KIERKEGAARDIAN INTERSUBJECTIVITY AND THE QUESTION OF ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITY

By
Kevin Krumrei

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

In the Department of Philosophy

© Kevin Krumrei
BROCK UNIVERSITY
February 2005

All rights reserved. This work may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means, without permission of the author.
Kierkegaardian Intersubjectivity and the Question of Ethics and Responsibility
By Kevin Krumrei.

Kierkegaard’s contributions to philosophy are generally admitted and recognized as valuable in the history of Western philosophy, both as one of the great anti-Hegelians, as the founder (arguably) of existentialism, and as a religious thinker. However valid this may be, there is similarly a generally admitted critique of Kierkegaard in the Western tradition, that Kierkegaard’s philosophy of the development of the self leads the individual into an isolated encounter with God, to the abandonment of the social context. In other words, a Kierkegaardian theory of intersubjectivity is a contradiction in terms. This is voiced eloquently by Emmanuel Levinas, among others. However, Levinas’ own intersubjective ethics bears a striking resemblance to Kierkegaard’s, with respect to the description and formulation of the basic problem for ethics: the problem of aesthetic egoism. Further, both Kierkegaard and Levinas follow similar paths in responding to the problem, from Kierkegaard’s reduplication in Works of Love, to Levinas’ notion of substitution in Otherwise than Being. In this comparison, it becomes evident that Levinas’ reading of Kierkegaard is mistaken, for Kierkegaard’s intersubjective ethics postulates, in fact, the inseparability and necessity of the self’s responsible relation to others in the self’s relation to God, found in the command, “you shall love your neighbour as yourself.”
"Love is a revolution."
Soren Kierkegaard

"It is not I who resist the system, as Kierkegaard thought; it is the other."
Emmanuel Levinas

"I love myself better than you, I know it's wrong, so what should I do?"
Kurt Cobain

Acknowledgements:

I'd like to mention a few names, without whom this thesis would never have come into being: my supervisor, Dr. Berman, whose suggestions and editing were helpful beyond description; Dr. Goicoechea, who likewise read all manuscripts and offered invaluable assistance, and from whom I received my introduction to Kierkegaard; my parents, Brenda Klassen, Tom Friesen, and Ryan and Kathleen Metz, offered support and innumerable encouragements; Brenda Klassen helped to compile the bibliography; the other graduate students and faculty in the Philosophy Department at Brock University, who helped to make philosophy in general, and Kierkegaard and Levinas in particular, so much fun.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: Kierkegaardian Intersubjectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: A Note on Reading Kierkegaard, and Levinas' Reading of Kierkegaard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: Kierkegaard's Aesthetic and the Notion of Immediacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four: Egoism and Substitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five: The Notion of Reduplication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endnotes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The topic of intersubjectivity and dialogical social philosophy has been a subject of discussion for well over a century. The contours of the discussion, which can arguably be traced back to Hegel, have been shaped by notions such as subjectivity, the self, the other (and the Other), responsibility and ethics. The intersubjective constitution of humanity is considered by some, in various disciplines (not only philosophy), to be already a "commonplace" insight. This does in fact seem to be the case. It is thus tempting to look back in the history of philosophy and criticize earlier philosophers for not having come to (or begun with) the same conclusions, or for not making use of the same insights. While this can be a valid and useful critique, it brings with it the danger of obscuring and overlooking the insights and conclusions of earlier philosophers. There is a common critique (to be outlined in chapter one) of Kierkegaard which does this precisely: Kierkegaard is thought to have forgotten or (worse) renounced intersubjectivity. By doing so, he becomes more or less irrelevant to the current conversation in philosophy, except perhaps as a footnote in the history of existentialism.

It is difficult to classify Kierkegaard's thought. He was, obviously, interested in philosophy and theology; his notions of responsibility, and his scathing critique of the nineteenth century Danish state church, make him relevant to sociology and anthropology. He was a philosopher of his own time, with concerns that apply specifically to the situation in his own nation. Since Kierkegaard had nineteenth century Denmark in mind, it is sometimes necessary to interpret and apply Kierkegaard's writings in ways in which Kierkegaard may not have envisioned. Kierkegaard's intention was to show "what it means to become a Christian," or to "re-introduce Christianity... into Christendom." Any reading of Kierkegaard must remember this. However, the problems that Kierkegaard finds in nineteenth century Denmark, and the way
in which he addresses them, are indeed still relevant for philosophy. Kierkegaard tried to meet
the reader at his or her stage in life, and lead them, indirectly, Socratically, towards the truth.
Certainly, for Kierkegaard this involves the individual leaving "the crowd," yet this does not
mean abandoning relations to other people. In fact, it commands the ethical relation to other
people.

The classic response to the cliché criticism of Kierkegaard is to show that Kierkegaard
essentially appropriates all of Hegel’s thought with respect to intersubjectivity, and, having done
this (implicitly), he makes explicit what he thought Hegel had overlooked, namely, the
individual. This is best outlined by Merold Westphal in his impressive work, *Kierkegaard’s
Critique of Reason and Society*. Yet recently it has been shown that Kierkegaard, apart from
simply leaning on Hegel, has a theory of intersubjective relations within his work. Kierkegaard’s
thought has been grudgingly identified, along with Feuerbach and Hegel, as an early proponent of
dialogical philosophy. With reference to an article by Pia Soltoft entitled, "Anthropology and
Ethics: The Connection Between Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity as the Basis for a
Kierkegaardian Anthropology," I examine the terms "intersubjectivity" and "dialogical" to see in
which ways they might apply to Kierkegaard’s philosophy. Yet some, while admitting that
Kierkegaard was interested in "dialogical philosophy," consider Kierkegaard to have valued the
individual’s relation to God to the point of forgetting that there are others to relate to as well.

It is my contention that Kierkegaard not only included, necessarily, intersubjectivity in the
constitution of subjectivity, his philosophy also anticipates such criticisms and answers them in
compelling fashion. Emmanuel Levinas, among others, gives a conventional albeit eloquent
critique of Kierkegaard’s anthropology, having seemingly gone beyond Kierkegaard and the likes
of Hegel to develop his own philosophy of ethics and alterity. However, Levinas does not read Kierkegaard closely enough, and it is my intention to show that Kierkegaard’s philosophy is a suitable dialogue partner to the twenty-first century discussion of intersubjectivity and the issues that proceed from it, especially the question of ethics and responsibility.

Soltoft makes an excellent case for a Kierkegaardian theory of intersubjectivity, based on Judge William’s Either/Or Part II. She distinguishes between a “strict dialogical intersubjectivity,” as one would find in Martin Buber’s I and Thou, and what she calls Kierkegaard’s “moderate dialogical intersubjectivity.” However, while appreciating and building on Soltoft’s work, I argue that one can find a Kierkegaardian theory of intersubjectivity earlier than that, in the aesthetic sphere. Only in this way can intersubjectivity be truly constitutive and determinative for subjectivity. Further, it is my contention that Kierkegaard’s ethics of responsibility are based upon his intersubjectivity, as formulated in the aesthetic. It is with this in mind that Levinas becomes a partner for dialogue. Having shown that Kierkegaard includes intersubjectivity as constitutive of subjectivity, I move on to examine what that means for Kierkegaard’s ethics of responsibility as found in the biblical command, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” In order to do this, it is necessary to demonstrate a reading of Kierkegaard that harmonizes Works of Love with the rest of the pseudonymous writings of Kierkegaard, which comprise his understanding of the spheres of existence and the “stages on life’s way.” I then show that Kierkegaard’s problem for ethics, namely, the egoism of the aesthete, is in fact the problem of improper self-love as outlined in Works of Love. Kierkegaard’s solution to the problem of improper self-love, and what amounts to a Kierkegaardian ethics of responsibility, is found in the notion of reduplication as given in Works of Love. This notion places the individual
in the position of Abraham, alone before God, with a duty to God which suspends the ethical; yet instead of isolating the individual and minimizing the importance of human interaction, Kierkegaard's notion of reduplication preserves both the teleological suspension of the ethical and ethics. Reduplication makes the relation to other humans, an ethics of responsibility, paramount in the relation to the Divine, and demonstrates that the very thing Kierkegaard is concerned with, in the lonely encounter of the individual and God, is the relationship to the other.

The comparisons between Levinas and Kierkegaard are becoming more and more frequent. Adrian Peperzak, in an article entitled, "The Significance of Levinas' Work for Christian Thought," notes that while Levinas' philosophy is "supported by a long Jewish tradition," its greatest readership has been Christian philosophers and theologians. Peperzak says, "Levinas' critique of totality may be read as an invitation to criticize the idea that Christian faith can be presented as a doctrinal system." This statement immediately strikes a chord with Kierkegaard, who denied both that existence could be a system and that reason is supreme. For him, any rational systemization is the enemy of faith. Yet this is only the tip of the iceberg in the comparisons between Levinas and Kierkegaard.

The tone of Levinas' writings bears an affinity to Kierkegaard as well. Uncompromising, radical, unrepentant, Levinas' works have not always convinced readers, but have seldom left his readers unmoved. The issues Levinas deals with are those which strike immediately to the heart, such as the opening lines of the preface to Totality and Infinity, where Levinas asks if, in the face of war, we have not been "duped by morality." Levinas breathes new life into the command, "You shall not commit murder." Kierkegaard, as a writer, could at times weave a dizzying poetic tapestry, uniting narratives and pseudonyms to delicately and deftly lead the reader to
conclusions; at other times, the blunt force of his pen and the biting satire of his parables can leave opponents stunned. His ethical writings share the same uncompromising vigour as Levinas, calling the reader to account. Kierkegaard breathes new life into the command, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

In order to evaluate Kierkegaard’s use of this New Testament command, I shall refer to the philosopher and theologian, Bishop Joseph Butler. Butler wrote one of the seminal works in 18th century theological ethics, entitled, “Upon the Love of Our Neighbour,” which endeavours to show that self-love co-exists with, includes, and compliments benevolence and the love of one’s neighbour.

The kinship is apparent and recognizable in that both Levinas and Kierkegaard are firmly rooted in the Judeo-Christian ethical tradition. They are analogous in that they approach ethics from a subjective standpoint, by which I mean that both are concerned with “my own obligations,” as opposed to the obligations of others “towards me.” However, what is amazing is the striking resemblance that each shares to the other in coming to their ethical conclusions. Both Levinas and Kierkegaard begin with the non-reflective individual. For Levinas it is the movement of “the same” in the otherness of the elements, who builds a dwelling to protect against the uncertainty of the future. This “ipseity” is not a self-consciousness, but a self-at-work, constituted by enjoyment, threatened only by scarcity and the uncertainty of the future (including the possibility of death). Implicit in this approach, for Levinas, is a movement away from a philosophy of consciousness, which was bequeathed to Western philosophy by Descartes. For Kierkegaard, it is the aesthete, the “self” which has no self-relation, constituted by enjoyment, threatened only by the possibility of tragedy, already present in a despair seeking to become manifest. Subjectivity, for Kierkegaard, is not concerned with self-consciousness per se, as in a
Husserlian sense where one can examine that which is present to consciousness and conceive the possibility of other consciousnesses and the problems therein. Instead, Kierkegaard’s subjectivity is relational, a self relating to itself, where the self is not an existent entity which starts to relate, but is that relation, and is in that relation. This emphasis on relationality places Kierkegaard in conversation with thinkers who have moved away from a philosophy of consciousness towards a philosophy of dialogue.

For Levinas, the approach of the other is the rupture of an enclosed egoism and the beginning of responsibility. It should be noted that, in this context, I do not propose a new interpretation of Levinas, aimed at a reconciliation of *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being*. For the purposes of this thesis, I find the pertinent themes begun in *Totality and Infinity* to be completed in *Otherwise than Being*, and regard his authorship as a whole.

For Kierkegaard, the manifestation of despair is the signal for the failure of the aesthetic, and the birth of the ethical. I do not propose a systematic re-interpretation of Kierkegaard’s spheres of existence. I argue that in *Works of Love*, the problem of “improper self-love” includes the problem of the enclosed egoism of the aesthete, and that moving from improper to proper self-love is Kierkegaard’s answer to the problem for ethics posed by the aesthetic. I say that the problem of “improper self-love” includes the problem of the enclosed egoism of the aesthete, because it is not my intention to limit the implications of the movement from improper to proper self-love to the aesthetic. In classical Kierkegaardian terms, the movement from improper to proper self-love is in fact the double movement of the leap, from religiousness A to religiousness B.
The key distinction to be noted, in my conclusion, is that Levinas maintains the non-cognitive approach to ethics, where the emphasis is on the “always already” presentness of responsibility, in which subjectivity is the response “here I am,” and the having and taking of responsibility are one and the same. Kierkegaard, perhaps as an early existentialist, sees reflection and subjectivity coming before the ethical response to the other, in that the movement from aestheticism is the movement into subjectivity. However, the reduplication of responsibility and Kierkegaard’s emphasis on the work of love, as opposed to the work of the individual, allows him to maintain a Levinasian notion of the response of subjectivity while separating the notions of having and taking responsibility.
Chapter One

Kierkegaardian Intersubjectivity
In his article, “Kierkegaard’s Radical Existential Praxis,” Martin Matuškíč refers to a caricature of Kierkegaard’s philosophy which has been passed down through the generations in Western philosophy’s “received wisdom” concerning Kierkegaard: it is said that by focusing too much on the individual and subjectivity, Kierkegaard has no foundation to speak about politics or sociology, and must therefore be an “anti-social... apolitical” thinker. Westphal puts it this way: “According to the prevailing understanding of Kierkegaard’s authorship... his radical, religious individualism focuses all but exclusive attention on the self in its lonely confrontation with God.” For example, Shmeul Bergman says, “although the individual cannot exist as an individual unless connected to other people, this second, complementary aspect of the dialogical relationship was overlooked by Kierkegaard.” It must be said that Bergman granted Kierkegaard a dialogical relationship between God and the individual (what Bergman calls the “first aspect of the dialogical relationship”), which he compares in a helpful way to Buber’s dialogical relationship between an “I” and the “Eternal Thou.” However, Bergman concludes that the intersubjective relations between humans (the “second, complementary aspect of the dialogical relationship”) have little or no representation in Kierkegaard’s philosophy. Levinas has a similar critique, which I outline in chapter two. For the moment, it suffices to recognize these critiques as a common reaction to Kierkegaard’s philosophy.

I have found three responses to this critique of Kierkegaard. The first and most extensive is to refer back to Kierkegaard’s Hegelian roots, to show that Kierkegaard essentially agrees with and assumes the Hegelian concept of intersubjectivity. It is then shown that Kierkegaard’s intent with his “radical religious individualism” is to criticize and build upon Hegelian anthropology.
An impressive and widely quoted book advocating this reading of Kierkegaard is Westphal's *Kierkegaard's Critique of Reason and Society.*

The second response is similar to the first: it has been demonstrated that Kierkegaard did have political and social aspects to his philosophy, and so it cannot be that Kierkegaard was anti-social or a-political. Robert Perkins points out that "the person is both a citizen and also one who may have to challenge the local mores, politics, and divinities for solid moral, political, and religious reasons." Thus, to focus on the single individual is actually the first step in developing a politics, for "how can one have a just state before one has just persons?" This particular approach, as exemplified by Perkins, tends to, when pressed, suggest that Kierkegaard leaned heavily upon Hegelian anthropology. Perkins understandably cites Westphal's work as justification. However, there is a problem in doing so: Perkins is suggesting that Kierkegaard was justified in beginning with and focusing on the individual in order to have a philosophy with political and social consequence. In doing this, he cites Westphal as supporting evidence, who holds that Kierkegaard, having assumed a Hegelian notion of intersubjectivity, focuses on the individual in order to criticise and build upon Hegelian anthropology. Thus, Perkins is explaining how Kierkegaard can begin with the individual qua individual, but cites Westphal, who is showing that Kierkegaard does not actually begin with the individual qua individual. For Westphal, Kierkegaard begins by assuming (more or less) a Hegelian intersubjectivity, where there is indeed a just state before there are just persons.

The third response is to see what room Kierkegaard left in his philosophy, without specific reference to Hegel, for the concept of intersubjectivity. This is the approach Pia Soltoft takes in her article, "Anthropology and Ethics: The Connection Between Subjectivity and
Intersubjectivity as the Basis of A Kierkegaardian Anthropology.” In this chapter I shall examine Soltoft’s article and attempt to show that Kierkegaard has a robust concept of intersubjectivity, and not merely a notion of subjects relating. However, before examining Soltoft’s article in detail, I shall first establish a functional definition of intersubjectivity, in contrast to subjects relating, for use as a reference in the discussion to follow.

The definition of intersubjectivity is crucial in deciding just what supports a Kierkegaardian account of intersubjectivity. It is also important to note that Kierkegaard did not use the term “intersubjective” in any of his works, and so any such endeavour will require honesty and interpretation in order to escape being anachronistic or manipulative. Similar to Bergman, Soltoft points out that the dialogical relation to God is a constitutive factor for the self in Kierkegaard’s thought, but she goes a step farther in suggesting that “it is not only the transcendent determination (i.e. the relation to God), but also the intersubjective obligation (the ethical relation to ‘the Other’21) that constitutes the concreteness and the continuity of the Self.”22 She further states that “subjectivity is a movement, a movement in time and in timeligheden and therefore intersubjectivity, the relation to other subjects, is a part of this movement.”23 It must be recognized that to imagine a self in complete isolation from others is only conceivable theoretically, which makes the relation to others essential, constitutive, and determinative for the self. Apart from a philosophical solipsism, any theory of “selfhood” will need to account for intersubjectivity as determinative for subjectivity.

In his article, “Intersubjectivity: Exploring Consciousness From the Second Person Perspective,” Christian de Quincey says that the decisive question for intersubjectivity is the question of ontological priority: does subjectivity precede intersubjectivity or vice versa?24 De
Quincey suggests three basic types of intersubjectivity: *standard intersubjectivity*, which means a "consensual validation between independent subjects via exchange of signals;" *weak-experiential intersubjectivity*, defined as the "mutual engagement and participation between independent subjects which conditions their respective experience;" and *strong-experiential intersubjectivity*, which is the "mutual co-arising and engagement of interdependent subjects." Standard intersubjectivity thus turns out to be any system of communication between relating subjects, where the subjective is ontologically prior to the intersubjective. Any time two or more "subjects" are relating or communicating via signals, there is an intersubjective dimension present. Conceivably, a person could (for lack of a better term) abstain from intersubjective relations by simply avoiding contact with others. Indeed, it would seem that a "subject" could develop in isolation and then later emerge, ready to begin interacting and encountering other "subjects." Given this set of criteria, a medium such as e-mails between isolated individuals in different galaxies would suffice for there to be an intersubjective context present. De Quincey's standard intersubjectivity is roughly equivalent to what I have shall call *subjects relating*. Weak-experiential intersubjectivity retains the ontological priority of the subjective, while recognizing that the relation to others is a determinative element in any experience. This too would be defined by the term *subjects relating*. Finally, strong-experiential intersubjectivity makes the intersubjective ontologically prior to subjectivity, such that individuals "co-emerge, or co-arise, as a result of a... holistic field of relations." This is roughly equivalent to what I shall call *intersubjectivity*. There are some limitations to de Quincey's terminology. Considering that even the remotest form of communication between individuals would qualify as standard intersubjectivity, it would be more challenging to imagine an anthropology that is devoid of an
intersubjective dimension, than one which adequately accounts for it. Yet de Quincey calls it “standard” intersubjectivity, which indicates that, in his opinion, this kind of anthropology has dominated Western thought. De Quincey hints that the advance to be made over standard intersubjectivity is moving beyond the view that the world is a “collection of objects, or even a collection of subjects.” De Quincey calls this the move from a “first person consciousness” to a “second person consciousness.”

De Quincey’s question of the ontological priority of intersubjectivity or subjectivity is the primary contribution he makes to this discussion. This is a difficult question, and it is not my intention to answer it definitively in this context. It is perhaps more helpful to speak of the ontological priority of relation or relaters (the ones relating). If one suggests that intersubjectivity is prior to subjectivity, as for example Martin Buber does in I and Thou, then one must assume that a relation or relationality can exist before there are individuals to be in relation. If one suggests that subjectivity is prior to intersubjectivity, then it becomes difficult to understand why, if subjectivity is able to come into being apart from an intersubjective context, there must be an intersubjective context at all. To sidestep the question, it will suffice to remember that one cannot think about subjectivity without also simultaneously thinking about intersubjectivity, just as it is obviously not possible to think about intersubjectivity without simultaneously positing subjectivity. This is what I take Soltoft to mean when she says that for Kierkegaard the “concreteness and continuity” of the self is established not only in the relation to God, but also in the ethical relation to the other. If both intersubjectivity and subjectivity constitute the “concreteness and the continuity of the Self,” then one can posit a simultaneous development wherein neither subjectivity nor intersubjectivity need be ontologically prior.
I shall make two terminological distinctions: *intersubjectivity* and *subjects relating*. Subjectivity refers to the self relating to itself, thus *intersubjectivity* shall denote *the self-relation relating to others such that the relation to others is essential, constituting, and determinative for the self-relation*. The phrase *subjects relating* refers to any view that takes into account humans simply relating to one another. For relational subjects, it is conceivable (though perhaps only theoretically) that the relation to the other is not essential to the self, because the self can be seen as concrete before encountering the other. Nor is relation necessarily constitutive or determinative for the self, although indeed durable relations between humans tend to have a lasting impact on both parties. This is why any politics or ethical theory tends to, or must presuppose relational subjects. I wish to avoid the possibility of using a theory which only involves subjects relating, for this ought not to be labelled "intersubjectivity," which seems to be the case with De Quincey.

Concerning the question of the ontological priority of subjectivity or intersubjectivity, the definitions I have given do rest on certain assumptions. The phrase "subjects relating" requires the ontological priority of the relaters, and carries with it the danger that intersubjectivity becomes an afterthought or epiphenomenal. The term *intersubjectivity* does not necessarily require the ontological priority of relation, as De Quincey’s definition of strong-experiential intersubjectivity seems to admit. It could instead be a case of a co-origination, or mutual arising of the relation and the relaters, where the ontological priority of the one over the other is either non-existent or not discernable. It would seem that none of De Quincey’s definitions necessarily denote the ontological priority of intersubjectivity over subjectivity.

It is likewise important to distinguish what Kierkegaard meant in his writings by the
terms “subjectivity” and “the self.” Are these terms synonymous for Kierkegaard? With reference to the three spheres of existence, namely the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious, the “self” does not come into existence until the ethical. Judge William makes it clear that the ethical choice is between either accepting the categories of good and evil or excluding them, and that before this choice, the aesthete does not really have a self. It is the choice of either/or in which one chooses the self:

This self which he then chooses is infinitely concrete, for it is in fact himself, and yet it is absolutely distinct from his former self, for he has chosen it absolutely. This self did not exist previously, for it came into existence by means of the choice, and yet it did exist, for it was in fact himself.

Kierkegaard is not denying “selfhood” to the aesthete, as though the aesthete is somehow less than human, but the “self” of the aesthete is not really a self. The aesthete does not relate to him/herself, which is precisely what becoming subjective entails: “The crowd, in fact, is composed of individuals; it must therefore be in every man’s power to become what he is, an individual.” This “becoming an individual,” a self, or becoming subjective is, as Westphal writes, “the goal rather than the presupposition of my existence.” Kierkegaard says, “Consequently, to become subjective should be the highest task assigned to every human being.” Perhaps then the distinction between “self” and “subjectivity” is that while Kierkegaard does not deny that the aesthete has a “self,” that self is precisely “no-self.” The aesthete is not a subjective thinker. The self of the aesthete is made up entirely of relations to others qua things, even though the aesthete relates to them as objects. Arnold Come suggests that self-consciousness (subjectivity) is for Kierkegaard a spectrum, a continuum, going from a minimum amount of self-consciousness (the aesthete, who is not a subjective thinker) towards an
increasing amount of self-consciousness, the ideal of the knight of faith:"The subjective thinker becomes aware that, in reflection, one is involved in a continuing, never finished process, because one is thinking about oneself concretely." So, one is always a self, but becoming a subjective thinker is the goal of the becoming self, which is what the self truly is.

