Kierkegaard:
The Temporality of
Becoming a Self

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Goicoechea, who has not only been a diligent reader, but more so, a constant source of inspiration and support of this project. Also, Dr. Ric Brown has made this paper much stronger through his thorough criticism. As well, my discussions with Dr. John Mayer have helped to form much of my philosophic approach. I would also like to thank Dr. Kahn, Dr. Hansen and Winston Evans. This paper would not be possible without the various contributions of these individuals. Of course, I am entirely responsible for any of its flaws.
Table of Contents

Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1

I. Self-Becoming .................................................................................................. 6
   A. The Self ........................................................................................................ 6
      i. The House Analogy ................................................................................. 6
      ii. Definition of the Self .......................................................................... 12
      iii. Definition of the Stages .................................................................... 17
   B. The Self and Despair ................................................................................ 19
      i. Definition of Despair ........................................................................... 19
      ii. Despair and Sin .................................................................................. 28
      iii. Despair and Madness ....................................................................... 33
   C. The Self and Faith .................................................................................... 37

II. The Temporality of Self-Becoming ................................................................. 40
   A. Repetition .................................................................................................. 40
   B. Temporality and Eternity ......................................................................... 58
   C. The Moment .............................................................................................. 64

Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 66
Introduction

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze compares and contrasts Kierkegaard’s and Nietzsche’s ideas of repetition. He argues that neither of them really give a representation of repetition. Repetition for them is a sort of selective task: the way in which they determine what is ethical and eternal.

With Nietzsche, it is a theater of unbelief.... ... Nietzsche’s leading idea is to found the repetition in the eternal return at once on the death of God and the dissolution of the self. But it is a quite different alliance in the theater of faith: Kierkegaard dreams of alliance between a God and a self rediscovered.¹

Repetition plays a theatrical role in their thinking. It allows them to dramatically stage the interplay of various personnae.

Deleuze does give a positive account of Kierkegaard’s “repetition”; however, he does not think that Kierkegaard works out a philosophical model, or a representation of what repetition is. It is true that in the book *Repetition*, Constantin Constantius does not clearly and fully work out the concept of repetition, but in *Sickness Unto Death*, Kierkegaard gives a full explanation of the self and its temporality which can be connected with repetition. When *Sickness Unto Death* is interpreted according to key passages from *Repetition* and *The Concept of Anxiety*, a clear philosophical concept of repetition can be established.

In my opinion, Kierkegaard’s philosophy is about the task of becoming a self, and I will be attempting to show that he does have a model of the temporality of self-

becoming. In *Sickness Unto Death*, Kierkegaard explains his notions of despair with reference to sin, self, self-becoming, faith, and repetition.

Despair is a sickness of the spirit, of the self, and accordingly can take three forms: in despair not to be conscious of having a self (not despair in the strict sense); in despair not to will to be oneself; in despair to will to be oneself.\(^2\)

In relation to this definition, he defines a self as “a relation that relates itself to itself and in relating itself to itself relates to another.” Thus, a person is a threefold relationship, and any break in that relationship is despair. Despair takes three forms corresponding to the three aspects of a self’s relation to itself. Kierkegaard says that a self is like a house with a basement, a first floor, and a second floor.\(^3\)

This model of the house, and the concept of the stages on life’s way that it illustrates, is central to Kierkegaard’s philosophy. This thesis will show how he unpacks this model in many of his writings with different concepts being developed in different texts. His method is to work with the same model in different ways throughout his authorship. He assigns many of the texts to different pseudonyms, but in this thesis we will treat the model and the related concepts as being Kierkegaard’s and not only the pseudonyms. This is justified as our thesis will show this model


\(^3\) *SUD*, 13-14.

\(^4\) *SUD*, 43.
remains the same throughout Kierkegaard's work, though it is treated in different ways by different pseudonyms.

According to Kierkegaard, many people live in only the basement for their entire lives, that is, as aesthetes ("in despair not to be conscious of having a self"). They live in despair of not being conscious of having a self. They live in a merely horizontal relation. They want to get what they desire. When they go to the first floor, so to speak, they reflect on themselves and only then do they begin to get a self. In this stage, one acquires an ideology of the required and overcomes the strict commands of the desired. The ethical is primarily an obedience to the required whereas the aesthetic is an obedience to desire.

In his work *Fear and Trembling* (Copenhagen: 1843), Johannes de Silentio makes several observations concerning this point. In this book, the author several times allows the desired ideality of esthetics to be shipwrecked on the required ideality of ethics, in order through these collisions to bring to light the religious ideality as the ideality that precisely is the ideality of actuality, and therefore just as desirable as that of esthetics and not as impossible as the ideality of ethics. This is accomplished in such a way that the religious ideality breaks forth in the dialectical leap and in the positive mood — "Behold all things have become new" as well as in the negative mood that is the passion of the absurd to which the concept "repetition" corresponds.5

Here one begins to become responsible because one seeks the required ideality; however, the required ideality and the desired ideality become inadequate to the ethical individual. Neither of them satisfy him ("in despair not to will to be oneself").

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Then he moves up to the second floor: that is, the mystical region, or the sphere of religiousness (A) ("despair to will to be oneself").

Kierkegaard’s model of a house, which is connected with the above definition of despair, shows us how the self arises through these various stages, and shows the stages of despair as well. On the second floor, we become mystics, or Knights of Infinite Resignation. We are still in despair because we despair of the basement and the first floor; however, we can be full, free persons only if we live on all the floors at the same time. This is a sort of paradoxical fourth stage consisting of all three floors; this is the sphere of true religiousness (religiousness (B)). It is distinguished from religiousness (A) because we can go back and live on all the floors. It is not that there are four floors, but in the fourth stage, we live paradoxically on three at once.

Kierkegaard uses this house analogy in order to explain how we become a self through these stages, and to show the various stages of despair. Consequently, I will be explaining self-becoming in relation to despair. It will also be necessary to explain it in relation to faith, for faith is precisely the overcoming of despair. After explaining the becoming of the self in relation to despair and faith, I will then explain its temporality and thereby its repetition.

What Kierkegaard calls a formula, Deleuze calls a representation. Unfortunately, Deleuze does not acknowledge Kierkegaard’s formula for repetition. As we shall see, Kierkegaard clearly gives a formula for despair, faith, and self-becoming. When viewed properly, these formulae yield a formula for repetition
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because when one has faith, the basement, first floor, and second floor become new
as one becomes oneself. The self is not bound in the eternity of the first floor (ethical)
or the temporality of the basement (aesthete).

I shall now examine the two forms of conscious despair in such a way
as to point out also a rise in the consciousness of the nature of despair
and in the consciousness that one’s state is despair, or, what amounts
to the same thing and is the salient point, a rise in the consciousness
of the self. The opposite to being in despair is to have faith.
Therefore, the formula set forth above, which describes a state in
which there is not despair at all, is entirely correct, and this formula is
also the formula for faith: in relating itself to itself and in willing to be
itself, the self rests transparently in the power that established it.\(^6\)

\(^6\) \textit{SUD}, 49.
I. Self-Becoming

A. The Self

i. The House Analogy

According to Kierkegaard, a self is "a relation that relates itself to itself and in relating itself to itself relates to another." This definition of the self can be understood in terms of the stages on life's way. The person as a relation is aesthetic. He or she is a relation of the temporal and the eternal. He or she relates to temporal or eternal values immediately. But then the person can enter the ethical stage of self reflection. Then there arises a collision between the immediate self and the reflective self. This gives rise to the religious and lets the person relate to God as the other. That other can be related to as imminent (religiousness (A)) or as transcendent (religiousness (B)). However, if a self is in misrelation, then it lives in despair. We can free ourselves from despair only when we have faith. "The greatest danger, that of losing one's self, may pass off in the world as if it was nothing; every other loss, an arm, leg, five dollars, a wife, etc. is bound to be noticed." Despair is a sickness unto death.

7 SUD, 13-14.

Kierkegaard compares a human being to a house with a basement, a first floor, and a second floor. On each floor, there are different people with different social distinctions.

Now, if what it means to be a human being is compared with such a house, then all too regrettably the sad and ludicrous truth about the majority of people is that in their own house 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. Moreover, he not only prefers to live in the basement -- no, he loves it so much that he is indignant if anyone suggests that he move to the superb upper floor that stands vacant and at his disposal, for he is, after all, living in his own house.⁹

According to this analogy, there are different stages on our life's way. An aesthetic or natural man is a person who just lives in the basement and does not think about the consequences of his actions for the future. Furthermore, he does not think about his past experience. He lives solely on impulse. The temporality of the basement-dweller (the aesthete) is just this brief moment. According to Kierkegaard, most people live their lives in aesthetic categories.

The aesthetic way of living has two primary expressions: romantic hedonism and abstract intellectualism. Mozart's Don Giovanni is representative of the romantic hedonist who is looking for the immediate pleasure of the moment.

⁹ SUD, 43.
To Don Giovanni, however, these differences mean nothing. If I could imagine him making such a speech about himself, he might perhaps say: “You are wrong. I am no husband who requires an unusual girl to make me happy; every girl has that which makes me happy, and therefore I take them all. In some such way we have to understand the saying I earlier referred to: ‘even sixty-year coquettes’....” ... To Don Giovanni every girl is an ordinary girl, every love affair an everyday story.10

Don Giovanni’s life is considered boring and melancholy, because he is seeking pleasure as his god. He thinks that, through pleasure, he can change himself. He recollects the pleasure that he has already experienced, and nothing is new for him.

The reason the person who lives aesthetically can in a higher sense explain nothing is that he is always living in the moment, yet is always cognizant of it only in a certain relativity, within a certain limitation.

The melancholy person is engaged in a frustrating search for diversion. Diversion cannot bring him momentary satisfaction because his life is empty and meaningless.

