and sex to be gifts from God to be enjoyed in the right way. By grace she is rightly related to the physical world, other people, and God. Her physical and spiritual aspects are integrated in a way that brings wholeness and integrity to her character and to her life. For Kierkegaard, this is what it means to be a Christian. By contrast, an authentic Christianity is a personal, passionate, inner faith that leads one to act in the world. Many readers of his works come away thinking that for him faith is irrational. But he is no relativist. In fact, his aim is to preserve objectivity but to keep it deeply connected with a passionate subjectivity, or a deeply held inward commitment that moves one to obey God through acting in the world. He believes that there are objectively true moral principles, and that humans have moral obligations connected to the various roles they inhabit such as parent, ruler, or employee. He also believes that there is an objective reality that can be known and engaged, including divine reality. For example, he would reject the notion that we are merely complex biological machines at the mercy of the laws of nature, because this view undermines individual responsibility. He would also be critical of the person who claims to know the truths of Christianity, but does not live them. These truths must be grasped subjectively and lived out in daily life, if they are to be truly known. Another reason that Kierkegaard is thought to believe that faith is irrational has to do with the concept of the absurd in his writings. Many interpret Kierkegaard as holding the view that individuals should take a blind leap of faith and believe in something that is contradictory. Contemporary Christian philosopher Robert Adams thinks this interpretation is misguided, however, based on his reading of *Fear and Trembling*. Rather, the absurd refers to a believer giving up his claim but not his care for someone or something that he loves. Abraham illustrates this when he binds Isaac and is prepared to offer him to God as a sacrifice. Abraham loves Isaac with all that he is. He gives up any claim to Isaac as he intends to offer him as a sacrifice, but never renounces his love for Isaac. By faith he receives Isaac back again as the angel of the Lord tells him to relent. To receive back that which one has given up is the movement of faith. This same faith is important for others as well. Humans are to renounce their claim on the finite goods of the world, but in the same moment receive them back from God by faith. It is this concurrent resignation and reception that is the absurd, for Kierkegaard. But it is also the right thing to do. Abraham, Noah, and the apostles are biblical examples of such obedience. Authentic faith is different from dead religion because it produces genuine obedience and love of both God and others. Second, Christians are to renounce the world but then receive it back from God by faith to be enjoyed and experienced in the ways He intends. Believers are to renounce their claim on, but not their care for, what and whom they love. We can enjoy the finite goods of earthly life, but we must depend on God for our ultimate happiness. Finally, if Kierkegaard were alive today, he would exhort people to take responsibility for themselves and their choices. He would have little patience for shifting responsibility to genetics, environment, or upbringing. For Kierkegaard, a living faith is one that expresses itself in works of love for God and others see Gal. Ultimately, each person is responsible for who they are and how they live, and can only achieve their full potential through a passionate and living faith in God. This is what it means to truly know God in Christ. Austin is professor of philosophy at Eastern Kentucky University, where he specializes in ethics. His most recent book is *Being Good: Christian Virtues for Everyday Life* Eerdmans, Robert Solomon New York: Oxford University Press, , Cambridge University Press, , 3â€” 6. Baylor University Press, , Princeton University Press, Howard and Edna Hong London: Mary Warnock, *Existentialism* New York: Oxford University Press, , 1â€”