These distinctions are cumbersome but essential if we are to find in Kierkegaard a theory of intersubjectivity co-originating with subjectivity, as opposed to simply subjects relating. For if one becomes a self only after the choice of either/or during the transition from the aesthetic to the ethical realm, then it would seem impossible for Kierkegaard to envision anything other than the ontological priority of subjectivity over intersubjectivity.

With these distinctions in mind, let us turn to Soltoft's article. Soltoft begins by stating that Kierkegaardian scholarship has typically overlooked the relation to others in discussing Kierkegaardian anthropology. However, she says, "This perspective obscures the important fact that the ethical relation to 'the Other' is an essential part of the Self and that intersubjectivity plays a crucial role for the truth of subjectivity." She then asks three questions:

1) Is it possible to talk about Kierkegaardian anthropology without taking into account the relation to the other person?
2) Does ethics only imply an obligation to oneself and God, and not an obligation to the other person?
3) And most important: What role does the relation to "the Other" play for the Self's being itself?

If the answer to the first two questions is in the negative, then the answer to the third question must involve more than simply subjects relating. It must require an account of intersubjectivity.

In order to speak of any anthropology without "taking into account the relation to the other person," one must posit an individual subject in complete isolation, perhaps like Adam in the
Hebrew creation story, who exists alone with his dialogical relation to the divine. Such an anthropology could perhaps only be hypothetical. The second is basically the question that Bergman, Levinas, etc. answer of Kierkegaard in the affirmative. Soltoft answers the first two questions negatively, and answers the third question by showing that both the relation to God includes relations to other humans, intersubjectivity. In saying this, Soltoft suggests that the role the relation to the other plays is that it is an intersubjective obligation which is determinative for subjectivity, for the self being itself. She then makes a comparison between how two of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms, Judge William and Johannes de Silentio, deal with this suggestion in their respective works, Either/Or Part II and Fear and Trembling.

The Judge addresses his writings to a the young man, Mr. A, the aesthete, a writer from the first part of Either/Or, who lives a life of immediacy, and thus does not have a self. "In fact," says the Judge, "you are nothing; you are merely a relation to others, and what you are you are by virtue of this relation." A choice confronts the aesthete: "My either/or does not in the first instance denote the choice between good and evil; it denotes the choice whereby one chooses good and evil, or excludes them." What it comes down to, however, is the choice to have a self or not to have a self:

But what is it I choose? Is it this thing or that? No, for I choose absolutely, and the absoluteness of my choice is expressed precisely by the fact that I have not chosen to choose this or that. I choose the absolute. And what is the absolute? It is I myself in my eternal validity.

For Judge William, it is possible for a "religiously based anthropology centred upon subjectivity to posit an intersubjective obligation as determinative for subjectivity." Soltoft says, "For [Judge William], being oneself is merely a question of choosing oneself in the right way, which
means in the ethical way, and in this choice the religious is automatically included." Soltoft, anticipating Abraham's dilemma in *Fear and Trembling*, states that there are differences between ethical and religious duties, but shows how Judge William refuses to see any conflict between the two:

But would these duties conflict? The Judge thinks not. He asks, for example, whether the love of God could ever conflict with the love of one's parents. But he immediately answers no: 'if there actually were a conflict between love of God and love of human beings, the love of whom he himself has implanted in our hearts, it would be hard to imagine anything more horrible'. . . The reason why such a rift would be hard to imagine is that it would tear apart the relation between subjectivity and intersubjectivity, and leave the Self in isolation.

Soltoft makes an important but subtle distinction based on the concept of the intersubjective found in *Either/Or*:

> The influence of intersubjectivity on subjectivity is not *produced* by an ethic, external to the Self. It is, however, *governed* by such an ethic, in the sense that one individual's tendency to dominate another is always mitigated by rules external to both individuals.

One must distinguish between the use of the term "ethics" and "an ethic." Any time individuals relate, the rules "governing" those relations, implicit or explicit, can be called "an ethic." One can suggest that a particular ethic is very poor, or not very ethical. The process of evaluating an ethic is referred to as "ethics." Soltoft says that the "influence of intersubjectivity is not *produced* by *an ethic." What if it were? Then we would be dealing with what I have called *subjects relating*. For the sake of discussion, imagine a generic situation where there are many individuals who begin to relate. In such a situation, one will begin to see "an ethic," like a pattern emerging, governing those relations. For a theory of *subjects relating*, where the subjective is ontologically prior to the intersubjective, one would say that the intersubjective element is present after this has all begun to take place. First there was the subjective element, present for the many individuals
who begin to relate; this gives rise to an intersubjective element. Instead, Soltoft contends that for Kierkegaard, "The influence of intersubjectivity on subjectivity is not produced by an ethic." It is already present for the Kierkegaardian self. Soltoft goes on to say, "it is, however, governed by such an ethic, in the sense that one individual’s tendency to dominate another is always mitigated by rules external to both individuals." Soltoft implies that the "rules external to both individuals" which "mitigate" individual tendencies include the individual’s history and temporality. Both of these are, in Kierkegaard’s writings, included in the "movement of subjectivity," and include an intersubjective element as well. Soltoft is not clear as to why the individual tendency governed by mitigating factors is the "tendency to dominate." Perhaps this is one possible example among many. What is also unclear is why Soltoft begins this analysis with Either/Or Part II.

Kierkegaardian intersubjectivity begins in the aesthetic, in Either/Or Part I, where, for Kierkegaard, there are indeed relations governed by an ethic of individual domination, in the self-centeredness of the aesthete. Soltoft is not explicit about this, but one can easily apply her suggestions to the aesthetic sphere: if one were to stumble upon a community of persons, all of whom were existing as aesthetes according to Kierkegaardian categories, then the only ethic one could expect to find would be each person relating to the others as though they were objects, which could more properly be called an inter-objectivity. Even in such a case, for Kierkegaard, there would not be an ontological priority of the subjective over the intersubjective. This thesis suggests that it is precisely the individual tendencies of aesthetic intersubjectivity which necessitate, for Kierkegaard, an ethics of responsibility.

Soltoft moves from Either/Or Part II to Fear and Trembling, where Judge William's words turn out to be in a sense prophetic: the very horror he imagines in the "conflict between
love of God and love of human beings” is the basis for Johannes de Silentio’s *Fear and Trembling*. Soltoft says that *Fear and Trembling* “unsuccessfully” tries to “negate the concept of intersubjectivity in *Either/Or*.” The ethic that the Judge recommended so highly, the choice of which gave one an “eternal self,” now must be suspended; not for a higher ethic, as in the case of Brutus, Agamemnon, and Jephthah, but for an unexplainable and absolute duty to God. Like Abraham, the characters Brutus, Agamemnon, and Jephthah were all called to sacrifice a child to their God; but unlike Abraham, these three remain within the ethical sphere, acting out of a moral duty to their respective countries. This makes them “tragic heroes,” who are great because of their “moral virtue, but Abraham is great because of a purely personal ethic.” Soltoft says, “The conflict between an ethical obligation to love one’s child and an absolute duty to God was solved when God accepted the ram instead of Isaac.” But there remains a problem for intersubjective relations: Silentio does not explain “how Abraham can return to Sarah, return to normal intersubjective relations and live happily ever after. . . although the dilemma was resolved, when God accepted the ram instead of Isaac, *Abraham still cannot speak.*” If Kierkegaard’s intention was to lead his readers along to the point of becoming “knights of faith,” then how can his anthropology account for the fact that becoming a knight of faith seems to lead inevitably to Judge William’s “horrible rift” between subjectivity and intersubjectivity? This would be akin to saying that the development of subjectivity annihilates the very possibility of intersubjectivity.

Soltoft finds the answer to this problem in Kierkegaard’s *Works of Love*: “In this text the love of God is defined as the love of one’s neighbor and the Self is made a whole because it can now in compliance with the demand to love one’s neighbor extricate itself from the dilemma of loving *either* God *or* loving neighbor.” Thus, Soltoft says, “It is only in the prescribed relation
to the Other that the Self can maintain itself as a created Self, which means a Self that has not been made for isolation but for engagement, because it is only here that the Self attains continuity in its history.57 This reference to the self and history is found (among other places) in The Concept of Anxiety, in which Kierkegaard, sounding very Hegelian indeed, states that “man is *individuum* and as such simultaneously himself and the whole race, and in such a way that the whole race participates in the individual and the individual in the whole race.”58 For an individual to look at himself or herself historically requires recognizing a connection to those who have come before, and those who will come after. Although Kierkegaard is using this thought to show how a concept of hereditary sin is possible, this passage illustrates our point as well: not only is an individual not isolated from those around him/her (the subject is in the intersubjective by being a subject, as discussed previously), an individual is also not isolated historically from those who came before, and from those who will come after. The past is in an existential sense determinative of who I am, and who I am becoming. Gregor Malantschuk explains: “As [an] individual he receives the contributions of the race in its development, while he, in turn, makes his contributions to coming generations.”59 This reference to the history of the self is part of what Soltoft sees as the relation to the other having a determinative effect on the continuity of the self.

Soltoft concludes by identifying Kierkegaard as having a “moderate dialogical position,” in contrast to Martin Buber, who has a “strictly dialogical position.” For Buber, “the Self or subjectivity depends upon the I-Thou relationship.”60 Buber says, “I take my stand in relation to [the other], in the sanctity of the primary word.”61 As soon as I speak, as soon as I say either “Thou” or “It,” I have already included myself in the relation. The self arises because of the
relation. Thus for Buber, intersubjectivity would ontologically precede subjectivity. Kierkegaard cannot be read this way, says Soltoft, "because he maintains that the Self precedes the act of choosing; in that sense the relation to the Other is not fundamental." Therefore, "one could say that according to Kierkegaard's more moderate dialogical view the Self is not self-constituted, but obtains its continuity, its self-realization or self fulfilment in its relation to the Other."^

This again demonstrates that precisely because the self precedes the "act of choosing," in whatever latent or minimal way the aesthetic realm allows for, we do not need to skip the aesthetic in search of an intersubjectivity in Kierkegaard and begin in the ethical as Soltoft has done. While I agree with Soltoft that Kierkegaard is not strictly dialogical in the sense that Buber is, it is not necessary to see Kierkegaard as positing the subjective before the intersubjective, even in the aesthetic sphere. The definition of intersubjectivity, as previously established stated that the self-relation relating to others such that the relation to others is essential, constituting, and determinative for the self-relation. With this reading of Kierkegaard, even in the aesthetic sphere, relations to others are essential, constitutive, and determinative, even though in a Kierkegaardian sense it is not a "self-relation" relating to others.

Judge William critiqued the aesthete in saying, "you are nothing; you are merely a relation to others, and what you are you are by virtue of this relation." Kierkegaard's aesthete relates to others as a subject relating to objects, and admittedly, the aesthete is not a relation relating itself to itself, the "relation's relating." While Soltoft does not provide any support for the notion that, "[Kierkegaard] maintains that the Self precedes the act of choosing," I am convinced that she is correct. Even in the immediacy of the aesthete, an immediacy which is for Kierkegaard mutually exclusive with reflection, there is in fact some sense of reflection. In Judge
William's analysis, the aesthete has some limited sense of reflection, and to that extent, is a self-relation. Kierkegaard would be absurd to insist otherwise. But what the aesthete refuses to do is choose the self-relation in its "eternal validity." This is more than semantics for Kierkegaard. It is the difference between a diamond and a genuine rhinestone. It is what Anti-Climacus might call a "mis-relation," rather than a non-relation. In this way, even though the self-relation of the aesthete is a mis-relation, not really a self, it yet satisfies the definition of intersubjectivity.

Soltoft's response to an objection such as the one voiced by Bergman seems quite definitive. It remains true that for Kierkegaard the primary dialogical relationship is the relation of the self to God, and yet it is that very relationship which commands and legitimates an ethics of responsibility in intersubjectivity, which can be used as the basis for a Kierkegaardian politics and sociology. This thesis develops the notion that Kierkegaard's "radical, religious individualism" is what ultimately makes relating to others in a loving way an essential part of Kierkegaard's philosophy.

Sylvia Walsh warns against interpreting the intersubjective consequences of Kierkegaard's thought as somehow more important than the subjectivity of the single individual: "The second form of inwardness from which Climacus seeks to distinguish true inwardness is 'chummy inwardness' or what I take to be a form of intersubjectivity that compromises the integrity of the individual." Climacus explicitly says, "Subjective individuals must be held devoutly apart from one another and must not run coagulatingly together in objectivity." Walsh says:

[Kierkegaard] does not deny that individual subjects are socially constituted through
relations to others, but in his view they are able to transcend human relations in the relation to God. Part of the task of subjectivity, therefore, is to assert oneself as an individual over against the determining forces of society such as family, church, and state. This is a welcomed suggestion, for it would not be true to Kierkegaard’s writings to ignore the overwhelming emphasis on the individual. Indeed, Kierkegaard’s constant reminders that “the crowd is untruth” in *The Point of View of My Work as an Author* ought to ensure that. However, as Soltoft has shown, even in what Walsh calls “transcend[ing] human relations in the relation to God,” the necessity of having loving relations with others as persons is only required all the more.

Soltoft outlines the problem in reconciling *Fear and Trembling* with *Works of Love*, in that for Abraham, the silence in the secret of the teleological suspension of the ethical makes impossible the relationship with other people, and hints at the resolution found in the parallel between the paradox for Abraham and the paradox for Kierkegaard’s Christian readership, which shall be discussed in the concluding chapter. This thesis finds that Soltoft’s basic premise applies to the aesthetic sphere, whereas Soltoft began her analysis with the ethical sphere. Thus, what must be made explicit is the relationship between Kierkegaard’s aesthetic writings and *Works of Love*, in order to provide an answer to the criticisms of Levinas et. al. as outlined in the introduction. In this way, I show that Kierkegaard’s aesthetic writings bear some striking similarities to Levinas’ work in the formulation of the problem that the aesthetic sphere poses for an ethics of responsibility. Following this, it becomes clear that Kierkegaard’s ethics of responsibility contains parallels to Levinas’ ethics, and contrary to his own reading of Kierkegaard, does provide for a fruitful dialogue on the nature of the ethical relation to the other.
Chapter Two

A Note on Reading Kierkegaard, and Levinas' Reading of Kierkegaard
Interpreting Kierkegaard is a notoriously intricate task. This chapter seeks to show the way in which this thesis interprets Kierkegaard’s writings, while recognizing some of the fundamentally unresolved issues in Kierkegaardian scholarship. It seemed appropriate to include in this chapter an outline of Levinas’ reading of Kierkegaard and the limitations therein, not only to set the stage for a Kierkegaardian response to Levinas, but also to show how the difficulties noted in interpreting Kierkegaard are recognizable in Levinas’ interpretation. My response to Levinas’ criticisms of Kierkegaard are found in the concluding chapter. Here I am simply noting which sections of Levinas’ interpretation are problematic.

Kierkegaard’s philosophy is famous for having three spheres of existence: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. This is clear enough from Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous writings. In *Stages on Life’s Way*, Frater Taciturnus explicitly names the three spheres. Similarly, in *Sickness Unto Death*, Anti-Climacus uses the analogy of a house: “Imagine a house with a basement, first floor, and second floor planned so that there is or is supposed to be a social distinction between the occupants according to the floor.” In the basement, then, would live the person who is “completely dominated by sensate categories”, that is, the aesthete. Although Anti-climacus is not explicit on this point, it is clear that the other two floors would represent the ethical and the religious.

What are we to make of this theory of personal development to which the pseudonyms of Kierkegaard seem to explicitly refer? Calvin Schrag says,

The journey of selfhood, for Kierkegaard, is a journey through the three existence spheres in such a manner that they can be seen as dialectically constitutive of what it means to be a self. *Surely Kierkegaard is misread if the three spheres are construed as successive stages of development in the process of which the earlier stage is left behind in the advance of the later.*
Certainly, it would be ironic for Kierkegaard to rail against the Hegelian system, to the point of seeming obsessive, and then set up a system of his own. Merold Westphal points out that while the Hegelian system (according to Kierkegaard's reading of it) is always in the background of Kierkegaard's thought, the difference is that Hegel speaks of the "necessary progression" through this "necessary sequence."

Hegel symbolizes this necessity with organic metaphors, describing the journey as that from bud to blossom to fruit, from acorn to oak, and from embryo to birth. These metaphors and the necessity they signify are repudiated in the theory of the stages. Neither developmentally nor conceptually is there any necessity to the movement from one stage to the next. Westphal states that the stages are like a "Weltanschauung," a worldview. The stages are "not in the first instance assertions about the world but modes of being-in-the-world." Yet it is difficult to understand what Westphal means in saying that there is neither a "developmental" nor a "conceptual" necessity to move through the stages, especially when one considers the nuances within the stages. All the pseudonyms seem to agree that the person begins aesthetically, in immediacy, as if by default. There is clearly some sort of development from the most immediate of aesthetes, the page, to the more reflective aesthetes, like Don Juan. Judge William, commenting on the aesthetic, says that it is not an option for the aesthete to avoid making the choice of the Either/Or. He says to his young friend, the aesthete who wrote the first part of Either/Or: "Already prior to one's choosing, the personality is interested in the choice, and if one puts off the choice, the personality or the obscure forces within it unconsciously chooses." Clearly, for Judge William, the individual will be confronted with the ethical at some point. Further, in a sense Kierkegaard's stages are developmental: conceptually, there is a certain
sequence - one could not begin in faith and then move to the aesthetic. Further, since it seems that one is bound to begin in the aesthetic, at some point one must recognize a telos in Kierkegaard’s theory of stages.

What then does Westphal mean that “neither developmentally nor conceptually is there any necessity to the movement from one stage to the next”? Perhaps Westphal means that, in contrast to the Hegelian “necessary progression,” Kierkegaard does not have a notion of “necessary progression” or “sequence.” Perhaps it is not necessary that the individual move from the aesthetic to only and specifically the ethical, meaning that Judge William simply does not realize that one can move directly to the religious, or can leap into faith straight from the aesthetic. Perhaps it is not necessary that one move from the aesthetic at all. Kierkegaard even suggests that “most people virtually never advance beyond what they were in their childhood and youth: immediacy with the admixture of a little dash of reflection.” This means that Kierkegaard is disagreeing with (in his reading of Hegel) the idea that the person necessarily or inevitably progresses in development. This gives occasion for his entire project: to indirectly lead people towards faith. Of his project, Kierkegaard says,

The Concluding Unscientific Postscript constitutes, as I have already said, the turning point in my whole work as an author. It presents the “Problem,” that of becoming a Christian. Having appropriated the whole pseudonymous, aesthetic work as the description of one way a person may take to become a Christian (viz. away from the aesthetical in order to become a Christian), it undertakes to describe the other way (viz. away from the System, from speculation, etc., in order to become a Christian.

Two things are important here: the “pseudonymous, aesthetic work” is simply one of the ways which Kierkegaard envisioned as helpful to lead people from what he calls “aesthetic categories.” Secondly, the Concluding Unscientific Postscript is a turning point, a second approach, seeking
to lead people from “the System.” What is clear is that each sphere, each mode of Being-in-the-world, as Westphal calls it, contains much that is good and desirable, and yet each sphere requires a certain corrective. Whatever point Kierkegaard’s reader might be at in developing as a person, there is always room to grow.

Understanding the different possible interpretations of the spheres of existence is only a part of the battle in reading Kierkegaard. There is a basic hermeneutic problem that comes with Kierkegaard’s writing style, having to do with Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous method and his concept of indirect communication. The aesthetic stage and the concept of immediacy are commented on by many different pseudonyms, as well as by Kierkegaard himself in his non-pseudonymous writings. The problem is to recognize from which perspective the writer/pseudonym is coming, and what the basic intent of the work is.

Westphal says that the point of writing under a pseudonym is generally to disguise the author, to keep the author from, perhaps, getting into trouble for the opinions expressed in a particular piece of work. Yet, as Westphal points out, this was not Kierkegaard’s intention:

The point [of pseudonyms] is to hide the true identity of the author. Because Kierkegaard denies that this is the point of his own pseudonymous writing, he can insist, precisely while acknowledging publicly that he is the producer of these works, that they remain pseudonymous. He wrote them, but he is not their author.  

This means that Kierkegaard “voluntarily forgoes the privileges of authorship,” and that he must, in a sense, write “without authority.” With regards to the implications of his writings for his own era, Kierkegaard says, “Am I then the teacher, the educator? No, not that at all; I am he who himself has been educated… I am not a teacher, only a fellow student.” Kierkegaard saw himself as part of the intended audience for his own writings, which he ought to learn from right
along with the rest of Denmark. Westphal cites the *Point of View for my Work as an Author*, where Kierkegaard readily admits that the whole of his writings, pseudonymous and otherwise, have the "character of being written by an author."^{87} Kierkegaard, who clearly wrote the texts, gives credit of authorship instead to "Divine Governance," saying,

I must say truly that I cannot understand the whole [of the authorship], just because to the merest insignificant detail I understand the whole, but what I cannot understand is that now I can understand it and yet cannot by any means say that at the instant of commencing it I understood it so precisely – though it is I that have carried it out and made every step with reflection.^{88}

Having completed the bulk of his writings, Kierkegaard reflects upon the process and his involvement in it, admitting that he did not fully understand his own project while writing it. Nevertheless, his works form, in his mind, a united "whole," which he understood after having written it.^{89} This opens up the possibility to search in all the writings of Kierkegaard for unified understandings, or a systematic approach to particular subjects, such as ethics and responsibility with reference to the aesthetic sphere. Even though Kierkegaard feared the day the systematizers would take hold of his philosophy,^{90} Stephen Dunning states that, "it is unusual, but by no means unprecedented, to interpret Kierkegaard’s thought in systematic and structural terms."^{91}

There are the aesthetic writings, which must be noted carefully, for who can better describe the experiences of the aesthete than an aesthetic writer? However, the aesthete cannot understand life beyond the aesthetic sphere. Hence the writings of other pseudonyms, especially Judge William, Kierkegaard’s representative for the ethical sphere, expressly critique the aesthetic life. Again, while his critique may be valid, one must still be wary of ascribing Judge William’s views or the views of any pseudonym to Kierkegaard himself: "What Judge William means by immediacy may differ from what Kierkegaard, speaking in his own voice, may want to
suggest. This is exemplified in Kierkegaard’s comments himself on the aesthetic, written in his own voice, in such works as the *Point of View for My Work as An Author*, *Works of Love*, and *Two Ages*. It is the task of chapter three to explore the possibility of a systematic understanding of the aesthetic in Kierkegaard’s writings, not as a comprehensive analysis, but as the basis for Kierkegaard’s understanding of the problem of improper self-love and the impetus it provides for Kierkegaard’s ethics of responsibility. This, in turn will allow for a comparison between Kierkegaard’s notion of reduplication and its implications for an ethics of responsibility, and Levinas’ own ethics of responsibility.

**On Levinas’ Reading of Kierkegaard**

I have alluded to and outlined what I have called the “cliché criticism” of Kierkegaard (chapter one). However, Levinas’ reading requires much more than a passing gesture, both for the depth of insight he provides and for his particular misreading of Kierkegaard. Levinas’ two published essays on Kierkegaard give Kierkegaard cautious and guarded praise but are more concerned with criticism, and his other scattered references to Kierkegaard are more dismissive than comprehensive. Levinas’ primary criticisms of Kierkegaard are made explicit in two chapters from the collection of essays entitled *Proper Names*: “Kierkegaard: Existence and Ethics,” and “A Propos of ‘Kierkegaard Vivant.’”