Further, Goethe’s Faust is representative of the aesthetic personality of abstract intellectualism. Faust is as much an aesthetic as Don Giovanni because neither has the reflection and decisiveness that would let them be ethical. They both live in the moment and hence they do not have an ethical standard by which they could be responsible to self, others, and God. Both the hedonist and the speculative thinker never take responsibility for their past actions because they neglect the past.

Don Giovanni, consequently, is the expression for the daemonic determined as the sensuous; Faust, its expression determined as the intellectual or spiritual, which the Christian spirit excludes. These ideas stand in an essential relation to one another, and have much in common; hence one might expect to find them both incorporated in sagas.\(^\text{12}\)

The aesthete tries to find himself outside of himself, but he cannot because he has to look for himself inwardly. He always deceives himself with an objective world. "He enjoys the satisfaction of desire; as soon as he has enjoyed it, he seeks a new object, and so on endlessly."\(^\text{13}\) However, if he moves toward commitment, freedom, and earnestness, then he becomes aware of his despair.

By choosing despair, he starts to move from the basement to the first floor, although this is only the beginning of self-becoming. Until the process is underway, the self is entirely abstract. The process makes things more concrete because it starts out with the universal and the abstract, and it actualizes as it goes along. For instance, when we start in the basement as mere aesthetes, we have the potential of going to the first floor, but the self is still abstract. We make ourselves concrete by actually living on all of the different floors. However, to begin with, the self is not a self. All its possibilities remain abstract.

In Kierkegaard’s philosophy, an ethical person lives on the first floor of a house and begins to become a self through reflection. He becomes aware of his

\(^{12}\text{E/O, I, 89.}\)

\(^{13}\text{E/O, I, 97.}\)
possibilities. In *Either / Or*, volume two, Judge William is the representative of the ethical person, and he thinks that the true life is the ethical life. He can only despair for himself and not anything else — his duty is all that matters. He is a married person who has committed himself in conjugal love. He is different than the young lover of the “Diary of the Seducer”, who always experiences romantic love with young girls. The aesthete is looking for romantic love in the Hollywood fashion, but the ethical person consciously wants to choose his beloved and get married out of a duty to other people. For Kierkegaard, Kant is the ethical man who argues that we should do our duty rather than follow our inclination.

But what does it mean to live aesthetically, and what does it mean to live ethically? What is the aesthetic in a person, and what is the ethical? To that I would respond: the aesthetic in a person is that by which he spontaneously and immediately is what he is; the ethical is that by which he becomes what he becomes. The person who lives in and by and from and for the aesthetic that is in him, that person lives aesthetically.\(^{14}\)

When we become ethical, we are living in the line of time. In other words, we are thinking about what we are doing in the present in relation to what the consequence will be in the future. To be ethical, we must always anticipate what will happen in the future. The ethical person cannot live in the moment. Rather, the ethical person has to choose despair in order to enter the ethico-religious sphere of

\(^{14}\) *E/O*, II, 178.
existence or occupy the second floor. Just as the ethical transfigures the aesthetic, the religious transfigures the ethical through despair, sin, and faith.

The ethical and the religious stages are very close to each other and the boundary zone between them is ambiguous. The religious stage includes two different levels of existence: the religious (A) and the religious (B). This is developed in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript (p. 493). But the point of this thesis is that this distinction is necessary to understand the model of the house and its related concepts. When we move to the second floor, we live in the eternal moment. That is to say that the religious person (A) lives in this kind of eternal moment and not the temporal moment. It is a momentariness.

These three stages are three modes of existence, and they are not temporally successive levels of development. They are indeed penetrating our personality in the process of becoming. We cannot absolutize any of these stages. We are what we will become. This is what Deleuze does not realize. We can find ourselves only when we are living on all three floors at once. No single one of the floors (basement, first floor, or second floor), taken exclusively, constitutes the final dimension of existence.
ii. Definition of the Self

Kierkegaard defines a self and the temporality of a self on the basis of this house analogy, and his house analogy itself is based on his definition of despair. As he says:

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.\(^{15}\)

Kierkegaard's definition of the self has three aspects. (I) The self is spirit. This element is connected with the becoming character of the self. (II) The self is a relation which relates itself to itself -- which explains the givenness of the self's being. (III)

In the relation between two, the relation is the third as a negative unity, and the two relate to the relation and in the relation to the relation; thus under the qualification of the psychical the relation between the psychical and the physical is a relation. If, however, the relation relates itself to itself, this relation is the positive third, and this is the self [spirit].\(^{16}\)

\(^{15}\) *SUD*, 13.

\(^{16}\) *SUD*, 13.
Kierkegaard argues that "this relation, the third, is yet again a relation and relates itself to that which established the entire relation."\(^{17}\)

The third aspect of the self has to do with the person's self-reflective relation to God and corresponds to the second floor of the house. As the person develops through the stages he or she appropriates the eternal after having become reflective on the first floor. So the self is pre-reflective, reflective, and then God related. This relational self is neither self-created nor established by an other; it is both. It is a network of relations which relate to God as the primal ground but not as a cause. Also, this relating activity (the self) asserts itself in time and space. It is always becoming and never fixed. It is related to others, and by doing that, it is social and intersubjective. Thus, it is not a self-isolated process organism. We cannot really live in isolation as man tries to do at times. He who forgets himself is a product of his social structures.

Surrounded by hordes of man, absorbed in all sorts of secular matters, more and more shrewd about the ways of the world -- such a person forgets himself, forgets his name divinely understood, does not dare to believe in himself, finds it too hazardous to be himself and far easier and safer to be like the others, to become a copy, a number, a mass man.\(^{18}\)

Becoming a self is a self-constituting process which never becomes complete. Its production and awareness of freedom are one and the same. The relational self

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\(^{17}\) *SUD*, 13.

\(^{18}\) *SUD*, 33-34.
first exists as self-consciousness when we start reflecting on ourselves (the first floor). Then, it exists as the repetition of the content of consciousness (the second floor as religious consciousness (B)). This repetition precedes and leads to self-consciousness. When we are on the first floor, our selves are viewed as being and becoming, but our selves do not become concrete.

The self is the conscious synthesis of infinitude and finitude that relates itself to itself, whose task is to become itself, which can be done only through the relationship to God. To become oneself is to become concrete. But to become concrete is neither to become finite nor to become infinite, for that which is to become concrete is indeed a synthesis. Consequently, the progress of the becoming must be an infinite moving away from itself in the infinitizing of the self, and an infinite coming back to itself in the finitizing process.\(^{19}\)

When we are in the basement (aesthetes), we are relating, but only unconsciously to ourselves. We become ourselves only when we get to the first floor (ethical); however, we are not ourselves as far as we should be. The first movement of the leap toward the self is infinite resignation. The aesthetic desire and ethical requirement collide and push us toward the religious leap beyond this collision. This means that we give up our love, which is aesthetic and ethical, and we relate to God. We give up all our self-love by going up to the second floor of the house, but we are still in despair if we live on the second floor exclusively. This leap beyond the collision into religiousness also has to do with Kierkegaard’s concept of despair.

\(^{19}\) SUD, 29-30.
Further, "the human being is spirit,"\textsuperscript{20} and "spirit is the self."\textsuperscript{21} However, there can still be despair as a sickness of the spirit even at the pre-reflective level. The aesthete does not know he is sick but he is still not fully a self. One can be sick and in despair without knowing it. A self is a relation which relates to itself, and in relating to itself, it relates to the other, that is, in the religious sense, God. Thus, as long as a self lives under the command of necessity, it cannot be free; like the aesthete who does not understand that he has freedom. "The self is freedom. But freedom is the dialectical aspect of the categories of possibility and necessity."\textsuperscript{22} For instance, the aesthete only lives in a relation, but the ethical man and the religious man (A) live in a relation that can relate itself to itself because they are conscious of living in despair. However, they are not yet spirits (selves). The Knight of Faith (religious man (B)) is an individual who relates himself to himself and by doing that, he relates himself to God. God is a salvation for us, and by relating to him, we become free. In other words, we have to have the relationships to ourselves and to God in order to have a spirit. Hence, a spirit is the synthesis of relating which is a necessity and relating to itself which is a possibility, and that synthesis takes place by relating to God. Faith is the transcending of despair in which the self, in relating itself to itself and willing to be itself, rests transparently in God. "Faith is: that the self in being itself and in willing

\textsuperscript{20 SUD, 13.}

\textsuperscript{21 SUD, 13.}

\textsuperscript{22 SUD, 29.}
to be itself rests transparently in God. There is no rest when there is the collision between then aesthetic and the ethical. But the first movement of resignation already brings rest in the immanent God whose presence on experiences in his resignation. Resignation is the beginning of peace. In this, "the human being is spirit," "spirit is the self," and "the self is freedom."
iii. Definition of the Stages

A human being has three dimensions in regards to which he develops in the process of self-becoming: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. In Kierkegaard's terms, we are a horizontal, reflective, and vertical relation. In a horizontal relation, we have a relation with anything we are conscious of in everyday life. We do not know our responsibility to ourselves and to others. We are living in a state of alienation without realizing it. Occasionally, someone starts reflecting and making decisions. The aesthetic is the relation of immediacy while the ethical is one of reflection and decision. Then, there is a collision between those two, and because of that collision, the individual goes into the religious stage (A) and develops a vertical relation with God. This definition of the stages is not formed in a specific text but is constructed on the basis of the model and related concepts with which we are working.

We cannot have a relation to others or to God without having a relation to ourselves because only when we relate to ourselves, can we find ourselves. By finding ourselves, Kierkegaard means that we come to realize our responsibilities to ourselves. By doing that, we become aware of our responsibilities to others. In a reflective relationship, I cannot find my real self because I am still in despair or in a misrelation with myself. Consequently, only when I relate myself to others am I truly
Academic Assessment:

The assessment provided by the evaluation process is designed to measure the skills and knowledge of the participants. The results are used to identify areas of strength and areas that require improvement. This information is crucial for planning and implementing effective educational strategies. The assessment process includes various methods such as tests, observations, and peer evaluations. The data collected from these assessments is analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the educational program. The results are reported to the participants, their parents, and educators to facilitate personalized learning plans.
able to find myself. Self-becoming is a process in which the other plays an important role.24

24This idea is close to Levinas' concept of the self. According to Levinas, I can discover myself only in regards to the Other, and without the Other, I cannot find myself. Levinas also believes that I can have a horizontal, a reflective, and a vertical relation at the same time. If I relate to God as immanent, that would be a religious relation (A). If I relate to God as transcendent, that would be an ethical relation. I become myself through these three relations. The self is always in the process of becoming, and I become this synthesis of the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. Thus we have a kind of threefold relation. We are a relation, that relates to itself; and in relating to itself, relates to God.
B. The Self and Despair

i. Definition of Despair

The aesthete does not have a self and, as a consequence, he is a relation in such a way that he does not know he is in despair. A person is a threefold relation and any break in that relation is despair. "Despair is a misrelation in a relation that relates itself to itself; it is not a misrelation in a relation but in a relation that relates itself to itself. That is, despair is a qualification of spirit."

Despair is the misrelation in the relation of a synthesis that relates itself to itself. But the synthesis is not the misrelation; it is merely the possibility, or in the synthesis lies the possibility of the misrelation. If the synthesis were the misrelation, then despair would not exist at all, then despair would be something that lies in human nature as such. That is, it would not be despair; it would be something that happens to a man, something he suffers, like a disease to which he succumbs, or like death, which is everyone's fate. No, no, despairing lies in man himself. If he were not a synthesis, he could not despair at all; nor could he despair if the synthesis in its original state from the hand of God were not in the proper relationship.

Despair has three forms because there are three aspects of the relation. In other words, despair is a break in the threefold relationship of the horizontal, the reflective, and the vertical transcendent which constitutes the person: (I) "In despair not to be conscious of having a self." The aesthetic is not reflective, and that is

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25 SUD, 142.
26 SUD, 15-16.
27 SUD, 13.
despair or the breaking of the relation. He is living in a misrelationship, but he is not aware of it.

Here, of course, the distinction must be made as to whether or not the person who is conscious of his despair has the true conception of what despair is. Admittedly, he can be quite correct, according to his own idea of despair, to say that he is in despair; he may be correct about being in despair, but that does not mean that he has the true conception of despair. If his life is considered according to the true conception of despair, it is possible that one must say: You are basically deeper in despair than you know, your despair is on an even profounder level.28

(II) "In despair not to will to be oneself."29 This is the despair of the ethical. The ethical man is aware of his suffering or misrelation, and he is therefore in what Kierkegaard calls deep despair. We are a relation, yet when we relate to ourselves, we may still be in despair if we are not willing to be in such a relation to ourselves. Insofar as the ethical person can never measure up to the eternal law he is in collision with himself and he is not willing to be himself as he is. He always wants to be better. People attempting to live by Kant's imperative would feel their shortcomings as radical evil. (III) The person of religiousness (A) makes a tremendous effort to become the self. He is willing to be himself, and he tries to change his situation. However, all the religious man (A)'s efforts to be a pure self is what Kierkegaard calls

28 SUD, 47.

29 SUD, 13.
"the despair of willing to be oneself."³⁰ The infinite resignation of the mystic shows that he is in despair over his finite, temporal being. The rest of this thesis will further explain this.

The aesthete’s despair could be positive in a certain sense, if he is grateful that he is in despair. In another way, his despair would be defective if he regrets it. He is not aware of it consciously, but he is subject to both the excellence and the defect of despair. It is an unconscious dialectic. This despair of the aesthete has the ambiguity of despair. It can enable him to move to a higher stage of life, but in itself it is a defect. We are different from animals because of the possibility of having despair, and because of that, we are spirits. In other words, I am a person, whose despair enslaves me and yet gives me its possibility of freedom. Therefore, I have the possibility of despair. Furthermore, this possibility is going to allow me to have the actuality of despair. The aesthete has the actuality of despair, and in a certain sense he really is in despair. This is the pre-condition for his possibility of greater despair, which ultimately helps him to leave the basement and become ethical. As Kierkegaard states:

³⁰ SUD, 13.
Is despair an excellence or a defect? Purely dialectically, it is both. If only the abstract idea of despair is considered, without any thought of someone in despair, it must be regarded as a surpassing excellence. The possibility of this sickness is man’s superiority over the animal, and this superiority distinguishes him in quite another way than does his erect walk, for it indicates infinite erectness or sublimity, that he is spirit.\(^{31}\)

Whereas sickness is a good possibility, despair is both negative and positive. Despair is God’s way of teaching us how to find ourselves. It reminds us of our possibilities which we are not consciously aware of. We also learn that for “God everything is possible,” and when we go before God we become more and more aware of ourselves.

The point is that the previously considered gradation in the consciousness of the self is within the category of the human self, or the self whose criterion is man. But this self takes on a new quality and qualification by being a self directly before God. This is no longer the merely human self but is what I, hoping not to be misinterpreted, would call the theological self, the self directly before God. And what infinite reality [\textit{Realitet}] the self gains by being conscious of existing before God, by becoming a human self whose criterion is God!\(^{32}\)

Moreover, despair is bad for us because it is a sickness, but that sickness pushes us to have faith or “Christian’s blessedness.”

In the aesthetic relation, we gain an ego; we then become ethical through reflection, and then we become religious by relating the aesthetic and the ethical to

\[^{31}\textit{SUD}, 14-15.\]

\[^{32}\textit{SUD}, 79.\]
God as immanent and transcendent. The man of infinite resignation (religiousness (A)) experiences God as a part of life; that is to say, immanently. An ethical man thinks of God as beyond experience; that is to say, transcendent. He has room for faith since he has no experience of God. In fact, both the immanent and transcendent views of God contain some truth. From this, it makes sense that the human being develops its self through and beyond all three stages — surpassing exclusive notions of God as either immanent or transcendent.

There are three existence-spheres: the aesthetic, the ethical, the religious. The metaphysical is abstraction, and there is no human being who exists metaphysically. The metaphysical, the ontological, is [er], but it does not exist [er ikke til], for when it exists it does so in the aesthetic, in the ethical, in the religious, and when it is, it is the abstraction from or a prius [something prior] to the aesthetic, the ethical, the religious. The ethical sphere is only a transition sphere, and therefore its highest expression is repentance as a negative action. The aesthetic sphere is the sphere of immediacy, the ethical the sphere of requirement (and this requirement is so infinite that the individual always goes bankrupt), the religious the sphere of fulfillment, but, please note, a fulfillment such as when one fills an alms box or a sack with gold, for repentance has specifically created a boundless space, and as a consequence the religious contradiction: simultaneously to be out on 70, 000 fathoms of water and yet be joyful.33

There are as many kinds of despair as there are stages on life's way. Furthermore, when we despair about anything in our daily lives, our despair is something eternal and it is not despairing something earthly. We have an absolute relationship which is relative. As Kierkegaard states:

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Despair over the earthly or over something earthly also despair of the eternal and over oneself, insofar as it is despair, for this is indeed the formula for all despair. But the individual in despair depicted above is not aware, so to speak, of what is going on behind him. He thinks he is despairing over something earthly and talks constantly of that over which he despairs, and yet he is despairing of the eternal....  

That is to say that, even when we are aesthetes, our despair is, in a certain sense, eternal. At this stage, the self is almost entirely the result of its individual and collective past. It lives in deep despair of necessity. It "neither moves from the place where it is [i.e., in the basement] nor arrives anywhere, for necessity is literally that place..." When we are ethical or religious (A), we have different kinds of despair. "To become is a movement away from that place, but to become oneself is a movement in that place."  

We always choose to go through these stages or places. In other words, we can go through the aesthetic, ethical, and religious (A) stages by ourselves because we get pushed along towards becoming a self by our despair, but to go from infinite resignation (religiousness (A)) to faith (religiousness (B)), we need God’s help. We cannot get faith in God by our own efforts. If we live in the eternal or the temporal, we are going to have despair. We have to live in both at the same time in order not to be destroyed by despair. This is Kierkegaard’s formula of how to overcome

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34 SUD, 60-61.

35 SUD, 36.

36 SUD, 36.
despair, and it is what he also calls the "paradox". The paradox is a key term for Kierkegaard. He uses it throughout *Fear and Trembling* and he develops eight senses of it in the *Philosophical Fragments*. However, for our purposes here, it has to do with a lived situation which looks like a contradiction but is possible with faith. Appropriating the apparently opposed values of the temporal and eternal at once through faith is the main point of paradox in this thesis.

Moreover, Kierkegaard distinguishes between despair in weakness and despair over weakness. For instance, if I say that I cannot find an answer for my question about someone's psychic mind because I do not know the reason for my despair or why I am weak, then I am despairing in my weakness. However, when I am despairing over my goal, I am indeed despairing over myself. I am despairing over my weakness. When we are in despair, it seems that we are angry with something outside ourselves and we make it a kind of scapegoat, blaming others for our despair, but we are really projecting ourselves on them. In fact, according to Kierkegaard, we do not despair over something "out there", so to speak, but we actually despair over ourselves. As he states:
When the world is taken away from the self and one despairs, the despair seems to come from the outside, even though it always comes from the self; but when the self despairs over its despair, this new despair comes from the self, indirectly-directly from the self, as the counter-pressure (reaction)...