In “Kierkegaard: Existence and Ethics,” Levinas begins by noting the debt which “European thought owes to Kierkegaard,” for the notion of the interiority of existence as “standing on the hither side of being.” Kierkegaard maintained, against the “idealism” of Hegel, that thought is not the “correlate of Being.” This is, for Levinas, a step in the right direction, for
Levinas even entitled a major work *Otherwise Than Being*, where subjectivity and responsibility are located “on the hither side of Being.” Levinas asks,

In what, then, does the subjectivity of the subject reside? Kierkegaard could not resort to the particularity of feeling and enjoyment, as opposed to the generosity of the concept. The stage he called aesthetic, which is that of sensible dispersion, leads to the impasse of despair *in which subjectivity loses itself*. But at the stage representing the other term of the alternative, the ethical stage (a stage at which the inner life is translated in terms of legal order, carried out in society, in loyalty to institutions and principles and in communication with mankind), totalizing, generalizing thought is incapable of containing the thinker. *The subject has a secret, for ever inexpressible, which determines his or her very subjectivity.*

Levinas says that Kierkegaard can not “resort to the particularity of feeling and enjoyment,” quite possibly because this is precisely Levinas’ own suggestion in *Totality and Infinity*. In chapter four, I argue that Kierkegaard does indeed include a very comparable exposition of a “subject” constituted by enjoyment. Furthermore, Levinas says, “The stage he called [a]esthetic... leads to the impasse of despair in which subjectivity loses itself.” However, I argue that it is not in the “impasse of despair” that Kierkegaard’s aesthete *loses itself*. The aesthete is in despair, but without knowing it, for there is no subjectivity reflecting on its condition. The aesthetic does lead to an “impasse of despair,” but this is the either/or in which subjectivity *finds itself*. In this sense, we note once again (as in the Introduction) that for Kierkegaard, the relations to others, intersubjective relations, are determinate for subjectivity. Levinas is correct in stating that for Kierkegaard, “the subject has a secret.” This is true for Abraham, in *Fear and Trembling*. However, it is not a predominant theme in *Works of Love*, precisely because the parallel Kierkegaard seeks to establish between *Fear and Trembling* and *Works of Love* has to do with the duty to obey the command, not with the inwardness of subjectivity. This is something which the pseudonym, Johannes de Silentio, does not understand (of this, see below, chapter 4).
Levinas points out a certain "tautological" aspect to subjectivity, an "A is A," as in the recognition of the self in saying "I am Myself." According to Levinas, for the "philosophy of existence" and "speculative philosophy," the "tautology" of subjectivity does more than simply equivocate:

The tautology activates, in a sense, that emergence from nothingness and that forward surge. Before all language, the identification of A as A is the anxiety of A for A. The subjectivity of the subject is an identification of the Same in its care for the Same. It is egotism. Subjectivity is a Me.\(^98\)

According to Levinas, the "philosophy of existence" and "speculative philosophy" focus on subjectivity as a "Me" before dealing with the notion of other individuals, other subjectivities:

At a certain moment the tension upon itself relaxes to become consciousness of self, the I grasps itself in a totality, under a general law, on the basis of a truth that triumphs — that is, leads to discourse.\(^99\)

Here Levinas seems to prefer Kierkegaard to Hegel. In the Levinasian interpretation, Kierkegaard sensed and protested against, "the end of philosophy, ending in a political totalitarianism in which human beings are no longer the source of their language, but reflections of the impersonal logos, or roles played by figures."\(^100\) This could be a concise description of what Levinas found unforgivable in Heidegger as well. But while he appreciates the spirit of Kierkegaard's anti-Hegelianism, Levinas suggests that Kierkegaard's thought leads to "other forms of violence," and gives an outline of these problems as follows:

We must ask ourselves whether the subjectivity that is irreducible to objective being could not be understood in virtue of a different principle than its egotism, and whether the true ethical stage is correctly described by Kierkegaard as generality and equivalence of the inner and the outer.\(^101\)

What Levinas finds inexcusable in Kierkegaard is the notion of faith as "egotism," a faith which leads the individual to relate exclusively to God, making all of existence an "inner drama." This
would effectively make relations to other people, especially the ethical relation of responsibility, a distant second in importance behind a personal, inner, religious faith. Levinas says, “Thus faith, the going forth from self, the only possible going forth for subjectivity, is the solitary tête-à-tête with what for Kierkegaard admits of nothing but the tête-à-tête: God.” Indeed, Levinas says, “the truth that suffers does not open man to other men but to God, in solitude.” By “the truth that suffers,” Levinas refers to Kierkegaard’s notion of “truth as subjectivity,” religious faith and belief in a God who “suffers, dies and leaves those whom he saves in despair.” It is not that Levinas does not appreciate the value in this “theology,” but he would see a similar “suffering truth” opening the individual to ethical relations with other individuals instead of closing them off completely. Levinas’ objection here is twofold: first, he objects to Judge William’s ethical sphere, as it is presented in Fear and Trembling. To this point, he is (unknowingly) in agreement with de Silentio. He then objects to de Silentio’s teleological suspension of the ethical, and the conclusions which can be drawn from it.

Levinas’ critique of the ethical is as follows: “The ethical means the general to Kierkegaard. The singularity of the I would be lost under the rule that is valid for all.” Levinas goes on to say that the “putting into question [of the self] signifies the responsibility of the I for the Other. Subjectivity is in that responsibility and only irreducible subjectivity can assume a responsibility.” When Levinas doubts “whether the true ethical stage is correctly described by Kierkegaard as generality and equivalence of the inner and the outer,” what he states as Kierkegaard’s “true ethical stage” is in fact Judge William’s writings in Either/Or Part II, from the point of view of Johannes de Silentio, the author of Fear and Trembling. In other words, Levinas is interpreting Kierkegaard’s ethical stage from the point of view of one of the
pseudonyms. Johannes de Silentio notes that Abraham has a secret, an inexpressible secret in that he can never rationally explain to anyone why he teleologically suspended the ethical. De Silentio says,

The ethical as such is the universal; as the universal it is in turn the disclosed. The single individual, qualified as immediate, sensate, and psychical, is the hidden. Thus his ethical task is to work himself out of his hiddenness and to become disclosed in the universal... If there is no hiddenness rooted in the fact that the single individual as the single individual is higher than the universal, then Abraham’s conduct cannot be defended, for he disregarded the intermediary ethical agents.  

As Levinas correctly shows, for de Silentio the task of the ethical is to make what is internal, external. The motivations for one’s actions, hidden in the secrecy of subjectivity, must be made known and justified rationally. Clearly, the aesthete can not and does not do that, for the aesthetic individual lacks the inwardness of subjectivity. However, upon moving to the ethical and recognizing the egoism of the aesthetic, the individual’s actions show themselves as either justifiable or unjustifiable, ethical or unethical. Here Levinas objects, along with de Silentio, at the notion of the “ethical being the general,” the universal. However, de Silentio makes his objection by using the story of Abraham sacrificing Isaac, which to Levinas seems incomprehensible, and understandably so. According to Kierkegaard, Abraham cannot never disclose the reason for his actions, because “faith begins precisely where thought stops.” The knight of faith is absolutely alone in his or her duty to the Absolute. For Levinas, Kierkegaard has just made faith into the antithesis of ethics, using Abraham as a paradigm for turning away from others completely. What Levinas does not seem to recognize is that this is a debate between pseudonyms. Fear and Trembling does not purport to give the “true ethical,” and Johannes de Silentio never does come to an understanding of Abraham’s faith. Further, neither of them...
have the understanding of faith as given in *Works of Love*.

Levinas' reading of Kierkegaard is a misunderstanding of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms, and is only tenable when one does not take *Works of Love* into consideration. I will show that Kierkegaard's intersubjective ethics are quite similar and comparable to Levinas' thought, primarily in *Totality and Infinity*, but also in *Otherwise than Being*.
Chapter Three

Kierkegaard’s Aesthetic and the Notion of Immediacy
In *The Point of View for My Work as An Author*, Kierkegaard outlines the basic problem his entire authorship addresses:

What does it mean that all these thousands and thousands of men call themselves Christians as a matter of course? These many, many men, of whom the greater part, so far as one can judge, live in categories quite foreign to Christianity!\(^{112}\)

Denmark, during Kierkegaard’s life, considered itself to be a “Christian” nation, that is, “Christendom,” a part of the empire of Christianity, where all people are Christians by being born in Christendom. But when Kierkegaard considered the attitudes of the nation, as they appeared to him, it seemed that this “Christendom” was a “prodigious illusion.”\(^{113}\) Being born Christian means that the individual does not have to take seriously the truths and paradoxes presented by Christianity and appropriate them inwardly. In fact, whether one believed or not, one was still considered a “Christian,” which means that one would no longer believe or disbelieve passionately. As for the “categories quite foreign to Christianity,” Kierkegaard says,

> If, then, according to our assumption, the greater number of people in Christendom only imagine themselves to be Christians, in what categories do they live? They live in aesthetic, or at the most, in aesthetic-ethical categories.\(^{114}\)

Thus, what Kierkegaard sought to do was become an aesthete for the aesthetes; in fact, outdo them in aesthetics, and lead them to see the problems associated with aesthetic categories, especially given the lip-service paid to being Christian.

If you are capable of it, present the aesthetic with all its fascinating magic, enthrall if possible the other man, present it with the sort of passion which exactly suits him, merrily for the merry, in a minor key for the melancholy, wittily for the witty, etc. But above all do not forget one thing, the purpose you have to bring forward... the religious.\(^{115}\)

With this in mind, Kierkegaard elucidates his motives for using pseudonyms. If he is attempting
to destroy the illusion of Christendom, then, he says, "an illusion can never be destroyed directly, and only by indirect means can it be radically removed."116

Climacus says in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript, "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 indirect form."117 Kierkegaard states that the aesthetic writings are "a deception," an attempt to deceive his readers into the truth.118 He further says,

So... one does not begin thus: I am a Christian, you are not a Christian. Nor does one begin thus: It is Christianity I am proclaiming; and you are living in purely aesthetic categories. No, one begins thus: Let us talk about aesthetics. The deception consists in the fact that one talks thus merely to get to the religious theme. But on our assumption, the other man is under the illusion that the aesthetic is Christianity; for, he thinks, I am a Christian, and yet he lives in aesthetic categories.119

Judge William's task is to try to convince his reader, entitled simply "A," that he cannot continue as an aesthete, that an inescapable "Either/Or" now confronts him. The Judge writes about the "ethical" sphere of existence, but he is not at all creating a system of ethics. One will hope in vain for the Judge to say, with Levinasian fervor, that the enclosed egoism of the aesthete makes responsibility to others impossible. This kind of approach to subjectivity and responsibility can be found in Kierkegaard, but such was not the task of the Judge. To do so would be at odds with Kierkegaard's method of "indirect communication." The Judge seeks to sway the aesthete, not by hammering down universal truths of ethics and responsibility, but by showing that the aesthetic life fails on its own terms, and that only by leaping from immediacy can the aesthetic find its true expression in Judge William's ethical sphere. However, many of the failures in the aesthetic, as pointed out by the Judge, stem from the problem of ethics and responsibility for the other. In fact, Either/Or Part II is essential in making a comparison with
Levinas on the problem of responsibility to the other, even though explicating this responsibility was not the Judge’s task.

“The aesthetic stage,” says Victor Eremita, in the “Letter to the Reader” of *Stages on Life’s Way*, “is the sphere of immediacy.”\(^{120}\) The aesthetic writer of *Either/Or Part I* seems to be in complete agreement. There is an entire section entitled, “The Immediate Erotic Stages,” in which the writer, A, expounds upon the development of the self-relation with reference to characters from Mozart’s *Figaro, The Magic Flute*, and *Don Giovanni*, from the pure immediacy of the Page to the awakened “seeking desire” of Papageno, to the “desiring desire” of Don Giovanni.\(^{121}\) The Page begins in pure immediacy, says A: “The sensuous awakens, yet not to motion but to a still quiescence, not to delight and joy but to deep melancholy. As yet desire is not awake; it is intimated in the melancholy.”\(^{122}\) Since desire is not yet awakened, there is no separation of subject and object. The “consciousness” of the purely immediate individual is not yet aware of itself, for there is no self-reflection, nor is there awareness of the differentiation between self and otherness. This immediacy, says A, can only be captured by music, as Mozart has done: “Reflection is implicit in language, and therefore language cannot express the immediate. Reflection is fatal to the immediate... In other words, the immediate is the indeterminate, and therefore language cannot grasp it.”\(^{123}\) With Papageno, A finds the next stage of consciousness: “Desire awakens, and just as we always realize that we have dreamed only in the moment we awaken, so also here - the dream is over. This awakening in which desire awakens, this jolt, separates desire and its object, gives desire an object.”\(^{124}\) This separation between subject and object is accomplished by desire and also the object. A says, “Only when there is an object is there desire; only when there is desire is there an object. The desire and the
object are twins, neither of which comes into the world one split second before the other.”  

Papageno, in Mozart's *Figaro*, is a bird catcher who seeks to catch a bird, but every time he sees another bird it distracts him from his previous object. Papageno is forever chasing many objects of desire unsuccessfully. The first stage, the Page, is the “contradiction” of “the inability of desire to find an object, but, without having desired, desire did possess its object and therefore could not begin desiring.” In the second stage, exemplified by Papageno, “the object appears in its multiplicity, but since desire seeks its object in this multiplicity, in the more profound sense it still has no object. It is still not qualified by desire,” for it is only a “seeking desire.” This brings us to the third stage, represented by Don Juan. This stage, says A, is a “unity of the [previous] two.” Don Juan, of course, was famous for having successfully pursued over a thousand women. This is “desire absolutely qualified as desire” in a particular object. “In the particular, desire has its absolute object; it desires the particular absolutely.”

This can also be explained with reference to Kierkegaard’s (or rather, Anti-Climacus’) definition of the self in *The Sickness Unto Death.*

A human being is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation’s relating itself to itself in the relation; the self is not the relation but is the relation’s relating itself to itself. A human being is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short, a synthesis. A synthesis is a relation between two. Considered in this way, a human being is still not a self.

So spirit, the self, is the “relation’s relating” itself to itself, the relating of the relation in a synthesis between two aspects. That there is relation between two aspects, for example, freedom and necessity, does not qualify that relation’s relating as “self” yet. When the relation relating the two relates to itself, the relation becomes a self. This is why Anti-Climacus says, “In the relation
between two, the relation is the third as a negative unity." It is not until that relation, the synthesis between the two, relates to itself is there a "positive third," the self.

With reference to the stages of immediacy and this complex definition of the self, Arnold Acome says,

A human being living at the level of a simple relation between two, where the psyche passively accepts what there is to enjoy in the way of sensuous desires, is not yet spirit or self, indeed, is unaware that there is an other self, a third that transcends the relation which is the immediate interplay of psyche and sense.

So consciousness, in immediacy, is unaware of itself as a relation between two, for that would require reflection, which is the relation's relating itself to itself. Yet there is no opposition for the awakening and/or desiring consciousness, and so the relation is indeed a unity, which Kierkegaard calls a "negative unity." Come says, "Why negative? Because this immediacy blocks the emergence of consciousness of the self which is not yet, blocks the awareness of the task of becoming one's self." Vigilias Haufniensis says, in The Concept of Anxiety, that "In ignorance, man is not qualified as spirit but is psychically qualified in immediate unity with his natural condition. The spirit in man is dreaming." Haufniensis takes great pains to distinguish "immediacy" and "ignorance," making subtle distinctions between the two. The description of the aesthetic still remains useful here, for in the "immediate unity" between the psychical and the physical, spirit (the self) is still dreaming. Johannes Climacus says, in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript,

Unscientific Postscript,

*Immediacy is good fortune*, because in immediacy there is no contradiction; the immediate person, viewed essentially, is fortunate, and *the life-view of immediacy is good fortune*. . . . The immediate person never comes to an understanding with misfortune – that is, he does not become dialectical within himself.

This is not an entirely negative view of the aesthete. This is one of the positive aspects of the
aesthetic sphere, that there is no contradiction for spirit. Judge William sums this up in speaking of the “life-view” of the aesthete:

Every human being, no matter how slightly gifted he is, however subordinate his position in life may be, has a natural need to formulate a life-view, a conception of the meaning of life and of its purpose. The person who lives esthetically also does that, and the popular expression heard in all ages and from various stages is this: One must enjoy life.\textsuperscript{137} The aesthetic individual has the fortune of living for enjoyment. But while the “spirit in man is dreaming,” he or she is driven by enjoyment, and essentially constituted by that enjoyment. This is not described by Kierkegaard as a negative characteristic, in and of itself. The enjoyment of the aesthetic is the enjoyment of objects of desire. One might refer to it as hedonism, yet hedonism seems to have a distasteful connotation, as though hedonism and selfish egoism were the same thing. The enjoyment described here is genuine enjoyment, something that is good, has no distasteful connotations, and thus the aesthetic individual is fortunate.

One must ask what the Judge can mean by ascribing the “natural need to form a life-view” to the aesthete. If the aesthete is qualified by immediacy, and as A points out “reflection is fatal to the immediate,”\textsuperscript{138} then how could one suggest that the aesthete is forming a “life-view”? For that matter, how can an aesthetic writer be reflective enough to write treatises on what it means to be an aesthete? It seems that there are two notions of “immediacy” to take note of. There is immediacy in a developmental sense, the unity of spirit as a relational synthesis before spirit relates to itself. Perhaps examples of this would include theories about children coming to the age of discernment, becoming self aware, whereas before there was no self-relation.\textsuperscript{139} There is a certain innocence here, which becomes clear in the phrase “the child does not know better.” When an infant does something inappropriate in public, it is acceptable, even enjoyable or “cute”
(perhaps to some, oddly), because "the child does not know better." Of course, when it is judged that the child should know better, many of these things are no longer cute for anyone. There is another sense of the term immediacy that Judge William explains, where a person is "that by which he spontaneously and immediately is what he is." With this usage, one does not have to imagine an exceptional or hypothetical person who lives entirely in immediacy with no reflection whatsoever, unable to speak (because language involves intrinsic reflection, at least according to A). Here it will be the Judge's task to explain how immediacy and reflection can seemingly dwell together in an individual. As for the notion of immediacy, it must be noted that Kierkegaard is usually speaking of the person in a developmental sense (the person as becoming), and although he does not have a theory of child development, the example still retains some usefulness here.

For Kierkegaard, there is the notion of immediacy in a developmental sense, the immediacy which he (and the pseudonyms) seem to ascribe to all individuals, like a "natural" state. This does not necessarily have a pejorative connotation. In fact, as was shown above, Climacus calls the immediate person "fortunate," and the Judge explains that the aesthete is in some sense constituted by enjoyment, a good, wholesome enjoyment of the world. However, for Kierkegaard there is an immediacy in the developmental sense which does have a negative side, the immediacy which ends up blocking personal development, as stated by Come above: the immediacy of the "negative unity" of the "self" relation, that obstructs the awareness of "the task of becoming a self." Thus, for Kierkegaard, while there is much in the aesthetic to be praised, there is a point at which immediacy loses its gleam, and becomes an obstacle to the development of the self.

Judge William outlines essentially three "life-views," which do not seem to be
intended to fit the three nuances of the aesthete as defined by A. First, there is the life-view which “teaches that we are to enjoy life, but place the condition for it outside the individual.”

For instance, what the Judge has in mind is when a person dedicates his/her life to the pursuit of wealth or great achievements, as though successfully gaining the object of desire will bring satisfaction. The condition necessary for enjoyment is outside the person, and it is hoped that successfully gaining the object will be cause for enjoyment. Secondly, there is happiness with internal conditions, life-views which teach “that we are to enjoy life, but the condition for it lies within the individual himself, yet in such a way that it is not posited by himself.”

The example given is that of a talent which lies within the individual and which one develops over time. Judge William is careful to note that “it is not posited by himself,” that is, the talent lies within the individual, though he or she is not necessarily the one to notice or encourage it. Jimi Hendrix would not have become one of the greatest guitarists of all time had he not had access to a guitar.

Thirdly, there is the life-view which “teaches ‘Enjoy life’ and interprets it as ‘Live for your desire.’” This desire, says the Judge, is “a multiplicity, and thus it is easy to see that this life splits up into a boundless multiplicity,” except in the case of the one who, from childhood, had one particular “inclination” which he or she followed, one primary desire.

In this context, Judge William addresses the notion of immediacy and reflection for the aesthetic individual:

Insofar as this life-view splits up into a multiplicity, it is easy to see that it is within the sphere of reflection; yet this reflection is always only a finite reflection, and the person remains in his immediacy. In the desire itself, the individual is immediate, and however refined and sophisticated, however artfully devised it is, the individual is still in it as immediate. In the enjoyment, he is in the moment, and however multiple he is in this respect, he nevertheless is continually immediate because he is in the moment.
It is in enjoyment that the person “remains in immediacy,” even though the person, like Kierkegaard’s aesthetic writers, might reflect and produce very sophisticated philosophical works indeed. Westphal says of A and Johannes the Seducer, “Clearly they are not instances of the immediacy that excludes every reflection. But they are immediate in their reflection in the same way that Don Giovanni is immediate in his action: they are unmediated by ethical considerations of any sort.” It is in fact this mixture of reflection and immediacy which gives one the opportunity to point out the failures of the aesthetic to the aesthete, and in turn, points the way to the framing of the problem of aesthetics and immediacy for responsibility and ethics.

What then are the problems of the aesthetic which Judge William points out? In commenting on the third aesthetic life-view, he says, “To live in order to satisfy one’s desires is a very distinguished appointment in life, and thank God one rarely sees it put into practice completely because of the trials and tribulations in life that give a person something to think about.” The aesthete can live in immediacy and enjoy enjoyment until that enjoyment, perhaps due to “trials and tribulations,” is no longer able to fulfill his or her existence. In terms of the definition of the self from The Sickness Unto Death, the negative unity, the synthesis of freedom/necessity, finitude and infinitude, and the other Kierkegaardian dyads before the relation relates to itself, begins to become anxious in the face of its own nothingness. Anti-Climacus says, “Despite its illusory security and tranquility, all immediacy is anxiety and thus, quite consistently, is most anxious about nothing.” To speak developmentally, there is a “security and tranquility” at first in immediacy when “the spirit in man is dreaming,” because the aesthete lacks the reflection to recognize despair. However, over time, through “trials and tribulations,” the aesthete has to choose to ignore the building anxiety of despair, thereby seeking enjoyment as
a sort of diversion from the suffering of life.\textsuperscript{153} It is anxiety which awakens the "dreaming spirit," causes the self to relate to itself. In the \textit{Concept of Anxiety}, Kierkegaard describes how anxiety causes the self to relate to itself. First, there is the natural condition, where the "spirit in man is dreaming."\textsuperscript{154} Kierkegaard says:

In this state there is peace and repose, but there is simultaneously something else that is not contention and strife, for there is indeed nothing against which to strive. What then, is it? Nothing. But what effect does nothing have? It begets anxiety. This is the profound secret of innocence, that it is at the same time anxiety.\textsuperscript{155}

Vigilias Haufniensis relates this to the notion of the self, which he seems to hold in common with Anti-Climacus:

Man is a synthesis of the psychical and the physical; however, a synthesis is unthinkable if the two are not united in a third. This third is spirit. In innocence, man is not merely an animal, for if he were at any moment of his life merely animal, he would never become man. So spirit is present, but as immediate, as dreaming. Inasmuch as it is now present, it is in a sense a hostile power, for it constantly disturbs the relation between soul and body... On the other hand, spirit is a friendly power, since it is precisely that which constitutes the relation... How then does spirit relate itself to itself and to its conditionality? It relates itself as anxiety.\textsuperscript{156}

This answers, for Kierkegaard, the question of how reflection first develops in the immediate relation of spirit, the synthesis. Spirit is both "friendly" and "hostile" to the two aspects it unites. Friendly in the sense that it is that which "constitutes the relation;" hostile in the sense that it disturbs the relation, ever disturbing the relation as anxiety. This is the impetus which pushes the self, latent in the relation, to develop, to relate to itself.