By definition, being on the first floor (ethical) means we start to act in a certain way.

When we act like an ethical person, we are living in that state of despair.

Furthermore, there is a greater consciousness here of what despair is, because despair is indeed the loss of the eternal and of oneself. Of course, there is also a greater consciousness that one’s state is despair. Then, too, despair here is not merely a suffering but an act.

The aesthete is in despair of weakness; the ethical man is in despair over his weakness. However, on the second floor (religiousness (A)), we go behind the weakness, and it is the despair of strength of defiance. Thus, we have three stages of despair: the despair in weakness, of weakness, and of strength in defiance. The aesthete is weak because he only follows his desires. The ethical person is beyond the weakness of mere desire, but he is weak because he lives in the temporality of a better future in light of past and future. Therefore, he can never accomplish the eternal ideal. The man of religiousness (A), on the other hand, who only appropriates the eternal ideal in relying on his own strength, can be defiant about the lack of value in the temporal.

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37 SUD, 62.

38 SUD, 62.
This despair is a significant step forward. If the preceding despair was *despair in weakness*, then this is *despair over his weakness*, while still remaining within the category: despair in weakness as distinct from despair in defiance (β). Consequently, there is only a relative difference, namely, that the previous form has weakness’s consciousness as its final consciousness, whereas here the consciousness does not stop with that but rises to a new consciousness — that of his weakness. The person in despair himself understands that it is weakness to make the earthly so important, that it is weakness to despair. But now, instead of definitely turning away from despair to faith and humbling himself under his weakness, he entrenches himself in despair and despairs over his weakness. In so doing, his whole point of view is turned around: he now becomes more clearly conscious of his despair, that he despairs of the eternal, that he despairs over himself, over being so weak that he attributes such great significance to the earthly, which now becomes for him the despairing sign that he has lost the eternal and himself.39

39 *SUD*, 61.
the text is not visible in the image.
ii. Despair and Sin

Sin is despair if we do it before God. For Kierkegaard, not all despair is sin. In order to really sin, by definition, we have to despair before God in such a way that we take offense at God. Again, offence is a technical term for Kierkegaard and he wrote his whole book *Training in Christianity* about it. It is a prominent term in *Fear and Trembling* and in the *Fragments*. This thesis is not primarily about this offence. However, one can be offended at the eternal side of the God-man (as were the Pharisees) or at the temporal side of the God-man (as was Peter). Kierkegaard thinks that any genuine sin will be rooted in such taking offence at the God-man. On Kierkegaard’s account, sin is the opposite of faith. Faith, however, is conceptually linked to incarnation and sin. By incarnation, he meant the idea of the God-man or God understood as becoming human. He believes that God is the God-man. This means that God is the eternal and the temporal, and to have faith is to imitate that. We could say that there are two religious movements. One is a movement into the infinite through infinite resignation. The other movement is a movement into the finite through repetition.
The dialectic of faith is the finest and the most extraordinary of all; it has an elevation of which I can most certainly form a conception, but no more than that. I can make the mighty trampoline leap whereby I cross over into infinity; my back is like a tightrope dancer's, twisted in my childhood, and therefore it is easy for me. One, two, three—I can walk upside down in existence, but I cannot make the next movement, for the marvelous I cannot do—I can only be amazed at it.

...[F]or the movement of faith must continually be made by virtue of the absurd, but yet in such a way, please note, that one does not lose the finite but gains it whole and intact.40

Kierkegaard does talk about double movement in the leap of faith. We have to leap up into religiousness (A) and then back into the aesthetic and ethical. In other words, up to the infinite resignation and then into the temporal. The temporality of repetition is living in the eternal and coming back and living in the temporal in the same moment. In other words, it is going up and living on the second floor of the eternal yet returning to live in the basement as well as the first floor. Thus, if we act on our beliefs and we really appropriate the eternal and the temporal, then we are believing in the God-man. This also means that we believe that we can take responsibility for our actions.

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Therefore, the definition [of sin] embraces every imaginable and every actual form of sin; indeed, it rightly stresses the crucial point that sin is despair (for sin is not the turbulence of flesh and blood but is the spirit’s consent to it) and is: before God. As a definition it is algebra; for me to begin to describe particular sins in this little book would be out of place, and, furthermore, the attempt might fail. The main point here is simply that the definition, like a net, embraces all forms. And this it does, as can be seen if it is tested by posing its opposite: faith, by which I steer in this whole book as by a trustworthy navigation guide. Faith is: that the self in being itself and in willing to be itself rests transparently in God.  

A Socratic definition would not accomodate sin since it lacks those three essential elements: to despair, before God, by taking offense.

So also with Christianity and offense. The possibility of offense is very appropriately present in the Christian definition of sin. It is this: before God. A pagan, the natural man, is very willing to admit that sin exists, but this “before God” that actually makes sin into sin, this is too much for him. For him (although in a way different from that pointed out here) it makes much too much of being human; make it a little less, and he is willing to go along with it -- “but too much is too much.”

We need to believe in the God-man in order to really be able to sin. Jesus in being the eternal and temporal ideal lets the believer have faith in temporal values. In making clear the choice between valuing the temporal or taking offence at it, belief in Christ opens possibility for sin. The formula for the self is connected with despair which is a misrelation and faith which is a relation. Faith and the God-man enable us to sin. For Kierkegaard, sin is despair, and it is different with Socrates’ notion of

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41 SUD, 82.

42 SUD, 87.
“missing the mark” as he calls it. For Socrates something is immoral when we aim our arrow to a target and miss, and that would explain immorality or error in terms of ignorance. However, for Kierkegaard, if we miss the mark because of ignorance, it is not a sin.

Sin is ignorance. This as it is well known, is the Socratic definition, which, like everything Socratic, is an authority meriting attention. But with regard to this point, as with so much that is Socratic, men have come to feel an urge to go further. What countless numbers have felt the urge to go further than Socratic ignorance -- presumably because they felt it was impossible for them to stop with that -- for how many are there in any generation who could persevere, even for just one month, in existentially expressing ignorance about everything.43

However;

Socrates does not actually arrive at the category of sin, which certainly is dubious for a definition of sin. How can this be? If sin is ignorance, then sin really does not exist, for sin is indeed consciousness. If sin is being ignorant of what is right and therefore doing wrong, then sin does not exist. If this is sin, then along with Socrates it is assumed that there is no such thing as a person’s knowing what is right and doing wrong.... Consequently, if the Socratic definition is sound, then there is no sin at all.44

Socrates was put to death because he offended people. The paradox of the God-man can be offensive in two different ways: it might be offensive to the man’s side of it, or to God’s. When we are living in the upper floors, we take offense at the basement because we do not think that it is good enough for us. Conversely, when

43 SUD, 87-88.

44 SUD, 89.
we live in the basement, we are offended by the preaching and morality of the upper floors. It is not that we are offended, but we take offense. It is something we really do. It is an important part of becoming a self, not to be offended by ourselves. We must learn to accept the offensive stages as nonetheless constituting parts of our selves. Thereby we come to understand that none of the three floors define us properly. Taken exclusively, all of these stages provide only partial revelations of the self.
iii. Despair and Madness

Despair is sickness unto death. A person who is severely handicapped might wish he did not exist. However, he finds that he cannot die, and he seems to be that way for eternity. "Thus to be sick unto death is to be unable to die, yet not as if there were hope of life; no the hopelessness is that there is not even the ultimate hope, death." He would rather die than live this way. As we move more and more into despair, we see that we are helpless and even dying would not really help us. In this sense, despair is the sickness unto death. Also, despair is sickness of the self. When we are in despair, we are suffering and we cannot enjoy life. We wish we were dead, but we cannot die. To keep on dying this death, that is despair. "For to die signifies that it is all over, but to die death means to experience dying, and if this is experienced for one single moment, one thereby experiences it forever." Every one of these types of despair is a kind of madness because madness "is the inclosing reserve which discloses itself all of a sudden out of boredom."

Madness is self-consuming; it can destroy us, but it can also help us to find ourselves. This definition of madness is distilled from The Concept of Anxiety. The inclosing reserve to which he refers in Sickness unto Death (p. 72), has to do with

45 SUD, 18.

46 SUD, 18.

47 David Goicochea, Unpublished Paper.
getting stuck on one floor of the house with a fixed idea. Then one speaks and acts unfreely, for example, with compulsive behaviour. Kierkegaard thinks it happens because of boredom or because one is not in full passionate inwardness (living on all floors of the house at once).

Nevertheless, despair is veritably a self-consuming, but an impotent self-consuming that cannot do what it wants to do. What it wants to do is to consume itself, something it cannot do, and this impotence is a new form of self-consuming, in which despair is once again unable to do what it wants to do, to consume itself; this is an intensification, or the law of intensification ... for it is precisely over this that he does despair (not as having despaired): that he cannot consume himself, cannot get rid of himself, cannot reduce himself to nothing. This is the formula for despair raised to a higher power, the rising fever in this sickness of the self.48

When he is in the basement (aesthete), he is not aware of his despair and suffering, and there is not madness yet. While he goes along, he gets greater despair, and greater madness. It can become so great that it becomes demonic. "The more consciousness there is in such a sufferer who in despair wills to be himself, the more his despair intensifies and becomes demonic."49 He becomes fixed or locked into one attitude (e.g., aesthetic or ethical) and thereby becomes closed to the other possibilities. He becomes afraid of eternity without reason. He is never satisfied when he is on one of those floors of the house, and he is bored because he is not being fulfilled. If he is fixed on one floor, it means being in despair. Thus, he goes mad out

48 SUD, 18-19.
49 SUD, 71-72.
of suffering and boredom because he does not yet have a self. He wants to stay put, and that is what constitutes madness. He wants to be in madness even though God wants to free him from his misery. "... [N]evertheless, he wills in despair to be himself. What demonic madness — the thought that most infuriates him is that eternity could get the notion to deprive him of his misery."\(^50\)

Thus, madness would mean that despair wants to keep on despairing. Madness comes when we remain as we are and accept the continuation of suffering. When it becomes mad, then it tends to prevent us from help. Madness is a type of despair, and it is the worst kind of despair. The person is in an "inclosed reserve," as Kierkegaard calls it in the following quotation. He closes up in his misery. The madness does not have any external object outside of itself that it knows or feels. It just totally locks up in itself. The objective world remains separated from this person by an unbridgeable abyss. There is only an overwhelming internal state. This is a very pure kind of despair.

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\(^{50}\) SUD, 72.
What, then, is the corresponding externality? Well, there is nothing "corresponding," inasmuch as a corresponding externality -- corresponding to inclosing reserve -- is a self-contradiction, for if it corresponds, then it does in fact disclose. But externality in this case is of no consequence whatsoever here where inclosing reserve, or what could be called an inwardness with a jammed lock, must be the particular object of attention.51

If he is on the second floor (religiousness (A)), and the lock jams on the door, he cannot even get out to go to the first floor or the basement. This happens when he goes into the worst form of despair, the despair of madness or defiance. He tries to protest against all existence because his existence is evidence that life is miserable.

Figuratively speaking, it is as if an error slipped into an author's writing and the error became conscious of itself as an error -- perhaps it actually was not a mistake but in a much higher sense an essential part of the whole production -- and now this error wants to mutiny against the author -- out of hatred toward him, forbidding him to correct it and in maniacal defiance saying to him: No, I refuse to be erased; I will stand as a witness against you, a witness that you are a second-rate author.52

The mad man is always looking for a scapegoat, and here, God becomes that scapegoat. It is always somebody else's fault. He never takes responsibility for his own action.

51 SUD, 72.
52 SUD, 74.
C. The Self and Faith

Kierkegaard's understanding of faith is unique and different from Christian-Platonism because Christian-Platonism thought that faith had to do with life after death. However, for Kierkegaard, faith has to do with the temporal and the finite, with the here and now, returning from the extreme limit of the second floor and living in the basement, the first floor, and the second floor. Kierkegaard's understanding of Christianity goes beyond Platonism, and that understanding has to do with a new concept of a person. A person is a relation. He is a relation of the temporal and the eternal. For instance, when he lives in the basement (aesthete), he is horizontally related to temporal values, but he is not aware reflective enough to see that the values of tomorrow depend on the way he lives today. But besides this horizontal relation of the aesthetic and reflective relation of the ethical there can be the vertical relation of the religious. Religiousness (A) lets him appropriate the eternal and in religiousness (B) he appropriates the temporal. When he lives in the truth or faith, he simultaneously appropriates both temporal and eternal values and holds fast to them with all his passionate inwardness.

Thus, what truth means, is really becoming what we are, namely, both the temporal and the eternal. We are the relation between the temporal and the eternal, but we are not aware of it. When we become aware of it, we can either emphasize the temporal side (ethical), or the eternal side (religious (A)). The task is to do both
at once. We have to absolutely relate to the absolute or the eternal. This has to do with Kierkegaard’s definition of truth. Then, we can come back and relatively relate to the relative or to the temporal. The absolute has to do with a person’s highest priority. This might be pleasure, wealth, fame, health, *et cetera*. But these will prove to be only relative values. So the only true absolute is the eternal God. Kierkegaard’s philosophy believes that we should live on the second floor and have the eternal God as our highest priority. Then through faith we should come back and love, but only relatively, aesthetic and ethical values. “An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth.”53 Objective uncertainty refers to our inability to know ethical and religious values with objective certainty. We can never know with reason the paradoxical value of the temporal and the eternal at once. To appropriate both of those together seems absurd. It signifies the double value of the eternal and the ethical being. Holding fast to objective uncertainty therefore means making the eternal and temporal our own.

We are really a synthesis of the finite and infinite, constituted by a factor or power that is transcendent. If we only live in either the finite or infinite, we are in despair because it would be a misrelation. The Knight of Infinite Resignation strives with all of his life on the second floor, and does not have any energy left. When we are doing that with our life, then we can be given the gift of faith.

Infinite resignation is the last stage before faith, so that anyone who has not made this movement does not have faith, for only in infinite resignation do I become conscious of my eternal validity, and only then can one speak of grasping existence by virtue of faith. 54

This is where grace comes in. We are given faith to believe in the value of the finite, the temporal, the body, the soul.

Faith has to do with two beliefs: in the incarnation, and in sin. God becomes flesh, and He shows us the value of the flesh and its temporality. Also, by becoming man, God shows us how to make the paradoxical movements of the leap that value the eternal and the temporal at once. For the God-man is the ideal to be imitated in both eternal and temporal. Then he shows us that the choice of what we believe (how we live our lives) is really up to us. This decision is not a matter of ignorance, but it is a matter of faith or sin. We have a possibility not to do our task and to be sinners or to do it with faith. We may choose to take offence and despair or to be faithful and not take offense. In faith, “the self rests transparently in the power that established it.” 55 Faith lets us believe in both the eternal and the temporal, without cancelling the possibility for sin.

54 FT. 46.
55 SUD, 49.
II. The Temporality of Self-Becoming

A. Repetition

If we accept Kierkegaard's definition of despair then we would see that a person like Don Giovanni, who does not reflect, lives in the moment and not in the line of time. In other words, what makes him unhappy is that he has a desire for a particular moment. He has to live in the grasp of that desire, and desire leaps from one moment to another moment, even within the present. On the other hand, in Either/Or, Judge William, the ethical character, does not take the moment or present into account because he holds to an absolute (for instance, do not murder, or do not lie). Such absolutes are eternal, or non-temporal. He is going to reflect and acquire a self, but he still feels the despair of not being himself. Kierkegaard argues that both the aesthetic and the ethical person are in despair because one is overwhelmed by flux (the temporal moment), while the other is overwhelmed by the static eternal.

The two forms of the religious go beyond this either/or. The Knight of Infinite Resignation (religious (A)) says no to the ethical and the aesthetic, and he lives in eternity, as Plato does. The Knight of Faith (religious (B)) believes both in the eternal, and the temporal. His faith helps him to get out of despair which enables him to be on all floors at once. Faith repeats the temporal by going back to it from the eternal. This is the second movement of the leap. It is the movement of repetition. Also, when he received his faith, everything became different for him. Thus,
repetition has to do with the aesthetic, ethical, religious (A) and religious (B) lifestyles. More importantly, religiousness (B) allows the others to be repeated in a new way. Repetition means that the old is repeated in a new way.

In the book *Repetition*, Constantin Constantius seems to show that repetition is impossible. The question is: "can he go back to Berlin?" He tries to argue that he cannot go back to Berlin because the second time he goes to Berlin, it is not like the first time.

My home had become dismal to me simply because it was a repetition of the wrong kind. My mind was sterile, my troubled imagination constantly conjured up tantalizing attractive recollections of how the ideas had presented themselves the last time, and the tares of these recollections choked out every thought at birth.56

Here the point is that there is a wrong kind and a right kind of repetition. Constantin, when he goes to Berlin the second time, is thinking only of repeating an external event. True repetition has to do with an internal or spiritual event. Only at the end of the book is that kind of repetition discovered. Constantin becomes unsatisfied and he thinks that repetition is impossible.

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Beckmann could not make me laugh. I endured it for half an hour and then left the theater, thinking: there is no repetition at all .... But then life also ought to be all the more secure. Should life be even more deceitful than a bankrupt? He still gives 50 percent or 30 percent, at least something. After all, the least one can ask for is the comic — should not even that be capable of repetition!\textsuperscript{57}

Wrong repetition is impossible; however, spiritual repetition is the point of Kierkegaard’s metamorphosis. Repetition is a Kierkegaardian paradox. In repetition everything is new, and yet the old is repeated. For instance, today is another day, and yesterday was a day too. Today is not exactly as yesterday, and yet yesterday can live in today, even in a new way. On the one hand, everything is repetition, and on the other hand, nothing is repetition. The only repetition in repetition is that everything is always new. ".... [G]enuine repetition is recollected forward."\textsuperscript{58} "Repetition -- that is actuality and the earnestness of existence. The person who wills repetition is mature in earnestness."\textsuperscript{59} "The dialectic of repetition is easy, for that which is repeated has been -- otherwise it could not be repeated -- but the very fact that it has been makes the repetition into something new."\textsuperscript{60} The key distinction is between recollection and repetition which will be explained in the last four pages of this chapter. Recollection is the Platonic notion of going up out of the cave by

\textsuperscript{57} REP, 169.

\textsuperscript{58} REP, 131.

\textsuperscript{59} REP, 133.

\textsuperscript{60} REP, 149.
remembering the forms which the soul previously knew. According to Kierkegaard’s house analogy this would be a movement to the second floor. But Kierkegaard thinks that once we are on the second floor or out of the cave we should return and then the shadows of the basement and the images of the first floor will have a new meaning and value in light of the eternal. Repetition, for Kierkegaard, recovers and renews the lower values. Platonic recollection is a backward movement to what we knew before. Kierkegaardian repetition is a forward movement that lets aesthetic and ethical values have a worth of their own after the eternal has been absolutely valued.

In *The Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard clarifies the distinction between two kinds of repetitions. He shows that going back to Berlin is not the only kind. He says that Constantin concealed the true kind of repetition. He writes; “Repetition which is revealed to Constantin is concealed by him so that the heretics would not understand him.”