The danger of the aesthetic worldview is that it leads inevitably to a self-centered egoism:

His [the aesthete's] reflection is continually reverting to himself, and his enjoyment is a matter of his enjoyment having as little content as possible, he is hollowing himself out, so to speak, since a finite reflection such as that is of course unable to open the personality.\textsuperscript{157}
This “hollowing out” is akin to a greater and greater despair, which the aesthete, while in immediacy, comes to recognize through the few moments of “finite reflection” the aesthete may have. The Judge says, “The immediacy of the spirit cannot break through, and yet it requires a breakthrough; it requires a higher form of existence.”¹⁵⁸ This brings the aesthete to the choice of the Either/Or, an unavoidable choice: “Either a person has to live aesthetically or he has to live ethically.”¹⁵⁹ Choosing the ethical does not mean choosing to have a system of ethics to live by. Instead, the Judge says, “Rather than designating the choice between good and evil, my Either/Or designates the choice by which one chooses good and evil or rules them out.”¹⁶⁰ Judge William does not portray one choice as “good” and the other as “bad,” but choosing the ethical means “positing good and evil” as meaningful terms, something the aesthete could never do. To choose the aesthetic, or to remain in the aesthetic, is necessarily a choice. Such a choice could be the attempt to elude the choice altogether by returning to the diversion of enjoyment, where the aesthete has chosen in a “figurative sense.” What does this choice mean for the individual? The Judge says,

But what is it, then, that I choose – is it this or that? No for I choose absolutely, and I choose absolutely precisely by having chosen not to choose this or that. I choose the absolute, and what is the absolute? It is myself in my eternal validity.¹⁶¹

With reference to the definition of the self in *The Sickness Unto Death*, spirit recognizes itself in the choice, for to choose, it must relate itself to itself. The choice does not create the self, for it was there, except only as a “negative unity.” Judge William says, “This self has not existed before, because it came into existence through the choice, and yet it has existed, for it was indeed ‘himself.’”¹⁶²

This is the solution for Judge William. The ethical allows the person to “know himself or
herself.” Spirit, the synthesis which is the relation as a negative unity for the aesthete, relates to itself, or, is the relation’s relating. This does not mean leaving the aesthetic altogether, but recognizing enjoyment’s relative place in life.

In choosing itself, the personality chooses itself ethically and absolutely excludes the aesthetic; but since he nevertheless chooses himself and does not become another being by choosing himself but becomes himself, all the aesthetic returns in its relativity.\(^{163}\)

To summarize, the Judge points out that the aesthetic, insofar as it is purely immediate and characterized by enjoyment, leads into the finite reflection of the aesthete who wills to remain in the aesthetic, focused on the satisfaction of his or her desire in a “selfish” hedonism. This inevitably brings despair, or, more properly in Kierkegaardian terms, makes evident and unavoidable the despair which was always there. In terms of relationality, Judge William’s descriptions of the aesthete show the aesthete to be a “subject” in a world full of objects. Driven by desire, the aesthete seeks to satisfy that desire with the object of desire. Thus, A, as an aesthetic writer, speaks quite openly of romantic love and the pursuit of the beloved, but once the beloved has been obtained, it is time to move on. Johannes the Seducer writes, after a successful endeavor (let the reader understand) with Cordelia, “Now all resistance is impossible, and to love is beautiful only as long as resistance is present; as soon as it ceases, to love is weakness and habit. I do not want to be reminded of my relationship with her; she has lost her fragrance...”\(^{164}\)

Other pseudonymous writers speak to the problem of aesthetics and immediacy as well. Anti-Climacus says that the aesthete prefers to remain ignorant of having a self, or the potential of becoming a self. “Why? Because he is completely dominated by the sensate and the sensate-psychical, because he lives in sensate categories, the pleasant and the unpleasant, waves goodbye to spirit, truth, etc., because he is too sensate to have the courage to venture out and to endure
being spirit." Anti-Climacus' analogy of the spheres of existence as a house is appropriate here to illustrate this point:

Imagine a house with a basement, first floor, and second floor planned so that there is or is supposed to be a social distinction between the occupants according to floor. Now, if what it means to be a human being is compared with such a house, then all too regrettablly the sad and ludicrous truth about the majority of people is that they prefer to live in the basement. Every human being is a psychical-physical synthesis intended to be spirit; this is the building, but he prefers to live in the basement, that is, in sensate categories.  

Here Anti-Climacus says that the majority of individuals live in "the basement," and are "dominated by sensate categories." This echoes Kierkegaard from the Point of View for My Work as An Author, where the majority of individuals live only in aesthetic categories. Similarly, Anti-Climacus echoes Judge William in pointing out the domination of "sensate categories," where (in my interpretation) the drive to fulfill desire makes other people into objects, means to that end.

In Repetition, a writing which also deals with aesthetic themes, Constantin Constantius examines the notion of repetition. As an aesthetic writer, Constantin seeks to find if it is possible to repeat an experience, or if experiences are lost once the moment is past. What brings him to this question is observing a young man who desires a girl, falls in love, and then in a religious sense begins to love the idea of being in love, where the beloved is in a sense no longer required. This sounds familiar, much like the situation of Johannes the Seducer. Constantin says, "He was deeply and fervently in love, that was clear, and yet a few days later he was able to recollect his love. He was essentially through with the entire relationship." In immediacy, an enduring love is impossible, unless at every moment it becomes first love all over again. A character in Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest puts this well, speaking of the idea of proposing.
marriage to the woman one is chasing: “It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal. Why, one may be accepted. One usually is, I believe. Then the excitement is over.” But Constantine applies this principle to everyday experiences, and in his case, a very memorable trip to Germany, attending the operas there. One has an experience and enjoys it, yet once the experience is over, that enjoyment is also gone, and cannot be brought back. Attempting to repeat the experience and failing becomes the boredom which the aesthete is ever prone to. Constantin says, “The next evening I went to the Konigstadter Theater. The only repetition was the impossibility of repetition.” Constantin reports similar results with love, with returning to his home where even the return to the familiar was not repeatable, particularly with the attempt to feel only pleasure. In essence, Constantius is saying that unless repetition is possible, the aesthetic life-views will never be satisfactory.

It is here that the notion of an inter-pseudonymical hermeneutic becomes relevant, as argued above in chapter two. There is clearly a thread which unifies the pseudonyms and Kierkegaard with reference to the aesthetic sphere and immediacy, a common conception of the aesthetic, as well as a general consensus of the problem that the aesthetic sphere culminates in. John Elrod says, “Whether in intimate relations of friendship, family, and Eros or in the public relations of classes, the immediate individual implicates others in instrumental relations given the necessity of the other in each individual’s striving for the end of self actualization.” It remains to be shown that this raises for Kierkegaard a problem for ethics and responsibility comparable to Levinas. This is primarily to be found in *Works of Love*. It will not be difficult to see how Kierkegaard’s ethics in *Works of Love* can be set in dialogue with Levinas’ ethics. The first task, however, is to set *Works of Love* in dialogue with the rest of Kierkegaard’s writings. *Works of*
Love does not make reference to the rest of Kierkegaard's writings, and he uses different terminology. With some analysis it will be shown that "improper self-love" is the problem with the aesthetic sphere,\textsuperscript{172} which is the key to understanding Works of Love with relation to the notion of the aesthetic in Kierkegaard's writings. This in turn shall show how the notion of the aesthetic and immediacy in Kierkegaard's writings can be set in dialogue with Levinas' non-reflective ipseity, the movement of the same in the otherness of the elements.

In Works of Love, Kierkegaard makes use of New Testament sayings about love. The statement, attributed to Jesus, which Kierkegaard makes the most use of is, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."\textsuperscript{173} This command is placed in an intersubjective context, and implies as much about "yourself" as it does about "your neighbor." The basic presupposition contained in the command, according to Kierkegaard is "that every person loves himself."\textsuperscript{174} Often, the love of self is conjoined with a negative connotation, namely, selfishness. This is called "improper self-love." For the command to be good news for one's neighbor, there must also be a notion of "proper self-love." Kierkegaard hints at both in saying, "If one is to love the neighbor as oneself, then the commandment, as with a pick, wrenches open the lock of self-love and wrests it away from a person."\textsuperscript{175} The command simultaneously sets forth one's responsibility to the neighbor, and redeems the notion of self-love:

\begin{quote}
Just as Jacob limped after having struggled with God, so will self-love be broken if it has struggled with the phrase that does not want to teach a person that he is not to love himself but rather wants to teach him proper self-love.\textsuperscript{176}
\end{quote}

Kierkegaard was not the first to examine a Christian ethics of self-love in a philosophical context. In an effort to refute "psychological egoism," Bishop Butler tried to show that one can be motivated to help others without such motivation necessarily entailing some sort of selfish
interest.\textsuperscript{177} Or, simpler yet, it may very well be the case that one is constantly self-interested, but the “psychological egoists” would have one believe that being constantly self-interested excludes the possibility of dis-interested goodness towards another, goodness towards another for the sake of the other. Therefore, Butler shows that self-love and the genuine love of others is not mutually exclusive. What seems to be of paramount importance for Butler is what one means by “self-love” or “self-interest.” Is this the same as egoism or hedonism? Butler says,

\begin{quote}
Happiness consists in the gratification of certain affections, appetites, passions, with objects which are by nature adapted to them. Self-love may indeed set us on work to gratify these; but happiness or enjoyment has no immediate connection with self-love, but arises from such gratification alone. Love of Neighbor is one of those affections.\textsuperscript{178}
\end{quote}

Thus, if one is constantly seeking enjoyment, which is gratification, one may very well end up doing oneself harm, which is certainly not consistent with the love of self. Clearly, the love of self will not always involve seeking enjoyment. One does not go to the dentist for the sheer enjoyment of it, but to avoid future problems. For Kierkegaard, the aesthete does not follow this sort of reasoning, for the despair which comes from choosing to remain in the aesthetic is not what would bring an individual enjoyment. Further, the move from improper to proper self-love does not bear a \textit{direct} analogy to the example of the dentist. \textit{Indirectly}, Kierkegaard holds that a right relationship with God is the way to overcome despair. In \textit{Sickness Unto Death}, Anti-Climacus says,

\begin{quote}
The formula that describes the state of the self when despair is completely rooted out is this: in relating itself to itself and in willing to be itself, the self rests transparently in the power that established it.\textsuperscript{179}
\end{quote}

However, Kierkegaard’s motivation in emphasizing proper self-love, especially given the problem that the example of Abraham provides for ethics, is closer to a “modified command
theory" as found in Robert Merrihew Adams’ article, “A Modified Divine Command Theory.” Adams says, “What the specifically theological doctrines introduce into Judeo-Christian ethics, according to divine command theory, is the belief in a law that is superior to all human laws.” Adams says that theologians have found this particularly appealing, a theory of ethics that is “especially congruous with the religious demand that God be the object of our highest allegiance.” This description certainly seems to include Kierkegaard’s ethics within the context of what Adams calls a “divine command theory.” Kierkegaard’s interest in the command, “love your neighbor as yourself,” is that it is a command, one which Denmark as a “Christian” nation ostensibly practiced en masse. That self-interest and genuine interest for another were not mutually exclusive is presupposed by Kierkegaard. For Adams, while the believer seeks to follow divine commands because they divine commands, this becomes problematic when what God commands seems unethical, as in the case of Abraham. While Levinas reads Fear and Trembling correctly in seeing that Kierkegaard considered the story of Abraham to be in some sense paradigmatic for faith, Kierkegaard did not suppose Abraham’s specific situation to be paradigmatic, but Abraham’s response of faith when faced with a paradox. I argue in chapter five that the parallel Kierkegaard saw is in the need to accept the paradox of the incarnation, and to follow the ethics of Jesus in the light of this difficulty. In Kierkegaard’s Works of Love, the problem of divine commands that troubled Abraham is dissolved in that what God commands is an ethics of responsibility.

The proper love of self and the love for others is not mutually exclusive for Kierkegaard. However, what Kierkegaard calls “improper self-love” is mutually exclusive with a genuine love for others. Selfishness, is the root problem behind “preferential love,” which includes erotic love
and friendship. In fact, in any love to which one does not add the phrase “as yourself,”
Kierkegaard detects a “secret self-love”\textsuperscript{185} which must be “dethroned.”\textsuperscript{186} Lowly as it might seem at first glance, Kierkegaard maintains that the commandment “love your neighbor as yourself” is the highest form of love for another person.

One might well ask what Kierkegaard means by “the neighbor.” How radical is his notion of the other? Kierkegaard says,

The neighbor, then, is nearer to you than anyone else. But is he also nearer to you than you are to yourself? No, that he is not, but he is just as near, or he ought to be just as near to you. The concept “neighbor” is actually the redoubling of your own self; “the neighbor” is what thinkers call “the other,” that by which the selfishness in self-love is to be tested. As far as thought is concerned, the neighbor does not even need to exist. If someone living on a desert island mentally conformed to this commandment, by renouncing self-love he could be said to love the neighbor.\textsuperscript{187}

This certainly does not seem to be a very radical other. To consider another person the “redoubling” of oneself seems clearly to be a (violent) reduction of the other. However, Kierkegaard’s notion of the neighbor is not an attempt to define the essence of the other person, but to establish a relationship between oneself and the other. Kierkegaard says, “The concept ‘neighbor’ is what thinkers call ‘the other.’”\textsuperscript{188} Kierkegaard makes “the neighbour” into a category, those individuals to whom the self is always related and relating to. That there is a category, “neighbor,” actually ensures that ethics is “always already” there. By recognizing the self, one recognizes the intersubjective context in which even an isolated self, “living on a desert island,” is immersed. Proper self-love, which is the command whether one is alone or not, necessarily recognizes an intersubjective context in which one is surrounded by neighbors. When the other is always already defined as the neighbor, it follows that the command to “love your neighbor as yourself” is always already in effect.
Kierkegaard turns to a famous story attributed to Jesus called the “Good Samaritan,” which is about three men who discover a man lying by the side of a road, recently mugged and injured. Two of the men hurried by on the other side of the road, yet one man stopped to help at his own cost.\textsuperscript{189} Jesus asks which of the three men was a “neighbor to the man who had fallen among the robbers?”\textsuperscript{190} The correct response, obviously, was the man who stayed to help, he was thus a neighbor to the injured man. This is an interesting use of terminology. At first, one is commanded to “love your neighbor as yourself,” and then one is told to act as a “neighbor” to others. Kierkegaard says,

The one to whom I have a duty is my neighbor, and when I fulfill my duty I show that I am a neighbor. Christ does not speak about knowing the neighbor but about becoming a neighbor oneself, about showing oneself to be a neighbor just as the Samaritan showed it by his mercy. By this he did not show that the assaulted man was his neighbor but that he was a neighbor of the one assaulted.\textsuperscript{191}

There are then two notions of the neighbor for Kierkegaard, establishing two kinds of relationships: proximity and responsibility. The neighbor is the one closest to me in terms of proximity, and yet for Kierkegaard this is not proximity in a strictly physical sense. He says, “If there are only two people, the other person is the neighbor; if there are millions, everyone of these is the neighbor.”\textsuperscript{192} The neighbor also designates a relation of responsibility, a mode of being towards the other: the neighbor is “the one to whom I have a duty.”\textsuperscript{193} These two aspects are inseparable. Kierkegaard says, “To love yourself in the right way and to love the neighbor correspond perfectly to one another; fundamentally they are one and the same thing.”\textsuperscript{194}

Kierkegaard began with the command, “love your neighbor as yourself,” and sought to show that the self-love presupposed therein is essential to the command, as opposed to perhaps suggesting that one love others and not think about oneself. This begins by supposing that the love for others
is possible, and attempts to show that love for self still has a place in genuine love for the neighbour. Butler began with the principle that all actions are self-interested and sought to show that, even if that is the case, it does not make genuinely dis-interested love impossible. Butler thus begins with the supposition that self-interest is dominant, and seeks to show that love for others can still have a place. Yet both come to the same conclusion that there is nothing problematic in affirming the co-existence of both self-interest and dis-interest.

Clearly, Kierkegaard’s problem with the aesthetic is not that self-love is present, but that it is improper. The suggestion that the problem with the aesthetic is improper self-love must be qualified in several ways. With reference to Kierkegaard’s definition of the self, the aesthete is the relation that does not relate to itself, either in immediacy lacking the reflection to relate to the self or the self-centered egoism which is “too sensate to have the courage to venture out and to endure being spirit.” Vigilius Haufniensis points out in the Concept of Anxiety (as quoted above) that spirit is hostile to immediacy, disturbing the dreaming self, which properly speaking, is no self. Anti-Climacus says that it takes courage to “endure being spirit,” because spirit is anxiety. The aesthete does not want to have this courage, although, as Judge William shows, whether the aesthete chooses to be in despair by choosing to be what he or she is, a self, or to avoid the choice, the non-choice that is also despair, the self must relate to itself, even if that reflection is short lived. Judge William describes the immediacy of the reflective aesthete as “that by which he spontaneously and immediately is what he is.” This means that, for the reflective aesthete, there is no self-relation, no reflection that endures through time. The spirit relates to itself for a moment, yet that relation never has the chance to develop, and so it remains in flux, and its essence is “spontaneously and immediately” what it is, moment by moment. This, says the
Judge, is the despair of lacking the eternal. To choose the self in its "eternal validity" rather than in immediacy is also despair, the despair which requires courage, for to choose the self is to face anxiety. Judge William says,

Choose despair, then, because despair itself is a choice, because one can doubt without choosing it, but one cannot despair without choosing it. And in despairing a person chooses again, and what then does he choose? He chooses himself, not in his immediacy, not as this accidental individual, but he chooses himself in his eternal validity.¹⁹⁷

This is precisely the language used in *Works of Love* to describe the difference between proper and improper self-love. In the command, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," Kierkegaard finds love with eternal validity. The "you shall" makes love a duty, a choice to be made time and time again. Kierkegaard says, "When one shall, it is eternally decided; and when you understand that you shall love, your love is eternally secured. By this shall, love is eternally secured against every change."¹⁹⁸

Improper self-love contains no command of duty to love the other person. It too is placed in an intersubjective context, yet the object of love ever remains the self. Others can be the objects of desire, but rarely are the subjects of true love. One might love oneself by loving the other person. Economically speaking, it can be very good for one to "love" others, it can be very beneficial for the self. Improper self-love is spontaneous and immediate, and is thus subject to change in a moment into hatred or jealousy:

The love that has only existence can be changed within itself and from itself. Spontaneous love can be changed within itself; it can be changed into its opposite, into hate. Hate is a love that has become its opposite, a love that has perished.¹⁹⁹

Jealousy is another form of love changed within itself: "Jealousy loves as it is loved. Anxious and tortured by the thought of whether it is loved, it is just as jealous of its own love, whether it
is not disproportionate in relation to the other's indifference, as it is jealous of the manifestation of the other's love.\textsuperscript{200} This kind of love is not based on the "you shall" of the command, nor does it fulfill the "as yourself." Instead, it is based on transitory things, like the actions and reactions of others, and it is conditional. In other words, it is an aesthetic love. He says, "What a difference there is between the play of feelings, drives, inclinations, and passions, in short, that play of the powers of immediacy... what a difference between this and the earnestness of eternity."\textsuperscript{201} Just as for Anti-Climacus and Judge William, in \textit{Works of Love}, despair is caused by a "mis-relation" in the self. This is overcome in the eternal decision to love:

Despair is a mis-relation in a person's innermost being — no fate or event can penetrate so far and so deep; it can only make manifest that the mis-relation — was there. For this reason there is only one security against despair: to undergo the change of eternity through duty's shall.\textsuperscript{202}

In this way, while \textit{Works of Love} does not specifically identify aesthetic self-love as improper self-love, the description fits exactly. This means that there is a generally unified critique of the aesthetic found to be found in the entirety of Kierkegaard's authorship.

Kierkegaard's critique of Eros and friendship is also a critique of the aesthetic. Much like Judge William's critique, from the point of view of the ethical, that the aesthetic must be dethroned as absolute and appreciated in its relativity to the ethical, Kierkegaard asks in \textit{Works of Love}, "Shall erotic love and friendship be the highest love or shall this love be dethroned?\textsuperscript{203}"

What he objects to in erotic love and friendship is "preferential love," that is in fact another form of selfishness. Erotic love cannot endure proper self-love's "redoubling." The command, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," shows that proper self-love is being a neighbor to one's neighbor, and requires a "redoubling" in the subject of love. Self-love becomes a love inclusive
of all selves qua others, equally. This, according to Kierkegaard, erotic love cannot endure:

What self-love cannot endure is redoubling, and the commandment's as yourself is a redoubling. The person aflame with erotic love, by reason or by virtue of this ardor, can by no means bear redoubling, which here would mean to give up the erotic love if the beloved required it.\(^\text{204}\)

Friendship is placing one person (or several) preferentially above one's relation to others. This means "to love one person above all others, to love him in contrast to all others."\(^\text{205}\)

Kierkegaard's rejection of erotic love and friendship in favor of true love\(^\text{206}\) seems problematic. One can easily admit that his descriptions fit at times. Sometimes erotic love makes one forget what is best for both oneself and the other, with disastrous consequences. Likewise, sometimes one's friendship to one person means showing preference over another, to that other person's detriment. Yet surely not in every case! I am suggesting a charitable reading of Kierkegaard, likening this "dethroning" of erotic love and friendship to the "dethroning" of the aesthetic in favor of the ethical, where the ethical reclaims the aesthetic, while dethroning it of its absolute nature. Kierkegaard says, "Just as self-love selfishly embraces this one and only self that makes it self-love, so also erotic love's passionate preference selfishly encircles this one and only beloved, and friendship's passionate preference encircles this one and only friend."\(^\text{207}\) With the spontaneity found in the immediacy of the aesthetic, Kierkegaard finds in self-love a "spontaneous combustion:" "The fire that is in self-love is spontaneous combustion; the I ignites itself by itself. But in erotic love and friendship, in the poetic sense, there is also spontaneous combustion."\(^\text{208}\)

This brings us directly to the question of responsibility and ethics, and sets *Works of Love* in dialogue with Levinas. Kierkegaard says, "For the unfaithful self-love that wants to shirk, the
task is: devote yourself; for the devoted self-love the task is: give up this devotion."^209

Recognizing the self-centered egoism of aesthetic love, Kierkegaard calls the individual not to "shirk" one's responsibility to the other, and to give up the devotion to the self which enthrones preferential love to the detriment of others.
Chapter Four

The Ethical Situation: Egoism and Substitution
Emmanuel Levinas’ references to Kierkegaard in his published works are “rather rare,”^210 and yet contemporary research places the two in dialogue with each other on theology, religion, ethics, and subjectivity. This chapter shows the remarkable parallels in Kierkegaard and Levinas on the topics of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, specifically on the constitution of the individual and how this leads up to a common problem for ethics.

In Totality and Infinity, Levinas follows the movements of “the same” in the alterity of the elements, to the appearance of the face of the other. By the term “the same,” Levinas means a “self-identity,”^211 a same-ness or homogeneity, but not necessarily a conscious ego in the Cartesian sense. Levinas uses “the same” to refer to both the conscious and pre-conscious “I:”

To be I is, over and beyond any individuation that can be derived from a system of references, to have identity as one’s content. The I is not a being that always remains the same, but is the being whose existing consists in identifying itself, in recovering its identity throughout all that happens to it. It is the primal identity, the primordial work of identification.^212 Levinas speaks of “the other” in two ways: There is the otherness of the world in which the same finds itself immersed; and there is “the other metaphysically desired.”^213 Levinas says “The other metaphysically desired is not ‘other’ like the bread I eat, the land in which I dwell, the landscape I contemplate.”^214 Anything that is not included in the identity of the same is other than the same, but not all otherness is included in a single category. The otherness of the world is that which the individual “lives from…” The metaphysical other is “absolutely other,” and can mean, for Levinas, both another person and God.^215

The “primal sphere” Levinas speaks of is the same and the other (the world) in the “elements.” Levinas says, “Every relation or possession is situated within the non-possessable which envelops or contains without being able to be contained or enveloped. We shall call it the
The elements are the background within which the same encounters the “alterity” of the world. The world has no form, it contains “things,” but is not itself containable.\textsuperscript{217} Levinas uses a striking example to describe the individual in the elements. He calls this, “the eddy of the same.”\textsuperscript{218} An eddy is a swirling vortex of water, like the funnel that forms when one drains a bathtub, often found off the coast near rocky shores, also on rivers around rocky and uneven banks, and over some underwater structures. It is an identity formed and sustained by its motion which distinguishes it from the medium from which it forms. For Levinas, the motion that drives the same in the other is “need.” As a being in the world, the same must sustain itself:

To be sure, it is necessary to earn one’s bread, and it is necessary to nourish oneself in order to earn one’s bread; thus the bread I eat is also that with which I earn my bread and my life. But if I eat my bread in order to labor and to live, I live \textit{from} my labor and \textit{from} my bread.\textsuperscript{219}

Levinas is careful to distinguish his notion of need from the classic interpretation of need as the required filling of a void, a privation, like a car requiring gasoline. This is a view which he ascribes to Plato:

In denouncing as illusory the pleasures that accompany the satisfaction of needs Plato has fixed the negative notion of need: it would be a less, a lack that satisfaction would make good. The essence of need would be visible in the need to scratch oneself in scabies, in sickness.\textsuperscript{220}

Instead, needs and the satisfactions of need are cast in a positive light. Levinas says, “Need is loved; man is happy to have needs. A being without needs would not be happier than a needy being, but outside of happiness and unhappiness.”\textsuperscript{221} This brings Levinas to enjoyment. Through the enjoyment one finds in the satisfaction of needs, the same distinguishes itself from what is other in the elements. Enjoyment accomplishes “separation.”\textsuperscript{222} Levinas describes this process
using potent language: “In need I can sink my teeth into the real and satisfy myself in
assimilating the other.” In another place he says, “In satiety the real I sank my teeth into is
assimilated, the forces that were in the other become my forces, become me.” The assimilation
of the other by the same brings recognizes the separation of the other and the same, the
assimilator and the assimilated. Enjoyment, as the accomplishment of separation, constitutes the
self as a self, an identity. Levinas says,

The upsurge of the self beginning in enjoyment, where the substantiality of the I
apperceived not as the subject of the verb to be, but as implicated in happiness (not
belonging to ontology, but to axiology) is the exaltation of the existent as such.