In *Repetition*, Constantin says that we cannot have repetition within an event, such as going back to Berlin. Indeed, he conceals repetition by treating cases such as going to Berlin which never get to the proper sphere of true repetition, which is that of the spirit. He is saying explicitly that we cannot repeat anything. This is the concealing of which Kierkegaard spoke. In fact, there is only one true kind of repetition: namely, that in which "all things are new." He conceals the truth by telling

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61 CA, p. 18.
the truth. There is no true repetition in the second trip to Berlin. The experience at the theater is new and not the same as before. If it is new, it is therefore not ordinary repetition. The second trip to Berlin does not recapture the joy of the first trip. This shows that there are both true and false kinds of repetition; the everyday repetition of the same (such as Constantin's trip to Berlin reveals) and the true religious repetition which repeats the old in a new way. We have seen examples of this regarding the temporality of the aesthetic and ethical stages being repeated from an eternal standpoint. Further, this means that what is the same about repetition is the newness of everything, and nothing is just the same. God makes all things new, that is repetition. The only way we can repeat something is to make it different, and yet paradoxical — to let it recover the old.

"Repetition" is and remains a religious category. Constantin Constantius therefore cannot proceed further. He is clever, an ironist, battles the interesting -- but is not aware that he himself is caught in it. The first form of the interesting is to love change; the second is to want repetition, but still in Selbsigenugsamkeit [self-sufficiency], with no suffering -- and therefore Constantin is wrecked on what he himself has discovered, and the young man goes further.\(^{62}\)

It is true that without a relation to the eternal, repetition is not possible. Thus, it is aesthetically and ethically impossible. Kierkegaard says, "One becomes great by expecting the possible, another by expecting the eternal; but he who expected the

\(^{62}\) REP, 326.
impossible became the greatest of all. In the basement and on the first floor, people are expecting the possible, and on the second floor, they are expecting the eternal. However, what is really important is to expect the impossible (i.e., repetition) at the level of the aesthetic and ethical. Abraham achieves repetition because he has seen the eternal, which in turn reveals the temporal in a new light. Aesthetic repetition is impossible, but that is exactly what Abraham accomplishes.

Moreover, in *Repetition*, the young man discovers religiousness (A) by falling in love with a girl. He practices infinite resignation and becomes a poet. If he were able to simultaneously remain in that state of erotic inspiration and be married, he would be doing the impossible. However, according to Kierkegaard, if he had faith, he could return from religiousness (B) and sustain himself in both the aesthetic and the ethical relationship. That is, by absolutely loving the absolute (God) he could then relatively relate to the relative (the girl) and still be inspired by the eternal.

On the one hand, we can repeat, yet on the other hand, we cannot. These are not only two different ways of behaving in the world, but also two different ways of looking at what we are doing. "Repetition takes place when existence does not come to an end in the demand of ethics, but when the condition is provided and the whole of life and of existence begins anew."Spiritual repetition begins with the condition

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63 *FT*, 16.

64 *REP*, 18n.
of appropriating the eternal and thent he temporal can be lived in a new way. When he says everything becomes new, he refers to spiritual repetition. The temporal values remain as temporal and yet are renewed in the eternal. However, if it is new, then it means it is different. If it is true that everything becomes new, then we have captured the paradox of repetition: repetition is the newness of all things. This paradox stems from the fact that the attitude of faith is the origin of both eternal and temporal values. Repetition corresponds to this paradoxical double procreation.

Constantin thinks that if two trips to Berlin are different, then it cannot be repetition. However, they are the same because they are different. What is the same about repetition is the newness of it.

When the Eleatics denied motion, Diogenes, as everyone knows, came forward as an opponent. He literally did come forward, because he did not say a word but merely paced back and forth a few times, thereby assuming that he had sufficiently refuted them. When I was occupied for some time, at least on occasion, with the question of repetition -- whether or not it is possible, what importance it has, whether something gains or loses in being repeated -- I suddenly had the thought: you can, after all, take a trip to Berlin; you have been there once before, and now you can prove to yourself whether a repetition is possible and what importance it has.65

"Repetition begins in faith."66 If we are living paradoxically on all three floors at once, then our faith lets us be at peace with whatever despair we may have. We

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65 REP. 131.

66 CA. 18n.
The page contains text, but without clear context or specific lines visible, it is challenging to transcribe accurately.

The text appears to be a continuous paragraph, possibly discussing a topic in detail, but the specific content is not discernible from the image provided.
are in spirit, and we are in faith, and “behold all things will become new.” Faith can open up direction for exploration. Repetition, or the newness of things, begins in faith. It remains a possibility which we have a responsibility to make actual.

Repetition is an action, or a self-transformative movement. When we are in the moment of faith, we are reborn. In the moment of living in the eternal and coming back to the temporal, we are reborn.

I am born to myself, for as long as Ilithyia folds her hands, the one who is in labor cannot give birth.

It is over, my skiff is afloat.\(^68\)

The aesthete lives by necessity, and he is born without knowing why. When we are ethical, we understand possibility in terms of freedom and choice. In *Sickness Unto Death*, Kierkegaard links together three sets of opposites; the eternal and the temporal, the infinite and the finite, and the actual and the possible. Paradoxically, we need to live in both sides of these at once. For example, the aesthete is caught up in necessity; therefore, he is not really free because he is not reflecting. The true self is the synthesis of both possibility and necessity.

\(^{67}\) *CA*, 17n.

\(^{68}\) *REP*, 221.
Personhood is a synthesis of possibility and necessity. Its continued existence is like breathing (respiration), which is an inhaling and exhaling. The self of the determinist cannot breathe, for it is impossible to breathe necessity exclusively, because that would utterly suffocate a person’s self.  

Our freedom is what makes us anxious or miserable. In the garden, when Adam and Eve were told not to eat the fruit, they became anguished. They were anguished about something that was not a thing. It was a kind of non-thing. They were anxious about possibilities and their indefiniteness. Indefinite possibilities let them be free but also anxious. When we have possibilities we are free and we have a choice.

The task of freedom is renewal and repetition.

Now freedom breaks forth in its highest form, in which it is qualified in relation to itself. Here everything is reversed, and the very opposite of the first standpoint appears. Now freedom’s supreme interest is precisely to bring about repetition and its only fear is that variation would have the power to disturb its eternal nature. Here emerges the issue: is repetition possible?

Our freedom helps us to renew our ideas and thoughts inwardly. If we did not do that we would quickly become bored, and thus go mad. “The freedom’s own task is to refresh consciousness, then we can celebrate life because life is repetition.” The freedom of spirit which is not locked up like body alone or psyche alone lets repetition take place. Repetition is the temporality of spiritual becoming. “Repetition, while

69 SUD, 40.

70 REP, 302.

71 REP, 132.
present in the realm of nature as an immovable necessity is present in the realm of spirit as the task of transforming itself into something inward; it is freedom’s own task.\textsuperscript{72} Our freedom reminds us of our possibility — that we can become ourselves.

In the individual, then repetition appears as a task for freedom, in which the question becomes that of saving one’s personality from being volatilized and, so to speak, in pawn to events. The moment it is apparent that the individual can lose himself in events, fate, lose himself in such a way that he therefore by no means stops contemplating but loses himself in such a way that freedom is taken up completely in life’s fractions without leaving a remainder, then the issue becomes manifest, not to contemplation’s aristocratic indolence, but to freedom’s concerned passion.\textsuperscript{73}

It is in the decision or choice that there is a leap to repetition and faith. When we are living in our freedom, we are living in the moment of repetition. In other words, repetition is the temporality of freedom, the moment in which we choose to perform an act of faith. Also, repetition is the temporality of living on all floors of the house at once. This is possible only through freedom, and not through the moments of life in the basement, or on the first floor. It is a new moment of being free for all these floors at once.

Repetition shows us that we should give up trying to absolutize the relative. That is, we should not treat as our highest priority something that cannot satisfy us. The aesthete or the ethical man always absolutize their relative ways of living. When

\textsuperscript{72} CA, 18n.

\textsuperscript{73} REP, 315.
he goes to the basement or the first floor, then he absolutizes the relative. He lives merely for the relativity of the moment or of the line of time. On the second floor he absolutizes the absolute. He lives for the eternal absolute. However, the Knight of Faith freely returns to any of the floors and relatively loves the relative. He both absolutely loves the absolute (religiousness (A)) and at the same time relatively loves the relative (religiousness (B)). Here Kierkegaard is like Augustine, who said; “you have made us for yourself, oh God, and our hearts are not at rest until they rest in you.” Man, according to Augustine and Kierkegaard, is made for the infinite, and the finite cannot satisfy him. However, once he properly loves the infinite then he can properly love the finite. “Repetition is a transition from one state to another and the states are as different from one another as the creatures of the oceans are from those of the land and air.”74 If everything is always the same and boring, it drives us mad. In freedom, “repetition corresponds positively to the fulfillment of the promise: Behold all things will become new and negatively to the passion of the absurd.”75 It is the absurdity of the paradox that lets there be repetition.

When we live in the basement (aesthete), we are determinate and unaware of our possibilities. On the first floor (ethical), we are aware of our freedom but we are still absolutizing the relative. This prevents us from recognizing all our possibilities,

74 CA, 18n.

75 CA, 17n.
which can help us to become free of despair. The fundamental task Kierkegaard assigns to us is to become what we are. We can never be God, we can only imitate God. In repetition, we are indeed "self-redoubling" when we return to the basement and first floor — that is, in making the double-movement leap. "It remains itself from first to last; in its self-redoubling it becomes neither more not less than itself."76 We should become what we are — neither more nor less than that. We can never get to the point of becoming God, but we should not be less than this relation by being aware of it and by deciding to be it. We have to make a decision to become ourselves, and no one can make it for us. We have to imitate the God-man and live out the eternal and temporal at once.

76 **SUD**, 69.
For even if this self does not go so far into despair that it becomes an imaginatively constructed god -- no derived self can give itself more than it is in itself by paying attention to itself -- it remains itself from first to last; in its self-redoubling it becomes neither more nor less than itself. In so far as the self in its despairing striving to be itself works itself into the very opposite, it really becomes no self. In the whole dialectic within which it acts there is nothing steadfast; at no moment is the self steadfast, that is, eternally steadfast. The negative form of the self exercises a loosening power as well as a binding power; at any time it can quite arbitrarily start all over again, and no matter how long one idea is pursued, the entire action is within a hypothesis. 

This corresponds to what Kierkegaard says about the double-movement of the leap of faith in *Fear and Trembling*.

The storms have spent their fury — the thunderstorm is over — Job has been censured before the face of humankind — the Lord and Job have come to an understanding, they are reconciled, “the confidence of the Lord dwells again in the tenets of Job as in former days — men have come to understand Job. Now they come to him and eat bread with him and are sorry for him and consider him; his brothers and sisters, each one of them, give him a farthing and a gold ring — Job is blessed and has received everything double. This is called a repetition. 

In *Repetition*, Kierkegaard thinks that Constantin is right that repetition is the new category of the modern age. What recollection has been in the past, repetition will be now.

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77 *SUD*, 69.

78 *REP*, 212.
If one does not have the category of recollection or of repetition, all life dissolves into an empty, meaningless noise. Recollection is the ethical [etniske] view of life, repetition the modern; repetition is the interest [interesse] of metaphysics, and also the interest upon which metaphysics comes to grief; repetition is the watchword [Losenel] in every ethical view; repetition is condition sine qua non [the indispensable condition] for every issue of dogmatics.\(^79\)

Plato thinks that we come to know the truth by recollecting it. Our soul lives through all eternity. It falls through forgetfulness, though it can rise again through recollection. What we see in the here-and-now reminds us of what we already knew. Thus, getting the truth is the recollection process whereby we recover what has already been. There is nothing new, but we are getting what has been. This is very important. Recollection does not permit the newness which lets freedom and creativity be, whereas repetition does. Repetition lets us renew the aesthetic and ethical. Recollection would only see them as shadows. Temporality for Plato is only an image of eternity. It is not a value in its own right, which repetition allows it to be.

When the Greeks said that all knowing is recollecting, they said that all existence, which is, has been; when one says that life is a repetition, one says, actuality, which has been, now comes into existence. If one does not have the category of recollection or of repetition, all life dissolves into an empty, meaningless noise.\(^80\)

Hegel argues that the metaphysics of the recollection cannot be a newness, and he introduces the metaphysics of mediation. He gives us the hope that we can

\(^{79}\) REP. 149.

\(^{80}\) REP. 149.
make progress through history if we can accept this metaphysics of a person that is intersubjective and historical. However, Kierkegaard argues that, while such a hope is understandable, mediation does not make sense for us because it does not really recover what has been. Everything has a future without a past. Indeed, we need a third kind of metaphysics, namely, a repetition which does not put all its emphasis on either the past or the future. Rather, we require a repetition which emphasizes both past and future. Kierkegaard puts forth a new metaphysical concept which is different from both the Platonic and Hegelian. It is a new formula for temporality.

Repetition is the metaphysics of the future, and it replaces the Platonic and Hegelian theories of temporality. In repetition, we go back and live in the basement, first floor, and second floor in a new way. However, according to Plato and Hegel when we move out of the cave, or we get up to history’s progress, we leave everything behind. For Kierkegaard, the return to the lower levels is all important; whereas, for Plato and Hegel, when we come out of the cave and arrive at the sun (the zenith of our thinking), we do not return to re-evaluate the shadows (the beginning of our thinking).
Repetition and recollection are the same movement, except in the opposite direction, for what is recollected has been, is repeated backward, whereas genuine repetition is recollected forward. Repetition, therefore, if it is possible, makes a person happy, whereas recollection makes him unhappy.

Recollection’s love \([kjærlihøed]\), an author has said, is the only happy love. He is perfectly right in that, of course, provided one recollects that initially it makes a person unhappy. Repetition’s love is in truth the only happy love. Like recollection’s love, it does not have the restlessness of hope, the uneasy adventurousness of discovery, but neither does it have the sadness of recollection -- it has the blissful security of the moment. Hope is a new garment, stiff and starched and lustrous, but it has never been tried on, and therefore one does not know how becoming it will be or how it will fit. Recollection is a discarded garment that does not fit however beautiful it is, for one has outgrown it. Repetition is an indestructible garment that fits closely and tenderly, neither binds nor sags. Hope is a lovely maiden who slips away between one’s fingers; recollection is a beautiful old woman with whom one is never satisfied at the moment; Repetition is a beloved wife of whom one never wearies for one becomes weary only of what is new. One never grows weary of the old, and when one has that, one is happy.\(^1\)

Kierkegaard contrasts his metaphysics of repetition with Plato’s metaphysics of recollection. Recollection has to do only with the past. Whatever truth we learn will be a recovery of the truth we knew before. Repetition has to do with the future. When we return to aesthetic and ethical values after we have become resigned to their failure and have discovered the eternal, they are renewed. So repetition explains how something becomes new. All these metaphors make the same point. Once we get to the second floor everything in the basement and on the first floor can be renewed -- can get a new value.

\(^1\) REP. 131-32.
Further, Plato and Hegel have the philosophy of immanence; therefore, they cannot have a philosophy of repetition. They do not believe in that which transcends the eternal or absolute. Kierkegaard renews the value of the temporal as something that transcends the eternal or is different from it. If we want to have repetition, we need to have a philosophy of transcendence because the new is transcendentally prior to the old. "Repetition takes place not through an immanent continuity with the former existence which is a contradiction, but through a transcendence." By transcendence, Kierkegaard means that the new does not proceed from the old through a quantitative movement like the oak tree growing out of an acorn; but rather through a qualitative leap that goes beyond anything that was there. When the Knight of Faith comes back to the temporal while living in the eternal that temporality becomes radically new. It transcends what it had been before.
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The issue that brings him [Job] to a halt is nothing more nor less than repetition. He is right not to seek clarification in philosophy. Either Greek or modern, for the Greek make the opposite movement, and here a Greek would choose to recollect without tormenting his conscience. Modern philosophy [Hegel] makes no movement; as a rule it makes only a commotion, and if it makes any movement at all, it is always within immanence, whereas repetition is and remains a transcendence. It is fortunate that he does not seek any explanation from me, for I have abandoned my theory, I am adrift. Then, too, repetition is too transcendent for me. I can circumnavigate myself, but I cannot rise above myself. I cannot find the Archimedean point.  

In repetition, nothing is ever the same -- everything is always new. That is what makes it the same. The more that is different, the more it is the same. This newness shatters the walls of immanence. “In the sphere of freedom ... possibility remains and actuality emerges as transcendence.”

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83 REP. 186.

84 REP. 309-10.
B. Temporality and Eternity

Kierkegaard tries to unfold the meaning of time. Time is not reducible to the past because that is no longer. Time is not the future because the future is not yet. The only actual time is the present. The present time is the only time in which one can make a decision. That moment is like a flash of lightening, and it is the time in which we make all our decisions: for instance, to be in despair or not to be in despair. However, for Kierkegaard, the present is not a brief moment. It is an indefinite moment because it can be extended insofar as the past and future exist in the present. The present is the extended moment which includes both the past and the future. The moment may be infinite.

Likewise, Nietzsche's gateway is the present, and in the gateway time is one line which extends infinitely in two directions. This means that time is infinitely running toward the past and the future. Thus, time does not have a beginning or an end as we find it in St. Augustine's model, because it runs forever. According to St. Augustine, there was no time before God created heaven and earth because before that there existed simple eternity (outside time by definition). Book XI of Augustine's Confessions treats this distinction between time and eternity.
But if only their minds could be seized and held steady, they would be still for a while and, for that short moment, they would glimpse the splendour of eternity which is forever still. They would contrast it with time, which is never still, and see that it is not comparable. They would see that time derives its length only from a great number of movements constantly following one another into the past. But in eternity not anything moves into the past: all is present.

For Nietzsche, there is no way that we can repeat the past, nor enter the future; however, we may eternally repeat the present. Thus, in some finite time everything repeats itself for eternity. Thus eternity means forever, and it goes around and around in a cycle.

For Husserl and Heidegger, the notion of the extended present is indeed important because we live by our decisions. According to Heidegger, we have to be authentic; that is, we should live each moment toward death. Heidegger discusses the authentic anticipation of death in Being and Time. "The existential conception of death has been established; and therewith we have also established what it is that an authentic Being-Towards-the-end should be able to comport itself towards." This is the moment of the decision that he calls "the authenticity of anticipation" and a kind of resoluteness. "This reticent self-projection upon one's ownmost Being-guilty, in which one is ready for anxiety -- we call 'resoluteness'." Indeed, there is evidence for such an understanding of time in Nietzsche's own writings.

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87 BT, 343.
“Behold,” I continued, “this moment! From this gateway, Moment, a long, eternal lane leads backward behind us lies an eternity. Must not whatever can walk have walked on this lane before? Must not whatever can happen have happened, have been done, have passed by before? And if everything has been there before -- what do you think, dwarf, of this moment? Must not this gateway too have been there before? And are not all things knotted together so firmly that this moment draws after it all that is to come? Therefore -- itself too? For whatever can walk -- in this long lane out there too, it must walk once more.**

When a person stands in the gateway, it is the moment straight toward the future and into the past. Facing the future in this way is what individualizes a person in Heidegger’s philosophy. The human being is projected toward the future in his commitment, and yet takes responsibility for the past. The moment is actually decisiveness. It is the moment of the crisis and decision.