This self, however, is not a self in the sense of a self knowing itself, a cognitive process. It is not
a reflective “I,” but is a distinct self in the sense that the movement of the same is towards the
other, thereby already distinguishing otherness. Even an amoeba does not normally try to
consume itself, but finds nourishment in the other. Levinas says, “We live in the consciousness
of consciousness, but this consciousness of consciousness is not reflection. It is not knowing but
enjoyment, and as we shall say, the very egoism of life.” Levinas understands the unreflected
consciousness in the idea of “sensibility,” which is synonymous with enjoyment:

The sensibility we are describing starting with enjoyment of the element does not belong
to the order of thought but to that of sentiment, that is, the affectivity wherein the egoism
of the I pulsates. One does not know, one lives sensible qualities.

Levinas describes this sensibility as “the naïveté of the unreflected I, beyond instinct, beneath
reason.” It is not to be reduced biologically to mere instinct, nor is it to be analytically
categorized as based on cognitive propositions. In separation, the being is aware of alterity, but
this is not necessarily a reflective awareness. This is because it is “spontaneous.” Adrian
Peperzak says, "The motivation of enjoyment must not be found in some reasonable thought... the tendency to pleasure and enjoyment is completely spontaneous."^229

There is a notion of reflection which can be attributed to the ego, even in its egoistic enjoyment of the elements. The ego becomes "insecure" when faced with the uncertainty of the future. Levinas says, "Enjoyment seems to be in touch with an 'other' inasmuch as a future is announced within the element and menaces it with insecurity."^230 The response to this insecurity is to build a home or a dwelling, through labor, by which one takes possession of the elements.^231 Jeffrey Dudiak describes Levinas' home as "the necessary condition for overcoming the uncertainty of the morrow, as the site in which can be stored up the products of labor against the insecurity of being carried away by the element[s]."^232

Levinas' descriptions of the enjoyment of the same in its separation from the other are quite violent. They point to the darker side of enjoyment. Again, "if enjoyment is the very eddy of the same, it is not ignorance but exploitation of the other,"^233 for the other is "assimilated;" I "sink my teeth" into it. Levinas says, "In enjoyment I am absolutely for myself. Egoist without reference to the Other, I am alone without solitude, innocently egoist and alone."^234 Peperzak describes this as, "the economy of a hedonistic autonomy,"^235 autonomous in the sense of being "sovereign" in its freedom.^236 The "I" is not specifically resisted by the elements which it "lives from." There is resistance, in the sense that one must work to sustain oneself through labor, but there is no indignation on the part of the elements at being "exploited" or "assimilated" in this way.^237 The elements do not call freedom into question, but provide the resources required to realize freedom. However, when one places this in an intersubjective context, the danger of a hedonistic autonomy comes to light:
It [the Ego] is an existence for itself— but not, initially, in view of its own existence. Nor is it a representation of self by self. It is for itself as in the expression ‘each for himself’; for itself as the ‘famished stomach that has no ears,’ capable of killing for a crust of bread, is for itself... The self-sufficiency of enjoying measures the egoism or the ipseity of the Ego and the same. Enjoyment is a withdrawal into oneself, an involution.\(^{238}\)

While both having and fulfilling needs is included in enjoyment, Levinas recognizes that a need is still a need, something which one requires for survival. If it should happen that two individuals, feeling their separate needs with “famished stomachs,” approach the only available sustenance, perhaps a crust of bread, they will not be concerned with the welfare of the other person, but will attempt to satisfy their own needs. Levinas insists that this occurs, but not out of malicious intent. It is a case of the ego being for-itself, which is not synonymous with being against-others. Indeed, there need not be malicious intent, or intent of any kind concerning others at this point, for the ego lacks the reflection to recognize another identity in the elements, other than itself. However, the outcome is similar to what it might be were the ego truly against-others:

The ego treats the other as it would the otherness of the world, exercising sovereignty over it.

Levinas says,

The objective totality remains exclusionary of every other, despite its being laid bare, that is, despite its apparition to an other. Contemplation is to be defined, perhaps, as a process by which being is revealed without ceasing to be one. The philosophy it commands is a suppression of pluralism.\(^{239}\)

The totality spoken of here is refers to the sovereign I, who in enjoyment takes possession of the elements and builds a home to protect itself from the uncertainties of the future. The ego, as for-itself, not only denies the “pluralism” of identities, but suppresses it. Indeed, “numerical multiplicity remains defenseless against totalization.”\(^{240}\) This, Levinas claims, is akin to “murder.” While the power the same exercises over the elements of the world is a “domination,”
the attempt to be sovereign over the other (person) is annihilation:

Murder alone lays claim to total negation. Negation by labor and usage, like negation by representation, effect a grasp or a comprehension, rest on or aim at affirmation; they can. To kill is not to dominate but to annihilate; it is to renounce comprehension absolutely. Murder exercises a power over what escapes power.\(^{241}\)

The separation enacted through enjoyment brings with it the danger of attempting to force the other into one's totality qua sameness. Levinas says, "Separation is embedded in an order in which the asymmetry of the interpersonal relation is effaced, where I and the other become interchangeable in commerce."\(^{242}\) The same exercising sovereignty over the elements is the commercial exchange of innocent egoism; but when one attempts to exercise sovereignty over the other (person), incorporating another person into an economy of exchange, then the asymmetrical relationship which Levinas sees as inherent in intersubjective relations is "effaced."

If course, not all "negation" leads to "annihilation." Levinas includes "labor and usage," perhaps in the sense of an employer's relationship to an employee. Also in representation by which one attempts to re-present an essence - which is, of course, never the same as the essence itself (thus being in that sense a negation) - one can relate to another in an affirmation that still does not capture the other's essence. The employer relates to an employee as a boss to a paid worker, but the employee is more than simply a paid staff member. Levinas seemingly recognizes some sort of scale of totalization, in which murder is the most violent.

Levinas does not provide detail for what I have called the scale of totalization. In my interpretation, he is much more concerned with the sketching his primary ethical situation, and the way in which the naïve goodness of enjoyment can develop into both the threat of murder and the possibility of responding to the other in an asymmetrical relationship. This latter possibility is
what makes subjectivity possible for Levinas, and it is at this point that Kierkegaard's thought intersects closely. Conceived in terms of a narrative of the development of subjectivity, Kierkegaard and Levinas describe very similar phenomena and experiences. For both, the "I" is constituted by enjoyment: for both, this is cast in a positive light, yet there are hazards that come with the egoism of the self in enjoyment.

For Kierkegaard and Levinas, the spontaneity of enjoyment excludes reflection. In *Either/Or* Part I, Kierkegaard's pseudonym A describes the "immediate erotic stages," where "Reflection is fatal to the immediate... In other words, the immediate is the indeterminate, and therefore language cannot grasp it."\(^{243}\) There are two senses of "immediate" for Levinas in *Totality and Infinity*: immediacy (spontaneity) of the same in the other (the world), and the immediacy of the face to face (addressed below). "Sensibility" is the term Levinas uses for "a relation with a pure quality without support, with the elements."\(^{244}\) It is a relation between the individual and the world, the elements. Sensibility is enjoyment, says Levinas: "The sensibility is therefore to be described not as a moment of representation, but as the instance of enjoyment."\(^{245}\)

In this context, Levinas treads a very fine line between consciousness and representation qua sensibility:

Sensibility enacts the very separation of being – separated and independent. The aptitude to keep to the immediate is not reducible to anything else; it does not signify the lapse of the power that would dialectically render explicit the presuppositions of the immediate, set them in movement, and suppress them in sublimating them. Sensibility is not a thought unaware of itself.\(^{246}\)

As an "instance of enjoyment," sensibility "enacts the very separation of being." One's sensation of the world, of what is other, enables one to "know" that there is that which is not oneself, not part of the identity of the same, which then allows one to move towards it in enjoyment, and for
nourishment. So the relation between the same and the other is enjoyment, which enacts the separation between the same and the other. This is not a cognitive process for Levinas, not even an unconscious process ("a thought unaware of itself"): "Sensibility is the... naïveté of the unreflected I, beyond instinct, beyond reason." Levinas, in this context, is carefully attempting to distance himself from Husserlian intentionality. This is also the case with "representation."

With representation comes identity: "To remain the same is to represent oneself." Thus, the "I" distinct from the elements in enjoyment finds some sort of permanence in self-representation.

Levinas says, "The identity of the same unaltered and unalterable in its relations with the other is in fact the I of representation." Yet here again Levinas brings in the notion of immediacy. He says, "Representation is pure spontaneity, though prior to all activity. Thus the exteriority of the object represented appears to reflection to be a meaning ascribed by the representing subject to an object that is itself reducible to a work of thought." It might appear plausible that in representation, one constitutes the world and in doing so represents it to oneself, a self which, ostensibly, one also constituted; this would be a constituted constituting subject, "a work of thought." For this to be the case, the "I" would need to forgot its own act of constitution, when it constituted itself – not to mention the fact that it was not yet constituted in order to be doing the constituting. Levinas sidesteps these absurdities, saying,

At the very moment of representation the I is not marked by the past but utilizes it as a represented and objective element. Illusion? Ignorance of its own involvements? Representation is a force of such an illusion and of such forgettings. Representation is a pure present. The positing of a pure present without even tangential ties with time is the marvel of representation.

Yet representation helps to make sense of the relation of the same and the other, without condemning the relation to a give and take economy of cause and effect: "Intelligibility, the very
occurrence of representation, is the possibility for the other to be determined by the same without determining the same, without introducing alterity into it; it is a free exercise of the same.\textsuperscript{252} By explaining representation as a “pure present,” Levinas effectively sidesteps the theoretical explanation of representation as the work of a constituting ego, where the very possibility of “alterity” in the ego becomes impossible; for if the representation of what is other than the ego is constituted by the ego, then how could it truly be other than the ego? By understanding representation as a “pure present,” Levinas denies the possibility of finding in representation the temporal gap required for an ego to be constituting what is other (i.e., the ego’s past involvements). This is what he means by saying, “At the very moment of representation the I is not \textit{marked} by the past but utilizes it as a represented and objective element. Illusion? Ignorance of its own involvements? Representation is a force of such an illusion and of such forgettings.”\textsuperscript{253}

Kierkegaard, of course, could not have the same phenomenological, post-Husserlian interests as Levinas. However, Judge William arguably had something similar in mind, in saying that in immediacy the aesthete is “that by which he spontaneously and immediately is what he is.”\textsuperscript{254} In immediacy, understood as a pure present, the aesthete lacks the temporality of a self-relation which persists through time, much like Levinas’ pure present which is “ignorant of its own involvements.” But the affinity between the two is much clearer in the notion that immediacy is unsettled by anxiety. For Kierkegaard, this is the beginning of subjectivity, the “natural condition,” where the human spirit is “dreaming.”\textsuperscript{255} Kierkegaard says,

\begin{quote}
In this state there is peace and repose, but there is simultaneously something else that is not contention and strife, for there is indeed nothing against which to strive. What then, is it? Nothing. But what effect does nothing have? It begets anxiety. This is the profound
\end{quote}
secret of innocence, that it is at the same time anxiety.\textsuperscript{256}

Levinas’ emphasis is slightly different\textsuperscript{257}:

In sensibility itself and independently of all thought there is announced an insecurity which throws back in question the quasi-eternal immemoriality of the element, which will disturb it as the other, and which it will appropriate by recollecting in a dwelling.\textsuperscript{258}

Kierkegaard’s anxiety is quite abstract, the anxiety of a non-reflective being “reflecting” on nothingness. In the synthesis of spirit, the relation begins to relate to itself and in doing so “disturbs itself.”\textsuperscript{259} Levinas’ insecurity is the anxiety of a being facing the unknown future, while being prompted to build a dwelling for protection, to be safe and at home. There are two important points of intersection here: first, what is common to both philosophers is the emphasis on denying that anxiety is a cognitive function. For Kierkegaard, at this point, subjectivity is just beginning to awaken. Nothing has happened or occurred at all. In fact, one gets the impression, that for Kierkegaard the existence of the world is quite superfluous concerning anxiety and the birth of subjectivity. This is most true for Vigilius Haufniensis in \textit{The Concept of Anxiety}, whereas (as shall be discussed below) Johannes Climacus in the \textit{Postscript} finds anxiety for the aesthete in everyday situations, trials and tribulations. This is not necessarily a contradiction, when it is remembered that Climacus is dealing with “reflective” aesthetes, while at this point Haufniensis is commenting on the earliest awakenings of spirit. Levinas’ insecurity stems from the subject existing in the world, for insecurity begins “in sensibility itself and independently of thought.” Levinas also says, “Sensibility is not a thought unaware of itself,”\textsuperscript{260} in that enjoyment and sensibility enact the “separation of being,” the awareness of the same and the other.

However, Levinas’ point is clearly that this insecurity is not a cognitive process whereby one would need to stop and take stock of the situation. Insecurity has its origins within the very fiber
of immediacy, in the spontaneity of enjoyment, something outside of cognition.

The second point of intersection is that both philosophers conduct their analyses within the notions of insecurity and enjoyment. Kierkegaard’s aesthete also finds itself disturbed by a kind of insecurity in enjoyment, for enjoyment is fleeting and easily overshadowed by misfortune. Johannes Climacus says, “Misfortune is like a narrow pass on the way of immediacy. Now he is in it, but essentially his life-view must continually imagine that it will in turn end because it is something alien.”

One could suggest that the aesthete does indeed build a dwelling to protect against life’s misfortunes, for Kierkegaard’s exemplar who leaps from the immediacy of the aesthetic to the reflection of the ethical, is the Judge who marries and takes his place in civil society. In any event, Kierkegaard ends where Levinas begins, with the aesthete in the world disturbed by his or her contingency, presented with the choice of either facing suffering or turning back to enjoyment, and hoping that suffering ends on its own. Levinas seems correct in pointing out that all individuals build a dwelling. Even Kierkegaard’s aesthete will return to his or her dwelling in order to attempt to avoid the inevitable onslaught of life’s misfortunes. Kierkegaard, however, points out that the dwelling does not necessarily protect one from misfortune or despair, and being able to retreat to the safety of one’s home is no protection from oneself. Conversely, Levinas ends where Kierkegaard begins, in a sense, by saying,

The dwelling, inhabitation, belongs to the essence – to the egoism – of the I. Against the anonymous there is, horror, trembling and vertigo, perturbation of the I that does not coincide with itself, the happiness of enjoyment affirms the I at home with itself.

However, Kierkegaard’s aesthete is bothered by all sorts of misfortunes; this is absolutely essential for the individual’s personal growth and progress. For Levinas, the “I at home with itself” could conceivably remain so until the postponement of death becomes impossible. Yet
both philosophers lead the individual away from the enclosure of the home. Levinas’ individual learns to welcome the other into the dwelling, postponing the other’s death instead of only his or her own. Kierkegaard’s individual leaps out of the egoism of improper self-love, learning to love the other as his or herself.

Thus, while there are differences in how Levinas and Kierkegaard approach subjectivity and the dwelling, their respective phenomenologies contain similarities which lead to comparable consequences for ethics. Both Kierkegaard and Levinas insist on the notion of immediacy, which allows them to sidestep an ethics of based on cognition and knowledge in the case of the aesthete. Neither want the relationship to other people to be based upon cognitive assent, because neither envisions the aesthete as making decisions based on rationality. This creates some interesting difficulties. In Levinas’ scenario, it is difficult to understand how one could move from the motions of enjoying life to fearing the future and building a dwelling, yet all the while existing in the spontaneity of representation and enjoyment. The reflection required to fear and plan for the future, to postpone one’s death, would seem to exclude immediacy. For Kierkegaard, it is difficult to understand how one could hold to a “life-view,” whether cognitively or not, write complex philosophical treatises, and entertain romances while remaining in the immediacy of the aesthetic. Further, Kierkegaard’s anxiety and Levinas’ insecurity are both conceived as beginning non-cognitively. Calvin Schrag, in *The Self after Postmodernity*, points out that Continental philosophers in particular have objected strongly to what he calls the “self of discourse:”

The self is implicated in its discourse as a who that at the crossroads of speech and language understands itself as a self that has already spoken, is now speaking, and has the power yet to speak, suspended across the temporal dimensions of past, present, and future.263
This means, for Schrag, that the individual becomes an “abstracted epistemological pivot,” the “atemporal zero-point of cognition.” Schrag (following Paul Ricouer) is interested the epistemological project of “grounding” identity in a narrative. His use of Kierkegaard is in the narrative of the “self in action,” which he finds in Judge William’s Either/Or. Schrag’s point translates well into this discussion. When one approaches Kierkegaard (and Levinas) as giving a phenomenological analysis of subjectivity, philosophy as “lived philosophy,” then the insistence on a non-cognitive approach becomes understandable. Ethics and responsibility are not merely subjects to be discussed in terms of truth-propositions and logical argumentation wherein conclusions follow from premises. Levinas and Kierkegaard recognize that the sheer facticity of one’s existence and the responsibility which comes with it are not cognitively asserted propositions. However, with the introduction of ethical responsibility, it becomes impossible to ignore existential realities. For Kierkegaard, this moment comes when the aesthete must face life’s either/or: that is, choose to be oneself, or choose despair and the duty that comes with being oneself. As I have argued previously, for Kierkegaard the problem in the aesthetic realm is the problem of improper self-love, the self-centered egoism of the aesthete. John Elrod summarizes this by saying,

> Whether in intimate relations of friendship, family, and Eros or in the public relations of classes, the immediate individual implicates others in instrumental relations given the necessity of the other in each individual’s striving for the end of self-actualization.

Levinas’ egoist “eddy of the same” is prone to the same ethical danger. Much more than Kierkegaard, Levinas emphasizes the goodness or natural quality of this egoism. Peperzak says, “A primary, self-centered, and sound hedonism is the spontaneous building up of a position that develops naturally into the egoism of unhindered autonomy.” This “natural development” is a
justification for the self's egoism. John Llewelyn says,

    Self-centeredness is its own defence, at the very least in so far as the ego’s felicity calls for it to protect itself against that by which it would be hurt. This is what might be called the ego’s first apology. It explains and justifies its stocking [of] its larder, furnishing its rooms and, when necessary, boarding up its windows and barring its doors.

This justification is possible because of the non-cognitive approach Levinas uses in setting his ethical scenario. One must be charitable to Levinas at this point, lest it be pointed out that to stock up for the future, and to have a dwelling built, so as to truly protect oneself against the uncertainty of the future would (taken literally) require at some point interaction with others, and society in general, in which case the face of the other has already appeared, and the Levinasian individual would already be going about responding to the other instead of defending against the future. There must clearly be a notion of forgetfulness for Levinas, where one can slip back into the egoism of enjoyment, even after having seen the face of another, like Robinson Crusoe landing on his island. In fact, Levinas mentions the forgetfulness of the experience of the other, the first welcome into the world of the child by the mother:

    This withdrawal implies a new event; I must have been in relation with something I do not live from. This event is the relation with the Other who welcomes me in the Home, the discreet presence of the Feminine.\(^{267}\)

From the original welcome into the world, the “separated being can close itself up in its egoism, that is, in the very accomplishment of its isolation.”\(^{268}\) Even though the survival every individual from birth requires several years (at least) of complete care and aid from others, this welcoming into the home of the other tends to be forgotten in the egoism of enjoyment. In this way, Levinas’ narrative of the development of the individual seems more complete than Kierkegaard’s, but they clearly have similar situations in mind. Thus, considering that Levinas
and Kierkegaard state the ethical situation of the aesthete in very similar fashions, it is not surprising to find them giving similar answers to the problem for ethics and immediacy.

Levinas is famous for the notion of “substitution,” hinted at in *Totality and Infinity* and fully developed in *Otherwise than Being*. Yet Kierkegaard also has a notion of “substitution,” in a sense, at least as radical as Levinas’. M. Jamie Ferriera points briefly to a very Levinasian section in the second part of *Works of Love* entitled, “Love does not seek its own,” in which Kierkegaard examines love and subjectivity. Kierkegaard’s attempt to overcome the possessiveness of the terms “yours” and “mine” correlates well with Levinas’ welcoming dwelling in *Totality and Infinity*; Kierkegaard’s notion of the “unconditionally injured one” relates well to the notion of the hostage in *Otherwise than Being*.

For Levinas, subjectivity is an opening to the other: “To utter ‘I’, to affirm the irreducible singularity in which the apology is pursued, means to possess a privileged place with regard to responsibilities for which no one can replace me and from which no one can release me. To be unable to shirk: this is the I.”

In *Totality and Infinity*, the individual builds a dwelling by possessing the elements, transforming the other into the same. When the other person approaches, the individual sees the face of the other and is unable to possess the other as the same does the elements:

The Other – the absolutely other – paralyzes possession, which he contests by his epiphany in the face. He can contest my possession only because he approaches me not from the outside but from above. The same cannot lay hold of this other without suppressing him. But the untraversable infinity of the negation of murder is announced by this dimension of height, where the Other comes to me concretely in the ethical impossibility of committing murder. I welcome the Other who presents himself in my home by opening my home to him.

Levinas does not see this drama as working itself out in an ethical deliberation, a rational
process, as though the Other first approaches one’s dwelling and then one thinks about what to do: welcome the Other or not? Instead, the very idea of infinity, the idea of the other person as other, is the motivation for the welcoming. Levinas says, “It is not I, it is the other that can say yes. From him comes affirmation; he is at the commencement of experience... to possess the idea of infinity is to already welcomed the Other.”

In Otherwise than Being, Levinas locates in signification the imperative of responsibility to the other person. In language, Levinas finds a “betrayal,” which allows him to escape Heidegger’s ontology:

At this moment Language is serving a research conducted in view of disengaging the otherwise than being or being’s other outside of the themes in which they already show themselves, unfaithfully, as being’s essence – but in which they do show themselves. Language permits us to utter, be it by betrayal, this outside of being, this ex-ception to being, as though being’s other were an event of being.

The “betrayal” Levinas finds here is that while language shows itself in being’s “themes,” which makes it inescapably ontological, there is a “trace” of being’s other in the “amphibology of the said.” Ontology and “manifestation,” the event of being, force a “correlation” of the saying and the said, but in the said the trace of being’s other shows that “apophansis is not exhausted in the saying.” The trace of being’s other shows that the other cannot be totally thematized, signified as part of one’s ontological understanding of the world. For Levinas, an ethics based on ontology will chronically result in exploitation and violence, like the violence of the holocaust. Jeffrey Dudiak says,

Levinas’ philosophical obsession, that which occupies his attentions and all but dominates his oeuvre, is clearly the movement from the said to the saying, is clearly with making a case that at the bottom – or at the heart—of live-world experience and of language, and as integral to such experience, there abides, as foundational to that experience, an ethical moment – my responsibility for the other, my self as substitution.
Levinas says, "There is a paradox in responsibility, in that I am obliged without this obligation having begun in me, as though an order slipped into my consciousness like a thief, smuggled itself in, like an effect of one of Plato's wandering causes." The obligation to the other person, responsibility, is not a conscious choice by the individual. If it were, for Levinas, it would inevitably include some sort of thematization or representation (see above). The "otherwise than being" reveals no more than a trace in the realm of thought. Levinas says, "Responsibility for another is not an accident that happens to a subject, but precedes essence in it, has not awaited freedom, in which a commitment to another would have been made. I have not done anything and I have always been under accusation -- persecuted." Jeffrey Bloechl says, "Community with my neighbour begins 'in my obligation to him.' This obligation, however, is not conscious, or rather, consciousness always arrives after the fact of the obligation. One is always already obliged." The "self" is not gained by an enclosed egoism. Instead, the originary obligation to the other, the taking of responsibility for others, which Levinas calls "expiation," constitutes subjectivity: "In this sense the self is goodness, or under the exigency for an abandon[ment] of all having, of all one's own and all for oneself, to the point of substitution."

As well as being an ethical imperative for actions towards the other person, Levinas' substitution is also freedom for the individual. Levinas says, "Substitution frees the subject from ennui, that is, from the enchainment to itself, where the ego suffocates in itself due to the tautological way of identity, and ceaselessly seeks after the distraction of games and sleep in a movement that never wears out." These are two of the themes to be found in Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*: being for the other and the cancellation of "one's own," and the escape of the
individual from the enclosing egoism of the aesthetic.

Kierkegaard makes use of a famous passage attributed to St. Paul, found in first Corinthians chapter thirteen:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it does not seek its own, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard wrote chapters on many of these phrases. Yet the opening chapter of the second part of *Works of Love* comes from another phrase used by St. Paul earlier in Corinthians, namely, “Love Builds Up.” Based on the structure of “Love Builds Up,” it seems that Kierkegaard found in this phrase a common thread which runs through First Corinthians thirteen, which I will demonstrate in relation to his chapter, “Love does not seek its own.”

Kierkegaard states, “There is nothing, nothing at all, that cannot be done or said in such a way that it becomes upbuilding, but whatever it is, if it is upbuilding, then love is present.” This, he notes, is an odd use of the phrase “to build up.” When one makes an addition to an existing house, one uses the phrase “build out;” when one adds a second floor to an existing house, one uses the phrase “build on.” The phrase “build up” is, according to Kierkegaard, only used when one builds from the ground up. Yet love has this strange characteristic, that at the same time that it is love which is built up from the ground, love too is the ground, the foundation: “Love is the source of everything and, in the spiritual sense, love is the deepest ground of the spiritual life.” Thus he says, “To build up is to build up love, and it is love that builds up.”

Ferriera points out that Kierkegaard comes from the Lutheran tradition, with Luther’s drastic emphasis on “justification by faith” as opposed to “justification by works,” and so it is interesting
that he would entitle his book the *works of love.* Yet Kierkegaard makes it clear that it is love that is at work in the one who loves. In this chapter, only once does Kierkegaard say, “the *one who loves* builds up,” and only once does he mention the notion of the one who loves “loving forth” love in the other. Every other time it is love which builds love up, not the one who loves. This is theologically intentional, for he says, “It is God, the Creator, who must implant love in each human being, he who himself is Love.” On this note, Kierkegaard contrasts love as builder with a master builder and a teacher: the master builder can point to his or her work and say, “this is what I have built;” the teacher can test students and say, “this is what I have taught them.” But love builds up by making it seem as though it has done “nothing at all.”

Meanwhile, the one who loves recalls that it was love, not they, who built up love in the other. This is because, Kierkegaard holds, love’s work is to build up love by presupposing love in the other.

Often when one says of a person that he or she is loving, one uses examples where that person has been kind or caring in the past, usually where one has been the recipient of the other’s love. Does presupposing love’s presence in the other mean assuming a reciprocity, that the other will act in love towards us? Moreover, in the Christian tradition, love’s most difficult task is generally considered to be to love those who most decidedly do not love us, those who are hostile towards us. Yet Kierkegaard insists that love’s work is to build up love by presupposing love in the other. Kierkegaard suggests that “Love is not a being-for-itself quality, but a quality by which or in which you are for others.” Obviously, reciprocity is not what Kierkegaard has in mind. Kierkegaard contrasts the building up of love with the master builder and the teacher by showing that while the master builder presupposes that he or she must build what is not there, and while
the teacher supposes that he or she must educate his/her students because they are ignorant, love’s work is to presuppose the presence, rather than the absence, of love.

Love does not seek its own, therefore it builds up. The one who seeks his own must of course push everything else to the side, must tear down in order to make room for his own, which he wants to build up. But love presumes that love is present in the ground and therefore it builds up.289

The correlation which Kierkegaard seeks to establish between the phrases, “Love builds up” and “Love does not seek its own,” and the important link for Kierkegaard’s parallel to Levinasian “substitution,” is to be found in the notion of love as not a “being-for-itself” quality. As if in response to the initial problem with Kierkegaard’s presupposing love, that presupposing love in the other sounds like the expectation that the other will reciprocate, Kierkegaard says, “If a human being seeks to become the object of another human being’s love, he is deliberately and fraudulently seeking his own, inasmuch as the only true object of a human being’s love is love, which is God, which therefore in a more profound sense is not any object, since he is Love itself."290 This follows from what was noted before, that Kierkegaard places the emphasis on the “works of love,” rather than on the “work of the one who loves.” He continues,

Love does not seek its own, for there are no mine and yours in love. But ‘mine’ and ‘yours’ are only relational specifications of ‘one’s own;’ thus, if there are no mine and yours, there is no ‘one’s own’ either. But if there is no ‘one’s own’ at all, then it is of course impossible to seeks one’s own.291

Kierkegaard grounds love and ethics in an intersubjective context rather than a subjective context. He does not see subjectivity abolished in love, for he says, “There are a you and an I, but no mine and yours! For without a you and an I, there is no love, and with mine and yours, there is no love.”292 Without an I and a you, Kierkegaard does not see how any relation is possible, and
without two beings relating, there is no love possible. This is in accordance with the definitions
given for intersubjectivity as discussed in chapter one: as Soltoft shows, one of the key
distinctions between Kierkegaard's "moderate dialogical philosophy," and a "strictly dialogical
intersubjectivity" as found in Buber's I and Thou is that for Buber, it is possible to say "In the
beginning is relation." For Kierkegaard, such a statement would not make sense. Kierkegaard's
intersubjectivity remains what de Quincey calls a "strong experiential intersubjectivity," while
sidestepping the question of the ontological priority of subjectivity or intersubjectivity. It is
precisely because Kierkegaard's ethics is placed in an intersubjective context that he discovers
the possibility of being for another, overcoming the egoism of the aesthete's exclusive being for
self.

In this chapter, "Love does not seek its own," Kierkegaard suggests that friendship and
erotic love are not capable of going beyond the distinction between "mine" and "yours." While
friendship is "the greatest temporal good" and erotic love is "undeniably life's most beautiful
happiness," they are exchanges, part of an economy, and as such, Kierkegaard considers them
to be self-love. "By being exchanged, mine and yours become ours," and simply make the
possession communal, rather than overcoming the notion of possession. Yet Love "cancels" the
distinctions "mine and yours," because it is an "antithetical relation; they exist only in and with
each other. Therefore take one distinction away altogether, and then the other disappears
entirely." What happens when the "your" is taken away? Kierkegaard uses the example of
thieves, who act as though all property belonged them. The thief does away with the term "your,"
yet is confounded that in doing so he has also done away with the term "mine." What does the
thief have to say when the property he has stolen is itself stolen? Certainly not “That’s mine!”

What happens when the term “mine” is cancelled? This is more difficult to follow in Kierkegaard’s thought, for it would seem that in cancelling the term “mine,” one cancels the term “yours” as well, which is what the thief did to the detriment of the other. But according to Kierkegaard, to cancel the term “mine” means that “all things are yours,” a total self-denial. In doing so, one becomes the “unconditionally injured one,” sacrificing through love the notion “mine,” and in a sense, the notion of “self.” It would seem to follow that, just as the thief was confounded, so too would Kierkegaard’s responsible individual realize that cancelling the term “mine” would cancel the term “yours.” Perhaps the difference is that in proper self-love, one has not cancelled the other’s own in an effort to appropriate it, as the thief did. Kierkegaard’s ethics are, as Ferreira shows, similar to Levinas’ in that Kierkegaard comments only on the individual’s responsibility to the other, not vice versa. When one has truly cancelled the term “mine,” one is no longer concerned about whether the distinctions “mine and “yours” are cancelled, and one can make the phrase, “all things are yours,” a living reality.

Another difficulty in this apparent “denial of self” is that Kierkegaard, of course, is well known for his esteem of the category of the “single individual.” Is there still a separation between self and other when the terms “mine” and “yours” are cancelled? Kierkegaard says:

The truly loving one does not love his own distinctiveness, but, in contrast, loves every human being according to his distinctiveness; but “his distinctiveness” is what for him is his own; that is, the loving one does not seek his own; quite the opposite, he loves what is the other’s own.

In loving the other’s distinctiveness, that which is the other’s own, the truly loving person maintains the distinction between I and You, and in essence, defines his or her self in relation to
the other. "To have distinctiveness is to believe in the distinctiveness of everyone else, because distinctiveness is not mine but is God’s gift by which he gives being to me, and he indeed gives to all, gives being to all."^299

Yet Kierkegaard notes that there is a potential danger here. Love builds up by presupposing that love is present in the other, by presupposing that the other is a distinct individual in whom love is at work, a single individual with all the dignity personhood. But as he points out in “Love Builds Up,” what is upbuilding in an act, what makes an action a “work of love,” is the presence of love in the action. The same action done without love can be far from upbuilding. For example, criticism can be given constructively such that the one criticized is built up; yet so easily, criticism, even the same words, can be spoken and used as a tool to tear someone down. Here Kierkegaard is suggesting that the recognition of the other as a distinct individual is simultaneously a giving, a gift, making everything the other’s by doing away with the term “mine.” Yet a gift can be given such that the recipient becomes a debtor; this is a gift with “guilt strings” attached. Kierkegaard says, “Love does not seek its own; it rather gives in such a way that the gift looks as if it were the recipient’s property.”^300 Ferreira comments, “Love gives, and it gives in such a way that the gift does not look as if it is a gift at all.”^301 Presupposing that love is present in another is not so much an attempt to evaluate another person’s capacity for proper self-love. Kierkegaard suggests that the opposite of presupposing love, which would be presupposing a lack of love in the other, is like presupposing that one must change the other, tear down the fault in order to build up the other.^302 It is not clear why Kierkegaard thinks one must either presuppose the presence or absence of love. Perhaps to attempt to remain neutral, not
knowing what the other is like, is not what Kierkegaard would have the loving individual do. But Kierkegaard’s focus is not actually on the question of whether another person is loving or not.

Presupposing love has to do with one’s own attitude towards others. Kierkegaard says,

But when the one who loves builds up, it is the very opposite of tearing down, because the one who loves does something to himself – he presupposes that love is present in the other – which certainly is the very opposite of doing something to the other person.

The work of love thus requires having the attitude in oneself that gives as much to the other as possible, including the presupposition that love is present in the other. The having of such an attitude has to do with love’s work in oneself, and is not concerned with whether love is present in the other. Kierkegaard here requires the individual to assume the essential goodness of all beings, whether that is justified or not. This makes the possibility of refusal to the other very difficult. For example, one might be willing to act to another’s detriment on the presupposition that, “If they were in my place, they would do the same.” This could apply to the mundane world of daily interactions, from driving on the highway, to more serious situations where perhaps lives are at stake. Kierkegaard’s presupposing of love in the other disarms this reasoning, and makes even one’s attitude toward others an act of giving.

Similarly, Levinas says, “To recognize the Other is to give.” Like Kierkegaard, Levinas notes that the recognition of the Other, that distinct single individual, brings with it an ethical imperative: to give. For Kierkegaard it is the work of love that does not seek its own, which abolishes the notions “mine” and “yours,” that gives the gift of everything to the other. Yet unlike Kierkegaard, for Levinas the other always seems to be destitute, the other is always a widow, an orphan, or a stranger. Kierkegaard presupposes that love is at work in the other; Levinas seems to presuppose that the other is always in need of my help, as though substituting
oneself for the other is always the response required or desired. This leads some to read Levinas’ ethics as applying only in some extreme situations, challenging experiences which happen infrequently, like rescuing a child from a burning building. Yet for Levinas the response is simply welcoming the other, a welcoming in which one’s possessing of what is one’s own is “paralyzed.” The other may take what he or she needs. Thus, Levinas too has a notion of the abolishment of “mine” and “yours,” albeit a slightly less melodramatic one. For Levinas, the challenge of possession is to be able to give what one possesses freely, as though it did not belong to oneself. The face of the other calls upon the self to “refuse enjoyment and possession” by opening one’s home in an act of hospitality. Thus what ethics requires is not a complete abolishment of “mine” and “yours,” but a hospitable transcendence of the separation between the same and the other by giving up what one possesses.

In the first chapter of Works of Love, Kierkegaard declares that the category “neighbour” includes those who are near to us, yet it also includes all people, whether we have met them or not. “If there are only two people, the other person is the neighbour; if there are millions, everyone of these is the neighbour.” Thus for the truly loving person, the work of love is never finished, for in cancelling the notion “mine,” love makes the one who loves a continual sacrifice for the other. Levinas says, “The responsibility for another, an unlimited responsibility which the strict book-keeping of the free and non-free does not measure, requires subjectivity as an irreplaceable hostage.” Kierkegaard’s description of being-for-another somewhat pales in comparison to Levinas’ description of the hostage, although Kierkegaard’s description of the thief who destroys the distinction “yours” is also a very violent image. Both philosophers are
willing to recommend their ethical theories in the face very violent situations.

One of the themes that was focused in previous chapters on is the non-cognitive approach that Levinas and Kierkegaard take in describing the problem for ethics. With the advent of the ethical moment, Kierkegaard and Levinas part ways. For Kierkegaard, it is the choice of the either/or in which one chooses oneself. This is the beginning of reflection. For Levinas, the ethical responsibility for the other person continues to be something that the individual does not cognitively assent to. This explains the continued emphasis by Levinas on the immediacy of the "face to face," and yet for Kierkegaard, the result is much the same. The responsibility to the other means the cancellation of what is "mine" or "yours." This makes it impossible to attempt an ethical analysis of the responsibility of others to oneself, which leads Levinas and Kierkegaard to the "hostage" and the "unconditionally injured one." These are violent terms, they seem to predict persecution for ethical individuals. Levinas and Kierkegaard are on the same page when it comes to the problem for ethics in their respective ethical situations. Yet it remains to be seen why it is that Levinas seems to deny that Kierkegaard's anthropology, philosophy, and theology can adequately delineate one's responsibility to the other.
Chapter Five

Kierkegaardian Responsibility: The Notion of Reduplication
As has been shown in chapter two, one of the charges laid against Kierkegaard by Levinas, although not exclusively by Levinas, is that his theology and philosophy leads the individual to an exclusive relationship with God, a religious relationship to which all other relationships are subordinated, forgotten, or ignored. Levinas says, "Thus faith, the going forth from self, the only possible going forth for subjectivity, is the solitary tête-à-tête with what for Kierkegaard admits of nothing but the tête-à-tête: God." This is a serious charge, shared in part by other commentators on Kierkegaard. Coppleston says as much in summarizing Kierkegaard in these words: "For man’s highest form of self-realization as spirit is for Kierkegaard his self-relating to the personal Absolute." Undoubtedly, the individual’s relationship to the Absolute is paramount for Kierkegaard, and so it would initially seem that Levinas et. al. are correct. However, this reading of Kierkegaard leads to a somewhat bewildering conclusion: Kierkegaard would ostensibly place the individual initially in an intersubjective context (as has been argued in chapter one) in the aesthetic, and then indirectly lead the individual to a make a leap of faith, entering a strictly dialogical relationship with the Divine, effectively shutting out the intersubjective. The stages on life’s way would thus lead the individual out from an intersubjective context, rather than maintaining it and speaking meaningfully about it. However, Kierkegaard’s Works of Love clearly emphasizes the individual’s ethical relationship to other individuals. It could be that Works of Love is meant to be interpreted separately from Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous authorship, along with perhaps the Edifying Discourses. It could likewise be that Works of Love simply contradict the pseudonymous authorship. I suggest, instead, that there is an alternate reading of Kierkegaard’s intersubjectivity that does not conflict with the exclusive dialogical relation between the person of faith and the Divine. I have already
outlined this reading in chapter four by arguing that "improper self-love" is the same problem for an ethics of responsibility and the egoism of the aesthete.

There remains yet this one task, to give an outline of Kierkegaardian responsibility which shows that Kierkegaardian ethics flow seamlessly from his analysis of the ethical problems for intersubjectivity, and to demonstrate that this is simultaneously included in his account of the individual alone before God. With this, the possibility of a dialogue between Levinas and Kierkegaard on ethics and responsibility can be made clear.

As has been shown, Kierkegaard closely parallels Levinas on the constitution of the "subject" in enjoyment, and the emergence of subjectivity in encountering the other. Why, then, would Levinas see Kierkegaard marooning the individual in an exclusive isolation with God?

What is unusual about Levinas' two essays on Kierkegaard is that they make use primarily of only two of Kierkegaard's texts, namely, *Fear and Trembling* and *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Hence, Levinas' reading of Kierkegaard bears the indelible stamp of having not quite come to an appropriate understanding of Kierkegaard's stages and pseudonyms. This is understandable given the difficulties of reading Kierkegaard as discussed in chapter 2. *Fear and Trembling*, taken on its own, would indeed lead to some startling conclusions.

However, *Fear and Trembling* is a text by a pseudonymous author, Johannes de Silentio, who clearly understands himself to be a "knight of infinite resignation," staring in wonder at the thought of the "knight of faith." The "knight of infinite resignation" is infinitely resigned before the paradox of faith, and cannot see a way around it.$^{313}$ In the text, it is the paradox of Abraham who both fully intends to sacrifice his child and fully expects to have the child returned alive. However, for Kierkegaard, the parallel between Abraham and subsequent individuals is not
specifically the choices Abraham faced in his situation, i.e., having to choose between either murdering a son or disobeying God. The parallel is the paradox of faith in which the “ethical becomes the temptation.” Kierkegaard, in his journals, mentions the criticism that the absurd in the Postscript is different from that in Fear and Trembling:

The objection that there is conflict between the absurd in Johannes de Silentio and in Johannes Climacus is a misunderstanding. In the same way according to the New Testament Abraham is called the father of faith, and yet it is indeed clear that the content of his faith cannot be Christian – that Jesus Christ has been in existence. But Abraham’s faith is the formal definition of faith. So it is also with the absurd.  

Kierkegaard points to a passage in the Postscript that he says is “of importance:”

For the person who with infinite passion has had the inwardness to grasp the ethical, to grasp duty and the eternal validity of the universal, no terror in heaven, on earth, and in the abyss can compare with that of facing a collision in which the ethical becomes the temptation. Yet everyone faces this collision, if in no other way, then by one’s being religiously assigned to relating oneself to the religious paradigm.  

To be “religiously assigned to relating oneself to the religious paradigm,” would seem to mean involving oneself in religion to the exclusion of everyday life, the very life in which one encounters the other person. In the New Testament, the “the parable of the Good Samaritan,” attributed to Jesus, illustrates this perfectly. Kierkegaard uses this parable twice in Works of Love to demonstrate the idea of mercy. Several religious leaders refuse to help a dying man, ostensibly from concern to continue performing religious duties, whereas a simple layman journeying past was willing to help his neighbor.

With this in mind, the “collision” Kierkegaard refers to as facing every person places every individual in the same position as Abraham, yet in a specifically New Testament context that would be an anachronism if applied to Abraham. Jacques Derrida, in his analysis of Kierkegaard in The Gift of Death, likewise suggests that for Kierkegaard, every person is in the
same ethical situation as Abraham when it comes to responsibility:

I am responsible to the other as other, I answer to him and I answer for what I do before him. But of course, what binds me thus in my singularity to the absolute singularity of the other, immediately propels me into the space or risk of absolute sacrifice. There are also others, an infinite number of them, the innumerable generality of others to whom I should be bound by the same responsibility, a general and universal responsibility (what Kierkegaard calls the ethical order). I cannot respond to the call, the request, the obligation, or even the love of another without sacrificing the other other, the other others.  

For Derrida, acting out of duty for my neighbor inevitably means choosing one neighbor over another, one neighbor over many others. Derrida also recognized one of the New Testament instances of this which Kierkegaard also made use of, namely, Jesus’ words in Luke 14:26 – “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.” New Testament commentators would be quick to point out that Jesus’ words are meant to be understood comparatively; the one who chooses to follow the teachings of Jesus must place his or her duty to God before all other duties, including love of family and friends. The account of the same (or similar) sermon or teachings of Jesus in the book of Matthew reads: “Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matt. 10:37, emphasis mine). Kierkegaard does use this passage once in Works of Love, although, he makes a similar sort of disclaimer to avoid affirming the actual hatred of family. 

Derrida is right in pointing out that Kierkegaard wanted to place his readers in the same position as Abraham, but in his efforts to complicate matters and make things even more paradoxical than they already are, Derrida seems to miss the basic implications of Works of Love and the teleological suspension of the ethical as Kierkegaard wants his readers to understand it.
Abraham had to suspend the ethical because of the command of God which was, for him, to kill Isaac. The absurd paradox was for him to continue believing in the promises God had made concerning Isaac, that the promises would still come true, which meant essentially believing that Isaac was not going to die, even though he (Abraham) was going to kill him. Kierkegaard’s readers (a primarily Christian readership) must follow the commands of God, or, follow the example’s set by Jesus’ life and teachings, namely, to fulfill the two great commands: love God, and love one’s neighbor as oneself. The paradox is in believing in the concept of the incarnation, that the eternal became temporal, the infinite became finite, in order for one to see Jesus demonstrating what the commands of God really mean for those who would follow them. For Kierkegaard, the two commands amount to the same thing: the relationship to God (loving God) consists precisely in loving the neighbor. This is what Kierkegaard calls redoubling.

Kierkegaard says,

Worldly wisdom is of the opinion that love is a relationship between persons; Christianity teaches that love is a relationship between: a person – God – a person, that is, God is the middle term... To love God is to love oneself truly; to help another person to love God is to love another person; to be helped by another person to love God is to be loved.\(^{321}\)

Thus, contra Derrida, this parallel in *Works of Love* is less paradoxical than Abraham’s situation, and perhaps not quite as exciting, but it is the parallel Kierkegaard intended. Through faith, one relates absolutely to God, and so the criticisms of Kierkegaard are correct to point out that Kierkegaard’s stages aim at an exclusive relation between the individual and God. However, the relationship with God means precisely relating to other people, recognizing one’s ethical responsibility to others. Kierkegaard says, “Christianity turns our attention completely away from the external, turns it inward, and makes every one of your relationships to other people a God-
relationship." The paradox in having faith is the offense and scandal of the “God-man,” the Christian belief in Jesus being both divine and human, the eternal becoming temporal, the infinite becoming finite. Furthermore, paralleling Abraham’s situation, the teleological suspension of the ethical entails action. For Abraham, it required actually going up Mount Moriah. For the Christian, the command, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” finds its practical fulfillment in all the ethical teachings of Jesus. Kierkegaard says,

He, the Inviter, requires of thee that thou give up everything, let all go – but the common sense which is contemporary with thee in thy generation will not easily let thee go, its verdict is that to join him is madness.

There is a sense in which following Jesus’ ethical commands is madness. The “Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew chs. 5-7) is an example of “the Inviter” requiring that his followers “give everything up.” While the madness of following Jesus’ ethics may not seem to match the madness of sacrificing one’s son, it is the connection that Kierkegaard intended.

Thus, Levinas’ critique dissolves while remaining an essentially correct understanding of Kierkegaard: the paramount relationship is the dialogical relation between the individual and God, an exclusive relationship which consists fundamentally of relations to other individuals. It is an exclusive relationship because it is meant to be the most important one that one has – to the extent that one would, like Abraham, sacrifice a family member to fulfill it. However, Christians are not being told to sacrifice a family member. Instead, the fundamental command is to relate ethically to other people, to fulfill the duty and responsibilities which one has, namely: “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Kierkegaard’s (Christian) teleological suspension of the ethical suspends the ethical by placing the relation to God as paramount, as in the case of Abraham; but the divine command for Christians happens to be one which is ethical, an ethical teleological
suspension of the ethical. Universal ethics has thus been redeemed.

There is still some sense of universal ethics being offended by Kierkegaard’s Christian ethics: it is not an ethics of reason, a rationally derived ethics; it is closer to a divine command theory.\(^{324}\) Further, Kierkegaard calls for a radical self-denial even in the context of self-love, justified only by the fact that the one who calls for radical self-denial, was the very incarnation of the deity, God made human. Thus, while Kierkegaard’s Christian teleological suspension of the ethical calls the believer to an ethics of responsibility, it still suspends the ethical, qua rational system, to do so.

In his essay, “Love’s Redoubling and the Eternal Like for Like,”\(^{325}\) Martin Andic has a fairly comprehensive analysis of Kierkegaardian redoubling and reduplication. Andic sees Kierkegaard distinguishing the “Christian like for like” from the “Old Testament religion” and the “Jewish like for like.”\(^{326}\) Admittedly, some of Andic’s categorical religious distinctions seem hard to follow, although he is following Kierkegaard’s nineteenth century terminology. The basic distinction comes from Matthew 5, where Jesus re-emphasizes some of the commands in the Torah. Here, Jesus is combating is some of the social norms of his day and their applications, and so he says repeatedly, “you have heard that it was said... [for example] an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, do not resist the evildoer!”\(^{327}\) It does not seem correct to say that this is the “Christian” teaching as opposed to the “Jewish” teaching, because Jesus was Jewish, and taught from the Hebrew Scriptures. Nor does it seem correct to say that this is “New Testament religion” as opposed to “Old Testament religion,” because Jesus was re-emphasizing sections from the Torah. The terminology I will use is Kierkegaard’s distinction between the “eternal like for like” and the “temporal like for like.”\(^{328}\)
For Kierkegaard, says Andic, “Christianity is misrepresented as soft and mild and easy; for [in actuality] there is a rigor to it.”

[Christianity] has indeed given up on the temporal and Jewish like for like, by which you are to take an eye for an eye; but it has replaced this with an eternal one, whereby God judges or blesses you as you judge or bless others. The old exigency concerned your outward or worldly relation to the human, but the new one concerns your inward relation to the Divine. For now your every relation to others is finally and essentially a relation to God, who looks on you in your conscience leniently or rigorously, exactly as you look on others.

This idea of “like for like,” whether eternal or temporal, seems at first blush to be very problematic, something that Levinas would rightly denounce as reciprocity annulling the possibility of true justice. For Levinas, a “like for like,” whether human, divine, temporal, or eternal, would be a symmetrical relationship, an economy of exchange, and not at all like the asymmetrical relationship we find in Totality and Infinity and Otherwise than Being. In all likelihood, Levinas did not read Works of Love, or at the very least, did not read Kierkegaard’s “Conclusion,” and so the objection I have noted is a hypothetical Levinasian critique which must be accounted for in Kierkegaard’s thought before the notion of reduplication can really stand in dialogue with Levinas’ ethics. Andic notes the difficulty, in different terminology: “To characterize God as relentless to the relentless seems to contradict the notion that God is Love that is perfect and equal and changeless, and loves everyone, just and unjust, saint and sinner alike.”

For Andic, reduplication is Kierkegaard’s mature notion of repetition, which replaces earlier conceptions of repetition. This suggestion can provide a reading of Kierkegaard that harmonizes the earlier pseudonymous writings with Works of Love, especially when conjoined with my own attempts to show that the notion of improper self-love is the problem of aesthetic
egoism (chapter three). Kierkegaard states,

A temporal object never has redoubling in itself; just as the temporal vanishes in time, so also it is only in its characteristics. When, however, the eternal is in a human being, this eternal redoubles in him in such a way that every moment it is in him, it is in him in a double mode: in an outward direction and in an inward direction back into itself.\(^3\)

The same thing applies to love, says Kierkegaard: "What love does, that it is; what it is, that it does - at one and the same moment."\(^4\) Love moves both outward, from the person, and inward, to the person, a simultaneous double movement: a redoubling. Kierkegaard declares, "Note the redoubling here: the one who loves is or becomes what he does. He has or rather he acquires what he gives..."\(^5\) This flows from Kierkegaard's analysis of the notion of proper self-love,\(^6\) where the (unreflected) self is not the center of one's love, but the self and the neighbor are both included in self-love, in the command, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

This brings Kierkegaard into dialogue with Butler once again. Kierkegaard recognized that the love of self is implicit in this command. He says, "When it is said, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' this contains what is presupposed, that every person loves himself."\(^7\) Kierkegaard recognizes that self-love is not often viewed as a just foundation for ethics:

Is it possible for anyone to misunderstand this, as if it were Christianity's intention to proclaim self-love as a prescriptive right? Indeed, on the contrary, it is Christianity's intention to wrest self-love away from us human beings.\(^8\)

Clearly, Kierkegaard is uncomfortable with the notion of declaring the right to love oneself to be a Christian ethical principle; it is as if the "as yourself" of the command requires some sort of justification. Kierkegaard rescues the notion of self-love by distinguishing between proper and improper self-love,\(^9\) in that proper self-love is necessary for one to be responsible for the other.

The very point of loving oneself is in aid of one’s responsibility for the other, and so it is
included in the command. The command, however, is followed because it is a command. In this way, self-love is subordinated to the command, teleologically suspended, like any universal ethical principle. Thus, the self-love Kierkegaard sees presupposed in the command is that which must be "wrested" away from the individual. Proper self-love is not a given for Kierkegaard. Although Butler speaks of "immoderate self-love," he does not make the same distinctions which Kierkegaard does. He says,

> Because every particular affection is a man's own, and the pleasure arising from its gratification his own pleasure, or pleasure to himself, such particular affection must be called self-love; according to this way of speaking, no creature whatever can possibly act but merely from self-love.\(^{341}\)

Butler's point is that even if it is granted that all actions are motivated by self-love, there can be other motivations as well. Self-interest is not mutually exclusive, it does not make other motivations impossible. "Immoderate self-love" is an exclusive self-love, selfishness. It is the self-love of the egoist aesthete. Proper self-love, however, is not self-love "wrested" away from the individual; it is self-love co-existing with concern for others. Since Butler concedes that one will always be self-interested, moderate self-love is genuine self-love stripped of its exclusivity. In contrast, Kierkegaard simply expects that one could and would follow the command because it is a command, seemingly without any self-interested motivations. Improper self-love is presupposed, and one must redeem it through faith, because it is commanded. This results from the fact that Kierkegaard is working in the context of a divine command theory (chapter three). Yet there is something suspiciously Butlerian in Kierkegaard's proper self-love. In love's reduplication, there is a movement both outward and inward. Love, personified, perhaps deified, works both in the one loving and in the one loved. The work in the one who is loving is
essentially beneficial to the self, much like going to the dentist is beneficial. For example, in
loving, one “acquires what one gives:”

When we say, “Love saves from death,” the redoubling in the thought is immediate: the
one who loves saves another person from death, and in quite the same or yet in another
sense he saves himself from death.\textsuperscript{342}

Like the one who finds purpose in loving another, whose life becomes meaningful precisely
because there are others for whom one has the responsibility to love, love moves from the one
loving to the one loved, and is redoubled inwardly to the one doing the actual loving.

Kierkegaard recognizes this implicitly, but seems to want to relegate the rewards of loving others
to a by-product, rather than admitting, as Butler does, that even in proper self-love, one’s own
interest is a motivating factor.

Love’s redoubling is a two way street. Andic sees the term as having three elements:
“inwardness, reduplication, and the like for like.”\textsuperscript{343} Inwardness in redoubling is the element of
love whereby “love does to the lover what the lover does to others.”\textsuperscript{344} The “like for like” means
that,

you judge and reveal yourself by the way you judge others, you therefore have love, the
highest good, only as you presuppose that they too have it fundamentally. It is a like for
like in that ‘existence’ or God judges you loving or otherwise as you judge others so.\textsuperscript{345}

Reduplication has to do with the actions of the individual towards others. Andic says,

If we think of the eternal’s presence as “inwardness” and “subjectivity,” and its inward
movement as “the like for like,” then we can regard its outward movement as
“reduplication” understood as making (religious and ethical) truth recognizable to people
in your existence, or realizing it outwardly in what you are for others.\textsuperscript{346}

Andic further distinguishes human redoubling from divine redoubling. This follows from the title
of Kierkegaard’s \textit{Works of Love}, as opposed to a title like “Works of Loving,” in the sense that
the individual is called to love, but also to recognize that it is Love which is at work. It is Love that is at work in the one who is doing the loving. Andic says, "Human redoubling consists in dying to self and the world, in order to become spirit and like to God: it is truly and fully acquiring human identity and individuality." This makes sense for Kierkegaard's stages in that it is in part the recognition that there are relations to others (the ethical) that subjectivity is troubled into existence. Divine redoubling, however, involves both divine love's fundamental presence in you but also, when and so far as you choose, its realization at once outwardly in what you do to others and inwardly in what it does to you, in a way that transcends and looks opposite to all human... nonreligious thinking.

There is an individualistic element in Kierkegaardian thinking, which pervades his ontology of love. Andic points out that for Kierkegaard, "inwardness is actuality," which leads to Kierkegaard's notion of the "eternal like for like." The individualistic element is that, for Kierkegaard,

You have no concern with what others do to you but only with what you do to them... Kierkegaard is declaring the primacy of the ethical and religious. It is the connection with the Divine that counts first in human existence and relationships, and shall transform them so that you exist for others on the basis of equality before it.

The redoubling of love means that for human reduplication, the individual's relation to God and humans is simultaneously affected. The two cannot be separated. Andic says, "loving people is loving God, and loving God is loving people."

Andic points to a paradox here: "Let us note the paradox in saying that the God who is love that is given freely and expects no return, expects and requires a return of love that we can make to God only in our neighbor, whom God also loves." If God gives without expecting
anything in return, why is it then that God seems to expect something in return, namely, that the one who is loved (by God) will love (others)? The paradox for Andic dissolves in recognizing the characteristics of Christian love. The “like for like” does not mean that God will only love me if I love others, as if grace and love are earned or merited, or that loving others is an expected return like the interest of an investment. Andic says, “You have not deserved it [God's love] by giving it to others, but simply shown that you believe in it and desire it and open yourself to share in what God wants to give to everyone.” Thus the one who does not love others has not understood Kierkegaard’s notion of Christian love.

Yet there is still something troubling in this notion of “like for like.” Kierkegaard says, Christianity’s view is: forgiveness is forgiveness; your forgiveness is your forgiveness; your forgiveness of another is your own forgiveness; the forgiveness you give is the forgiveness you receive, not the reverse, that the forgiveness you receive is the forgiveness you give. So, as opposed to the phrase, “as others do unto you, do likewise to them,” or “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,” Kierkegaard imposes a new “like for like:” “The Christian like for like is: God will do unto you exactly as you do unto others.” This seems to be a frightening theology, or perhaps a very comforting one, depending on how one views oneself: if I suppose that I am good to others, then I shall expect to be rewarded, or if I recognize myself as very cruel, I shall expect to be punished. Both options seem to lead to an economic reciprocity in the human relationship with the divine. The economy of exchange set up by a God who would reward good behavior on a meritorious basis and punish bad behavior challenges the notion of a God who loves without return, and invites humans to do the same. It is certainly contrary to the classic Protestant notion that God’s favor is not earned through good behavior. M. Jamie Ferriera offers a slightly different interpretation at this point:
Does confidence in the ‘like for like’ – one gets what one gives – turn neighbor love into a kind of ‘profit’ transaction? The only way to avoid concluding that it does is to focus on the nature of what one ‘gets.’ The benefit received is one that is not extrinsic to what one gives; in other words, I will be benefited, but the value of that benefit will, of course, depend on my already having a certain hierarchy of values. The benefit of forgiving is being forgiven by God, but this will only seem a benefit if my values are religiously ordered.\textsuperscript{358}

The importance of the “benefit” not being “extrinsic to what one gives” cannot be overemphasized. An “extrinsic” reward for what one gives would be something other than or different from, what one is giving. For example, if one were to receive a free trip to Florida, or a gold mansion in Heaven for being a loving and forgiving person, then one would be receiving a reward extrinsic to the love and forgiveness one gives. But the reward in Kierkegaard’s “like for like” is exactly the same as the gift one gives (i.e. love and forgiveness). If one values love and forgiveness, then one has that frame of mind (or, as Ferriera puts it, “hierarchy of values”) in which one is already at work forgiving others. Andic says, “God is the true subject of our love as well as its true object, so that we acquire God’s love, or unite ourselves to it, by making it our own gift to one another.”\textsuperscript{359} Kierkegaard’s “like for like” is intended to evaluate one’s relation to God in the only way possible, by evaluating one’s relations to other people. Thus, the threat of God “doing unto me as I do unto others” is really an evaluation in which one’s relation to God can either be a gift in and of itself (as would be seen in the one who truly loves others and takes responsibility for them) or a detriment. The redoubling of love, in that it moves both outward and inward, means that my relation to God or my relation to others affects me. Kierkegaard tells a story to illustrate this:

There was once a criminal who had stolen some money, including a hundred-rix-dollar bill. He wanted to change this bill and turned to another criminal at the latter’s house. The second criminal took the bill, went into the next room as if to change it, came out again,
acted as if nothing had happened, and greeted the waiting visitor as if they were seeing each other for the first time—in short, he defrauded him out of the hundred-rix-dollar bill. The first criminal became so furious over this that in his resentment he notified the authorities of the matter, how shamefully he had been defrauded. The second criminal was of course imprisoned and charged with fraud—but alas, the first question the authorities raised in this case was: How did the plaintiff get the money? Thus there were two cases… So it is also with the relation to God. If you accuse another person before God, two actions are instituted immediately; precisely when you come and inform on the other person, God begins to think about how you are involved.360

Kierkegaard states further: “If you refuse to forgive, then you actually want something else: you want to make God hardhearted so that he, too, would not forgive—how then could this hardhearted God forgive you?”361 This is a powerful example, pointing out the irony in Kierkegaard’s reduplication: one fashions God in the way one acts towards others, only to find that one’s actions move both inwardly and outwardly. Here it makes sense to note an interesting choice of terminology used by Andic as quoted previously: “It is a like for like in that ‘existence’ or God judges you loving or otherwise as you judge others so.”362 Andic very carefully states “‘existence’ or God,” as though the two are interchangeable. For Kierkegaard, it is simply the reality of the redoubling of love that the one who does not love does not reap the rewards of that love, rewards which are intrinsic to showing love, the gift that is itself a reward. In this way, existence judges, God judges, the one who does not love. Butler, essentially in agreement, points out that, “The benevolent man has clearly the advantage, since endeavoring to do good considered as a virtuous pursuit is gratified by its own consciousness, i.e. is in a degree its own reward.”363 A similar response can be found in Ed Mooney’s article “Repetition: Getting The World Back.”364 The fact that Abraham does come back down the mountain with Isaac at his side shows how it is faith that brings about the repetition in which we are granted a “‘second immediacy,’ a vital connection through which things and persons matter, a connection more
adequate to our human and spiritual needs. Thus, even though we give up the world in our dialogical relation to God, through faith we “receive it back.” Mooney says, “The world one gets is in part a function of the self one is: a self-tempered, alert, and open; and the self one gets is in part a function of the world one has: a world stocked with worth that calls on and stills the business of mobile selves. Self and world become reciprocally articulate.”

Mooney approaches the subject, not from the point of view of Works of Love, but from the point of view of the pseudonyms, especially Fear and Trembling. This shows the unity of thought between Works of Love and the pseudonymous authorship. That “the world one gets is in part a function of the self one is,” is precisely what Kierkegaard calls the “eternal like for like,” the reduplication of love. However, it must be noted that in the world one receives back anew, one becomes the servant to the other, acting out of one’s duty to love one’s neighbors. Only in this way is the world truly renewed.

Ferriera points out a very Levinasian aspect to Kierkegaard’s ethics, that one ought not focus on the responsibility of the other but only on one’s own responsibility:

Both Levinas and Kierkegaard agree that there is an important sense in which it can be truly said that you have only to do with what you are supposed to do; the other’s responsibility is none of your business. In both cases, the message seems to be that there is a kind of interest about the other that is not genuine concern but rather a way of trying to abdicate or lessen my responsibility.

With this in mind, Kierkegaard declares that there is actually a “heightened inequality” in the “like for like” of Christianity, in that “you have nothing at all to do with what others do unto you – it does not concern you.” In his chapter, “The Work of Love in Recollecting One who is Dead,” Kierkegaard points out that to love one who is dead is the most faithful and pure love possible, for there is no chance of them returning the love. Loving one who is dead is in one
sense, the height of asymmetrical love. Levinas, however, is the philosopher who is most famous for his insistence on the "asymmetrical relation to the other." He writes,

What I permit myself to demand of myself is not comparable with what I have the right to demand of the Other. This moral experience, so commonplace, indicates a metaphysical asymmetry: the radical impossibility of seeing oneself from the outside and of speaking in the same sense of oneself and of the others, and consequently the impossibility of totalization.  

Ferriera points out that Levinas and Kierkegaard differ in one important way regarding intersubjective asymmetry:

The asymmetry in Kierkegaard's model of the love of the dead highlights the self as the sole center of initiative. It is one-sided in its emphasis on the self as agent; that is, my activity is not conditional on the response of the other. For Levinas, however, the asymmetry seems to go in the opposite direction; it is the other whose presence is the originating source of activity.  

For Kierkegaard, there is a duty to others even in the other's absence. This is why he makes a category out of the concept "neighbor:"

As far as thought is concerned, the neighbor does not even need to exist. If someone living on a desert island mentally conformed to this commandment, by renouncing self-love he could be said to love the neighbor.  

Even if there were no others, selfishness would remain unacceptable. According to Ferreira, Levinas' approach is different. It is the approach of the other, the voice that addresses and commands, which one responds to. One would not respond to the hypothetical category of the neighbor.

This distinction originates in the non-cognitive approach to the ethical situation (chapter four). Both Levinas and Kierkegaard insist on a non-reflective approach to the egoism of the aesthetic individual, which begins in innocence but ends, for both philosophers, in a situation which calls forth one's responsibility to the other. However, at this point, Kierkegaard and
Levinas part ways. Levinas holds to the non-cognitive approach, in the individual’s recognition of responsibility to the other. Jeffrey Bloechl says,

Community with my neighbor begins ‘in my obligation to him.’ This obligation, however, is not conscious, or rather, consciousness always arrives after the fact of the obligation. One is always already obliged. One starts from a debt so deep and so ravenous that it swallows the act of recognizing it. The relation with my neighbor would thus be a matter first and above all of a debt which is infinite. Levinas uses very strong language to describe this pre-original indebtedness:

Responsibility goes beyond being. In sincerity, in frankness, in the veracity of this saying, in the uncoveredness of suffering, being is altered. But this saying remains, in its activity, a passivity, more passive than all passivity, for it is a sacrifice without reserve, without holding back, and in this non-voluntary – the sacrifice of a hostage designated who has not chosen himself to be hostage, but possibly elected by the Good, in an involuntary election not assumed by the elected one.

One’s obligation to the neighbor is discovered as having always been there, but for Kierkegaard the individual could recognize duty even before there is a neighbor for whom one is responsible. For Levinas, as Bloechl says, the recognition of duty “always arrives after the fact of the obligation.”

It must be pointed out that the term non-cognitive does not necessarily refer to the absence of cognition (or to its presence), but most likely reflects what Westphal calls the “increasingly linguistic orientation,” both for Levinas and for contemporary Continental philosophers. For Kierkegaard, the non-reflection of the aesthete gives way to the despair of reflection (reflection being essential in subjectivity), even to the point of the torment of the demonic “inclosing reserve” for the religious individual. This differentiates Kierkegaard’s approach to responsibility from Levinas, in that for Kierkegaard there is the responsibility to the other person in the command to love the neighbor as oneself, but there is also the fact that one is
responsible for one’s own responsibility to the other, a redoubling of responsibility, which goes both inward and outward. For Levinas, there is only the outward movement of the inescapable responsibility to the other, which is always already there. Westphal says,

For Levinas, recognizing the infinity of the neighbor is an essential prior condition to recognizing the infinity of God, while for Kierkegaard, it seems to be the other way around... For [Levinas] ethics is first, then religion, and the neighbor always stands between me and God, while for Kierkegaard religion is first, then ethics, and God always stands between me and my neighbor.377

The two phrases, “I have responsibility” and “I take responsibility” are basically interchangeable with the phrase, “I am responsible.” One might say, “I have a responsibility to my neighbor,” or one might say, “I take responsibility for my neighbor.” In the first phrase, one would seem to indicate that, whether one fulfills it or not, one has a certain responsibility placed upon them with respect to the neighbor. With the second phrase, one indicates that one will act responsibly on the neighbor’s behalf, whether one has that obligation or not. For example, often it is said that parents are responsible for their children, they have a responsibility to fulfill: to feed or clothe them, among others. However, one does not have the same responsibility for someone else’s children, they are not necessarily one’s responsibility, but one can take responsibility for them, if one is particularly magnanimous or if the need arises.378 Yet in either case, whether one has responsibility or takes responsibility, one can say, “with respect to this or that person, I am responsible.”

Both Levinas and Kierkegaard would agree with the phrase, “I have a responsibility to my neighbor.” Both would similarly agree that the responsibility to the other is not chosen, but given, always already there. The distinction which Westphal makes above, that for Levinas ethics is first, then religion, and for Kierkegaard that religion is first, then ethics, is not based on the
having of responsibility but the taking of responsibility. What I have called the “non-cognitive” approach to ethics, which Levinas maintains from the egoism of the aesthete to the response of the one for the other, shows itself in that for Levinas the having and taking of responsibility are not distinguished. Levinas is fully aware of this, and that consequently his philosophy is reproached as “utopian” (if, he says, utopianism is really a reproach). In Totality and Infinity he says, for instance, “The being that expresses itself imposes itself, but does so precisely by appealing to me with its destitution and nudity – its hunger-- without my being able to be deaf to that appeal.” It is the face of the other person which makes one call one’s egoism into question – one is not able to “be deaf to that appeal.” The other cannot be ignored, there must be a response, one fulfills ones duty to the other. In Otherwise than Being, Levinas says, “Identity here takes form not by a self-confirmation, but as a signification of the-one-for-the-other, but a deposing of oneself, a deposing which is the incarnation of the subject, or the very possibility of giving, of dealing signifyingness.” Right in the very structure of language, in the “signifyingness of signification,” there is a trace of “being’s other,” an “identity” that is not simply “self-confirmation.” Subjectivity (or identity, quoted above) is not the recognition of the self so much as it is the recognition of what is other than the self, which reveals the structure of subjectivity, which is “the-one-for-the-other,” i.e., substitution. One can suppose that Levinas asked the question: “What happens when an individual chooses to be deaf to the appeal of the other, when one refuses to recognize the responsibility towards the other intrinsic to the nature of subjectivity?” Levinas lived through the Second World War, and being Jewish, felt keenly the reality of denied responsibility and ears deaf to justice. Levinas’ defense for the charge of “utopianism” is as follows:
This book interprets the subject as a hostage and the subjectivity of the subject as a substitution breaking with being's essence. The thesis is exposed imprudently to the reproach of utopianism in an opinion where modern man takes himself as a being among beings, whereas his modernity breaks up as an impossibility to remain at home. This book escapes the reproach of utopianism — if utopianism is a reproach, if any thought escapes utopianism — by recalling that what took place humanly has never been able to remain closed up in its site. There is no need to refer to an event in which the non-site, becoming a site, would have exceptionally entered in to the spaces of history.\textsuperscript{382}

This quote demonstrates the unity of thought between \textit{Totality and Infinity}, and \textit{Otherwise than Being}. Levinas returns to the language of "the home," where responsibility amounts to the shattering of one's totality (one's dwelling) in order to welcome the other. This is in contrast to the "opinions of modern man," where the individual is "a being among beings." This is the same distinction made in chapter one where I distinguished the term "intersubjectivity" from the notion of "subjects relating."

Kierkegaard, as Westphal points out, saw "religion" as coming before ethics, and God as standing between myself and my neighbor.\textsuperscript{383} God is like a "middle term" in the relation between the individual and the neighbor.\textsuperscript{384} For Kierkegaard, the vast majority of individuals never do take responsibility for the other, but continue in improper self-love as aesthetes. It is not until one recognizes, as Abraham did, that the relation to God is paramount, that the Kierkegaardian will truly understand that the relationship with one's neighbor is in fact paramount. A resounding theme in Kierkegaard's works is that while practically all the inhabitants of Denmark considered themselves Christians who know the New Testament teachings, they did not practice them. It is a process of willing not to know the good, what Kierkegaard elsewhere called defiance.\textsuperscript{385}

Westphal shows that there is a theological difference here between Kierkegaard and Levinas, in the Kierkegaard's "God" is a personal God, an "interlocutor," as God was for
Abraham. Westphal asks of Levinas, “If God is only “the he in the depth of the you,” does this mean that God is not a distinct personal being but rather the depth dimension of the human person?” Westphal is undoubtedly correct in this rhetorical question, but there is a simpler explanation as well. Levinas wants the approach of the other to be an awakening, the “moral equivalent of reveille at boot camp,” where God (Levinas’ God) is “the drill sergeant.” In this awakening, the having of responsibility and the taking of responsibility for the other are simultaneously enacted in a response to the other’s command: one becomes the other’s hostage.

For Kierkegaard, the aesthete sees and relates to people as an aesthete, that is, as a subject relates to objects. The aesthete has responsibilities towards others, but does not take responsibility and fulfill the command to love the neighbor as him/herself. Some individuals never leave this stage, the stage of improper self-love. For those who do, however, God (Kierkegaard’s God) is the moral “drill sergeant,” once the choice is made to grapple with the existence of self and others in the redeemed ethical of reduplication.

Thus, Levinas’ charges have been answered, and in Levinasian fashion. Levinas and Kierkegaard have theological differences that affect their ethical positions, but the original criticism that Kierkegaard’s exclusive relation to God admits nothing but the individual and God is clearly a misunderstanding. Kierkegaard is more Levinasian than Levinas thinks.
Concluding Remarks
Kierkegaard’s *Works of Love* is a text with immense depth. Every chapter has new insights, and adds to the unity of the text, as well as Kierkegaard’s authorship as a whole. As I have argued, Kierkegaard’s works bear a striking affinity to Levinas’ works, which has set this stage for a dialogue between Levinas and Kierkegaard on ethics and responsibility. This has lead to the possibility of answering Levinas’ criticisms of Kierkegaard, as I have outlined in the previous chapter.

However, doing so raises new questions for Kierkegaard’s philosophy. I have used Bishop Butler’s sermon on self-love as a resource for evaluating Kierkegaard’s notions of self-love, which answers some of Levinas’ initial criticisms. Yet it remains an open question as to what Levinas (and Butler) would make of Kierkegaard’s notions of self-love.

While Kierkegaard’s intersubjective proper self-love results in a “heightened inequality,” one might still wonder if this is asymmetrical in a genuinely Levinasian sense. Kierkegaard’s proper self-love still retains a “like for like,” not between persons, but between the individual and God. It is improbable that Kierkegaard would have something like meritorious salvation in mind, where one’s actions alone merit favor or disfavor with God. This is also clear from the personification of reduplicated love, where it is love that works in the one loving and the one loved. But Kierkegaard’s proper self-love implicitly contains Butler’s admission that all things are done out of self-interest, even while commanding the individual to act out of love, and thereby to take an ethical responsibility for one’s neighbors.

It would be interesting to investigate a Levinasian response to Butler’s notion of self-interest, as well as the hedonism that Butler was responding to. Levinas, like Kierkegaard, would seem to want to subordinate self-interest to the responsibility to the other. But unlike
Kierkegaard, Levinas’ ethics of responsibility is not situated in the context of self-love. Even though the egoist enjoyment of the same in the other constitutes a sort of self-interest, one does not respond to the call or approach of the other out of self-interest. Kierkegaard’s ethics, however, are situated in the context of self-love, which seems to conflict with his divine command approach. One does not follow God’s commands because it is in one’s self-interest to do so, even though that may very well be the case. Instead, it is the essence of the command that is binding, not the unavoidable principle of self-interest. At the same time, Kierkegaard’s proper self-love rests on the presupposition that humans love themselves, yet Butler would ostensibly admit that the believer follows God’s commands first and foremost because it is beneficial for the believer to do so. For Butler, perhaps, the principle of self-interest is the binding motivation in following the command.

Butler might very well suggest that self-interest can co-exist with the essence of the divine command, since both are motivating factors for the believer. Yet Kierkegaard’s teleological suspension of the ethical requires that the essence of the command take priority, whereas all other benefits/detriments are more or less by-products. Clearly, Kierkegaard did not see a contradiction in proper self-love and the command. He says,

To love yourself in the right way and to love the neighbor correspond perfectly to one another; fundamentally, they are one and the same thing... The Law is therefore: You shall love yourself in the same way as you love your neighbor when you love him as yourself. Whoever has any knowledge of people will certainly admit that just as he has often wished to be able to move them to relinquish self-love, he has also had to wish that it were possible to teach them to love themselves.

For Kierkegaard, Jesus’ ethics take into account how individuals really are, not imposing an impossible burden upon the believer but working with what must be presupposed, namely, that
every person loves himself or herself. This amounts to saying, paradoxically, that one must be self-less while still loving oneself. Proper self-love is being self-less towards oneself, taking the same responsibility towards oneself that one is commanded to take towards others. Being as self-less towards oneself as one is towards others is proper self-love. This is why Kierkegaard suspects both friendship and erotic love as being first and foremost self-interested and preferential love: one either loves others out of interest to oneself, or one loves particular others as opposed to all others.

Kierkegaard’s eternal “like for like” is an essentially Butlerian conclusion to a modified divine command theory: one is first and foremost commanded to love others and to obey the command because it is a command, but one also follows the command because it is beneficial to follow the command. Even in the sense that one’s attitude towards others affects ones own well-being, or in Andic’s statement, “It is a like for like in that ‘existence’ or God judges you loving or otherwise as you judge others so,” the like for like is self-interested. Andic’s intentional equivocation of “existence” and “God” opens the possibility of broadening Kierkegaard’s monotheism to a theory of existential “karma,” but does not take away from the fact that for the individual relating to existence or God, there is a reciprocal “like for like.”

One could suggest that Kierkegaard overcomes the reciprocity of self-interest and the “like for like” in saying, “You shall love yourself in the same way as you love your neighbor when you love him as yourself.” Whatever one would do in order to genuinely benefit the neighbor is what one should do with regards to oneself. The self becomes essentially an other who one cares for as well, self-less self-interest. In this sense, if one were doing something beneficial for oneself that one would not do for any other, it is selfish interest, not proper self-
Kierkegaard’s love personified introduces an element of justice, performing the works of love such that love moves both to and from the individual, a reduplication in which proper self-love includes self and other in an ethics of responsible love.
Bibliography:


Endnotes:

Introduction:


3 Ibid., p. 23.


5 Ibid., p. 184.

6 Ibid., p. 185.


8 Soren Kierkegaard, Trans. and Ed. Howard H. Hong, and Edna V. Hong, Works of Love. (New Jersey, 1995)


Chapter One: Kierkegaardian Intersubjectivity


12 “Kierkegaard’s Radical Existential Praxis,” p. 241. It must be said that this is not Matuštík’s opinion, but rather the one he is combating.


15 Niels Thulstrup warns quite explicitly against a reading of Kierkegaard which utilises Hegelian anthropology. See Niels Thulstrup, Trans. George Stengren. Kierkegaard’s Relation to Hegel. (New Jersey, 1980), pp. 55-57, and p. 305. Stephen Crites suggests that it was not Hegelian anthropology that Kierkegaard disagreed with, but Hegel’s interpretation of Christianity. See Stephen Crites, In the Twilight of Christendom. (Montana, 1972). Westphal would seem to be closer to Crites’ interpretation. Reidar Thomte comments briefly on both of these opinions in his introduction to The Concept of Anxiety, charting something of a middle path between the two opinions. See Soren Kierkegaard, Trans. and Ed. Reidar Thomte, The Concept of Anxiety. (New Jersey, 1980) pp. Xi-xii. However, since none of these books deal directly with the concept of intersubjectivity, I have not included them in the essay save for this footnote.

16 Kierkegaard’s Critique of Reason and Society, pp. 30-32. It must be admitted that my very brief summary of Westphal’s book does not do justice to the complexities and distinctions which he is working with.


18 Ibid., p. 43.


20 See Kierkegaard’s Critique of Reason and Society, pp. 33-36.

21 By capitalizing the term “Other,” Soltoft does not seem to intend any distinction between “other” and “Other,” in the sense of God as “the Other,” and a human as the “other.” She similarly capitalizes the term “Self” to refer to the
individual. Thus, I am interpreting “the Other” as meaning another person.


23 Ibid., p. 43.

24 Christian de Quincey, “Intersubjectivity: Exploring Consciousness From the Second Person Perspective,” p. 7. De Quincey offers some very interesting discussion on the concept of intersubjectivity, but his interests seem to lie in the direction of a global spiritual consciousness, which is somewhat removed from the topic at hand.

25 Ibid., p. 6.

26 I am at the moment not sure of a better example for what I am attempting to illustrate here. The point of using e-mail here is that, while it does presuppose a network created by others, it is as impersonal and detached a relation I could think of, other than perhaps smoke signals. The difficulty in finding an appropriate example points to a limitation in this first definition.

27 De Quincey, p. 7.

28 Ibid., p. 2.

29 It should be noted that it is not my intention to engage De Quincey’s article, except as a preliminary framework for the discussion to follow.

30 “Anthropology and Ethics: The Connection Between Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity as the Basis for a Kierkegaardian Anthropology,” p. 41.

31 This is my understanding of a suggestion made in conversation by Dr. Goicoechea.

32 This relation will be examined in more detail below, in the discussion of Soltoft’s article.

33 Either/Or II p. 219.

34 The Point of View for my Work as an Author: A Report to History, p. 119.


38 I say “ideal” here because it does not seem to be Kierkegaard’s intention that the becoming of the self (becoming in the sense of a process or progression) ends with the knight of faith, where one can say positively, “I have become a self!” and retire from the process. Instead, the person of faith is constantly striving to become what he/she is more fully, more concretely.

39 Kierkegaard as Humanist, p. 105.

40 “Anthropology and Ethics: The Connection Between Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity as the Basis for a Kierkegaardian Anthropology,” p. 41.

41 Ibid., p. 41.

42 As in The Sickness Unto Death, pp, 13-14.


44 Ibid., p. 173.


46 “Anthropology and Ethics: The Connection Between Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity as the Basis for a Kierkegaardian Anthropology,” p. 42.

47 Ibid., p. 43.

48 Ibid., p. 43.

49 Ibid, p. 43, emphasis mine.

50 Ibid., p. 43.

51 Ibid., p. 44.


53 Ibid., p. 59.

54 “Anthropology and Ethics: The Connection Between Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity as the Basis for a
Kierkegaardian Anthropology,” p. 44.
  ^55 Ibid., p. 45.
  ^56 Ibid., pp. 47-48
  ^57 Ibid., p. 47.
  ^58 The Concept of Anxiety, p. 28.
  ^60 “Anthropology and Ethics: The Connection Between Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity as the Basis for a Kierkegaardian Anthropology,” p. 47.
  ^62 “Anthropology and Ethics: The Connection Between Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity as the Basis for a Kierkegaardian Anthropology,” p. 47.
  ^63 Ibid., p. 47.
  ^64 Either/Or Part II, p. 163.
  ^65 The Sickness Unto Death, p. 13.
  ^66 “Anthropology and Ethics: The Connection Between Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity as the Basis for a Kierkegaardian Anthropology,” p. 47.
  ^70 Ibid. Quoted Concluding Unscientific Postscript To Philosophical Fragments Vol. I, p. 79.
  ^71 Ibid., p. 29.
  ^72 The Point of View for my Work as an Author: A Report to History, see esp. chapter 3.
  ^73 “Subjectivity Vs. Objectivity: Kierkegaard’s Postscript and Feminist Epistemology,” p. 29.

Chapter Two: A Note on Reading Kierkegaard and Levinas’ Reading of Kierkegaard

^75 The Sickness Unto Death., p. 42.
^77 The question of the correctness of Kierkegaard’s reading of Hegel is too large a question for me to deal with adequately in this thesis.
^78 Becoming a Self, p. 21.
^79 Ibid., p.21.
^80 Either/Or Part I, pp 47-135. I comment on this in chapter three.
^81 Either/Or Part II, p. 164.
^82 The Sickness Unto Death, p. 59.
^83 The Point of View for my Work as an Author: A Report to History, p. 42.
^84 Becoming A Self, p. 8.
^85 Ibid., p. 12.
^86 The Point of View for My Work as An Author, p. 75.
^87 Becoming A Self, p. 13.
^88 The Point of View for my Work as an Author: A Report to History, p. 72.
^89 Naturally, one could question Kierkegaard’s reflections at this point, but such an attempt would most likely become conjecture based upon conjecture.
^90 See, for instance, the last sentence of the last section of the Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Vol I: “Oh, that no ordinary seaman will lay a dialectical hand on this work but let it stand as it now stands.” Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Vol I, p. 630.


The term “subject” is in quotations, because for both Levinas and Kierkegaard, the individual constituted by enjoyment is not a subjective subject per se.


I will not here attempt an analysis of whether de Silentio has correctly understood Judge William’s ethical. By this I mean that Levinas understands the ethical, not from reading *Either/Or* part II, but as it is given in by De Silentio in *Fear and Trembling*.

*Kierkegaard: Existence and Ethics,* p. 72.

Chapter Three: Aesthetics and Immediacy

*The Point of View for my Work as an Author: A Report to History,* p. 22.

See, for instance, Soren Kierkegaard, Trans. Walter Lowrie, *Attack Upon Christendom* (New Jersey, 1968); or *The Point of View for my Work as an Author: A Report to History,* p. 22 etc.

*The Point of View for my Work as an Author: A Report to History,* p. 25.

Kierkegaard as Humanist, p. 6-7.

The Concept of Anxiety, p. 41.

Concluding Unscientific Postscript Vol. I, p. 433-434. The quote was pointed out to me in Kierkegaard as Humanist, p. 7.

Either/Or Part II, p. 179.

Either/Or Part II, p. 178.

See, for instance, Either/Or Part II, p. 229.

Judge William does distinguish a fourth life-view, although it seems to be the culmination of the previous three, as despair itself. In this sense, it is not a “life-view” per se, but the recognition of the failure of the aesthetic. See Either/Or Part II, pp. 193-195.

As in the example of Nero, Either/Or Part II, p. 185.

The Concept of Anxiety, p. 42.

Either/Or Part II, p. 184.

The Sickness Unto Death, p. 25.

As in the example of Nero, Either/Or Part II, p. 185.

Either/Or Part II, p. 191.

Either/Or Part II, p. 186.

Either/Or Part II, p. 168.

Either/Or Part II, p. 169.

Either/Or Part II, p. 214.


The Sickness Unto Death, p. 43.

The Sickness Unto Death, p. 17.

Improper self-love is also the problem with the ethical sphere, although this essay is focusing on self-love and the aesthetic.

Works of Love, p. 17.

Ibid., p. 17.
One could also point out that for Kierkegaard, in nineteenth century Denmark, the problem of divine commands as Adams envisions it would not have been a pressing debate. Similarly, the problem of self interest as it applied to the debate between Butler and the psychological hedonists was not a pressing question for Kierkegaard either. This means that any sort of Kierkegaardian response to these issues will be theoretical and indirect.

Chapter Four: The Ethical Situation: Egoism and Substitution

Kierkegaard in Post-Modernity, p. 265.
Adriaan T. Peperzak, Beyond, (Illinois, 1999), p. 49.
Totality and Infinity, p. 36.
Ibid., p. 36.
Ibid., p. 36.
Ibid., p. 36.
Ibid., p. 36.
See, for instance, Totality and Infinity pp. 36-38; pp 78-79.
Totality and Infinity, pp. 130-131.
Ibid., p. 131.
218 Ibid., p. 114.
219 Ibid., p. 111.
220 Ibid., p. 116.
221 Ibid., p. 146.
222 Ibid., p. 115.
223 Ibid., p. 117.
224 Ibid., p. 129.
225 Ibid., p. 119.
226 Ibid., p. 112.
227 Ibid., p. 135.
228 Ibid., p. 138.
230 *Totality and Infinity,* p. 137.
231 See *Totality and Infinity,* p. 158-162.
232 Jeffrey Dudiak, *The Intrigue of Ethics* (New York, 2001), p. 133. See also *To The Other,* p. 157-158.
233 *Totality and Infinity,* p. 115.
234 Ibid., p. 134.
235 *To The Other,* p. 136.
237 Alphonso Lingis, however, argues in *The Imperative,* a work clearly influenced by Levinas, that the elements do in fact "speak" to us, give us imperatives. Environmentalism might be, in some sense, an imperative. See Alphonso Lingis, *The Imperative.* (Indiana, 1998), pp 67-68.
238 *Totality and Infinity,* p. 118.
239 Ibid., p. 221.
240 Ibid., p. 220.
241 Ibid., p. 198.
242 Ibid., p. 226.
243 *Either/Or Part I,* p. 70.
244 *Totality and Infinity,* p. 136.
245 Ibid., p. 136.
246 Ibid., p. 136.
247 Ibid., p. 138.
248 Ibid., p. 126.
249 Ibid., p. 126.
250 Ibid., p. 125.
251 Ibid., p. 125.
252 Ibid., p. 124.
253 Ibid., p. 125. I do not pretend to have evaluated Levinas’ critique of Husserl in this brief paragraph, but simply note it as an example of Levinas’ use of the notion of "immediacy."
254 *Either/Or Part II,* p. 178.
255 *The Concept of Anxiety,* p. 42.
256 Ibid., p. 41.
257 One might propose a genealogy of anxiety here, tracing Levinas’ notion of “insecurity” back through Heidegger to Kierkegaard himself; however, this question must be left to further studies.
258 *Totality and Infinity,* p. 137.
259 *The Concept of Anxiety,* p. 43.
260 *Totality and Infinity,* p. 136.
261 *Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Vol I,* p. 444.
262 *Totality and Infinity,* p. 143.
263 *The Self After Postmodernity,* p. 17.
Ibid., p. 25.
265 The Social Dimensions of Despair, p. 113.
266 To The Other, p. 150.
267 Totality and Infinity, p. 171.
268 Ibid., p. 173.
269 Ibid., p. 245.
270 Ibid., p. 171.
271 Ibid., p. 92.
273 Ibid., p. 6.
274 Ibid., p. 6.
275 The Intrigue of Ethics, p. 231.
276 Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence, p. 13.
277 Ibid., p. 114.
279 Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence, p. 118.
280 Ibid., p. 124.
281 Works of Love, p. 212.
282 Ibid., p. 211.
283 Ibid., p. 215.
286 Works of Love, p. 216.
287 Ibid., p. 217.
288 Ibid., p. 223.
289 Ibid., p. 220.
290 Ibid., p. 264-264.
291 Ibid., p. 265.
292 Ibid., p. 266.
293 “Anthropology and Ethics: The Connection Between Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity as the Basis for a Kierkegaardian Anthropology,” p. 46.
295 Ibid., p. 267.
296 Ibid., p. 269.
297 See chapter five, p. 110.
298 Works of Love, p. 269.
299 Ibid., p. 270.
300 Ibid., p. 274.
301 Love’s Grateful Striving, p. 151.
303 Ibid., p. 219.
304 Totality and Infinity, p. 75.
305 As was the case in a graduate course I took on Levinas at Brock University with Dr. L. Rosmarin.
306 Totality and Infinity, p. 171.
307 Ibid., p. 172.
308 Works of Love, p. 21.
309 Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence, p. 124.
310 Ibid., p. 122.
Chapter Five: The Notion of Reduplication

311 “A Propos of ‘Kierkegaard Vivant.’”, p. 70.
313 Fear and Trembling, pp. 34-40.
315 Ibid., p. 164.
320 Works of Love, p. 108.
321 Ibid., p 107.
322 Ibid., p. 376.
323 Training in Christianity, p. 55.
324 As discussed in Chapter 3, p. 56, in comparison to Robert Adams’ “Modified Command Theory.”
326 Ibid., p. 9.
328 Works of Love, p. 376. However, when quoting either Kierkegaard or Andic, I will quote directly and not change the quotations.
330 Ibid., p. 9.
331 Ibid., p. 11.
332 Ibid., p. 11.
334 Ibid., p. 280.
335 Ibid., p. 281. Emphasis mine.
336 See Chapter 4.
337 Works of Love, p. 17.
338 Ibid., p. 17.
339 Ibid., p. 18.
340 “Sermon ‘Upon the Love of Our Neighbour,’” p. 141.
341 Ibid., p. 369.
345 Ibid., p. 17.
346 Ibid., p. 18.
348 By this I refer to the appearance of subjectivity in the ethical, from the context of the non-reflection of the aesthete. See chapter two.
350 Ibid., p. 29.
351 Ibid., p. 29.
352 Ibid., p. 29.
353 Ibid., p. 31.
354 Ibid., p. 35.
Concluding Remarks

Enlightenment

Ibid., p. 383.
For instance, see Luther’s Bondage of the Will, chapter VII section VII: “Rom. 4:2-3: the total irrelevance of
works to man’s righteousness before God;” or Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book Three, chapter
three: “Regeneration by faith. Of Repentance.”
Love’s Grateful Striving, p. 171.
“Love’s Redoubling and the Eternal Like for Like,” p. 35.
Works of Love, p. 383.
Ibid., p. 384.
“Love’s Redoubling and the Eternal Like for Like,” p. 17.
“Sermon ‘Upon the Love of Our Neighbour,’” p. 144.
briefly, but not quite in the same sense as Mooney. For her, Repetition and Fear and Trembling illustrate two sides of a
coin of difficulties that the knight of infinite resignation has: In Fear and Trembling, Abraham’s silence makes it
difficult to establish a relationship again. In Repetition, the young man’s passion for the girl, which turned so quickly
from a desire to be with her to a desire to stay away from her, makes it difficult to break off a relationship that is
already established. See “Anthropology and Ethics: The Connection Between Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity as
the Basis for a Kierkegaardian Anthropology,” pp. 44-45.
Ibid., p. 294.
Love’s Grateful Striving, p. 247.
Ibid., pp. 345-358.
Totality and Infinity, p. 53.
Love’s Grateful Striving, p. 217.
“Ethics as First Philosophy and Religion,” p. 132.
Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence, p. 15.
Merold Westphal, “The Transparent Shadow: Kierkegaard and Levinas in Dialogue.” In Martin J. Matuštík,
See, for example, The Sickness Unto Death, p. 78.
Admittedly, this example has its limits. There are many possible situations in which one does have a responsibility
towards another’s children.
Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence, p. 184.
Totality and Infinity, p. 200.
Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence, p. 79.
Ibid., p. 184.
Merold Westphal, “Commanded Love and Divine Transcendence in Levinas and Kierkegaard.” In Jeffrey
See The Sickness Unto Death, pp. 87 ff.
Ibid., p. 207.

By “essence of the command,” I mean the fact that the command is a command, apart from whatever form or
content the command my have.

390 *Works of Love*, p. 23.