Further, the authentic person lives in anticipatory resoluteness. For instance, when we are living in the basement (aesthete), we only have the time of the moment. Everything is always the same; “the machinery has been set in motion .... I am born to myself.... My skiff is afloat."89 There is no repetition, and we always recollect ourselves out of existence.

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89 *REP*. 221.
Here I sit.... I do not stir from the spot. Here I stand. On my head or my feet? I do not know. All I know is that I am standing and have been standing *suspensio gradu* [immobilized] for a whole month now, without moving a foot or making one single movement.  

When we go up and live on the first floor (ethical), we get an extended line of time because this moment is now ethically related to past moments and the future moments. For example, Judge William thinks about the consequences of his actions in the future, and he reflects and decides precisely because he thinks of their consequences. Also, religiousness (A) implies a circular notion of time because its representatives relate to an eternal. The person of infinite resignation does not value the succession of time. The temporality of infinite resignation is eternity. This is best represented by the kind of circular moment which always turns in on itself. The man who lives on all floors of the house at once is going to have Kierkegaard’s repetition. Thus, there are four different ways of living temporally. First, the aesthete lives in the *aesthetic moment*. Secondly, the ethical man lives in the *line of time*. He will reflect and think about the past and the future, and will make all of his decisions with that in mind.

Every actual moment of despair is traceable to possibility; every moment he is in despair he is bringing it upon himself. It is always the present tense; in relation to the actuality there is no pastness of the past: in every actual moment of despair the person in despair bears all past as a present in possibility. 

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90 *REP*, 214.

91 *SUD*, 17.
Thirdly, the religious man (A) lives in the circle of time. Finally, the Knight of Faith lives on all three floors at once; therefore, the temporality of the cycle goes back and picks up the temporality of the line of time.

The moment is that ambiguity in which time and eternity touch each other, and with this the concept of temporality is posited, whereby time constantly intersects eternity and eternity constantly pervades time. As a result, the above-mentioned division acquires its significance: the present time, the past time, the future time.92

The Knight of Faith is the person who lives in the eternal moment. This man is the synthesis of the temporal and the eternal. In other words, religious temporality (B) is the synthesis of the eternal circle, the line of time, and the aesthetic moment. This synthesis is repetition.

Kierkegaard, indeed, gives us a formula for becoming one’s self, and he emphasizes the temporality and the eternal which have to do with repetition. For Kierkegaard, once we live on the second floor, we can go back and repeat our life in the basement and on the first floor; however, it will be new because we do it from the perspective of the eternal. This is a representation of the self. Also, it contains a representation of the temporality of self-becoming. It is the temporality of faith. When somebody makes a choice in the moment, he is living in faith. The moment, for Kierkegaard, is a kind of moment which is outside of time. It is an existential moment of choice, and it is the moment of repetition. However, this moment is not the

92CA, 89.
aesthetic moment; rather, it is the moment in which the Knight of Faith lives. He makes his decision in the moment, even while he lives in the eternal. Hence, there are two kinds of moment: a mirror-moment (aesthetic), and a moment of eternity in which the self comes back and regains or repeats the aesthetic. The eternal moment is not merely a part of the extended present as is the temporality of the ethical man which contains a present which remembers the past and anticipates the future. The eternal moment of religiousness (A) has to do with the Knight of Infinite Resignation and his appropriation of the eternal as such. This eternal is different from any sort of temporality or temporal value. We can return and repeat the temporal because we are resting formally in the power that establishes us. As he states: "the self rests transparently in the power that established it."93

93 SUD. 49.
C. The Moment

According to Kierkegaard, the separation between the momentary and the eternal is paradoxical when we examine it because the only thing that is eternal is the moment. Momentariness does not change and is eternal. Logically, momentariness is on one side, and eternity seems to be on the other side. Kierkegaard brings these opposites together in an Hegelian fashion. Everything is momentary, therefore, eternal.

Kierkegaard's doctrine of repetition has a direct relationship with his understanding of eternity and momentariness. Each moment is fresh from previous moments, and it is this freshness that is repeated. When we discuss repetition, we must discuss eternity and momentariness. They are logically interrelated because when we are talking about momentariness, we must emphasize difference and freshness. When we talk about eternity, we talk about sameness and repetition. There are only moments, and each moment is differentiated by being either momentary or eternal. "Eternity is the true repetition."94 "Eternity has the blissful security of the moment."95 "The moment is not properly an atom of time but an atom of eternity."96

94 CA, 18n.
95 REP, 131-32.
96 CA, 88.
In summary we can say that repetition has something negative and positive about it. The negativity of repetition is to see the absurdity of the basement (aesthete) and the first floor (ethical), and to practice infinite resignation. It is positive because in repeating them, they become renewed. In other words, repetition positively has to do with freshness, creativity, creation, and novelty. The negative and positive aspects of repetition are not separate from each other because eternity is to live this moment (connected to both past and present). We should not cling to this moment, and we should not fear the next one because we live this moment badly. In the eternal moment, the Knight of Infinite Resignation is saved from the limitations of the aesthetic and the ethical; but he still needs to come back and appropriate them. When he appropriates both the eternal and the temporal he is being saved. What is eternal is the momentary, and the eternal life is not something otherworldly. All life is going to be momentary. The eternal life is also momentary. Time and eternity are not two different things. To see everything as new is to celebrate life. A newness of repetition makes life exciting. Every time I return to the aesthetic or the ethical, they are new for me because every repetition is necessarily novel.
Conclusion

I am going to argue that, in spite of obvious differences, the eternal return in Nietzsche has the same function as repetition in Kierkegaard, especially in regard to the reconciliation of time and eternity. I shall therefore examine Nietzsche's eternal return in terms of the Kierkegaardian model of repetition.

For Kierkegaard, repetition is a form of one's decisiveness in recommitting oneself, at every moment, to the eternal (or to be Christian). The task is to become Christian rather than being a Christian, because it is a dynamic process. We are temporal beings, and we have to stand in relationship to the absolute. We can only do it temporally and that means that we have to do it repeatedly. But this is exactly what the eternal return does for Nietzsche. The eternal return enhances our relationship at every moment through life-affirmation.

For Nietzsche as well, eternity is not something otherworldly, but is rather a possible temporal experience. The eternal is the unlimited extension of the temporal. Nietzsche thinks that whatever has been could be repeated again and again forever. In fact, he even comes to will this. The character of belief in eternal return is such that, whatever is in this temporal existence is so valued that it will return again and again for ever (and that is the meaning of eternity for him).
One
O man, take care!

Two
What does the deep midnight declare?

Three
"I was asleep --

Four
"From a deep dream I woke and swear;

Five
"The world is deep,

Six
"Deeper than day had been aware.

Seven
"Deep is its woe;

Eight
"Joy -- deeper yet than agony:

Nine
"Woe implores: Go!

Ten
"But all joy wants eternity --

Eleven
"Wants deep, wants deep eternity."

Twelve

The moment is what is eternal. The moment is now; it was yesterday; and it will be in fifty years. If we accept the truth of the eternal return, the now changes and becomes the eternal because the now is going to happen again and again without change forever. Every moment becomes more meaningful because this now is going to return. We are imbuing it with value and meaning just because we want it to return in the future.

97 TSZ. 339-40.
From Kierkegaard’s perspective, Nietzsche’s theory is really about repetition. It claims that repetition is difference, and that eternity is the momentariness of the moment. The moment is what is eternal and constant. Nietzsche discusses the eternal return of the little man and of the chaotic nature. The chaotic nature is always changing. It will return by chance, which means a return in newness. Chance, that is to say, contains something different and something new.

Verily, it is a blessing and not a blasphemy when I teach: “Over all things stand the heaven Accident, the heaven Innocence, the heaven Chance, the heaven Prankishness.”

“By chance” — that is the most ancient nobility of the world, and this I restored to all things: I delivered them from their bondage under Purpose. This freedom and heavenly cheer I have placed over all things like an azure bell when I taught that over them and through them no “eternal will” wills. This prankish folly I have put in the place of that will when I taught: “In everything one thing is impossible: rationality.”

This view of chance implies that things are not going to simply recur in the same way all the time. Indeed, they are going to happen in a random way, and consequently, in a new way. Nietzsche is giving his “yes and amen” to chance which means newness. For this reason, Nietzsche does not want to be a camel, because the camel in some sense, is like Judge William, who accepts the eternal laws. He absolutizes something relative, namely, the ethical laws. On the other hand, the lion says no. The lion is free, but he is not yet creative. There is a difference between freedom from and freedom for, as Zarathustra says in “The Way of the Creator”.

\[98\text{TSZ. 278.}\]
“Free from what? As if that mattered to Zarathustra! But your eyes should tell me brightly: free for what?” The real freedom, for Nietzsche, is the ability to say “yes and amen” to eternal return: that is creativity. For him, human creativity is this affirmation of the repetition. The child is a full transformation of spirit, as Zarathustra says in the “Three Metamorphoses”. The child’s creativity loves the eternal return of chance, and he says “yes and amen” to this sort of eternal return. This is Nietzsche’s repetition.

Nietzsche thinks that science might do two things: it might decrease the chaos of nature and it might improve certain men. He says this in the prologue to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* when he talks about the last man. “What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star? Thus asks the last man, and he blinks.” His ideal as lion of the enlightenment is to overcome this littleness of man. Also the hope of science is to better the world. But this, because of the eternal return of nature as it is, shows itself to be impossible. On the other hand, it may give rise to the little man and the chaotic dangerous nature. One’s acceptance of the eternal return of man’s littleness and nature’s chaos would be the greatest affirmation. The point is to really love existence. The highest affirmation is to say yes and amen to existence just as it is here and now, even with man’s littleness and nature’s chaos. That is the meaning of the eternal return. Either we can be disgusted with this thought or we can

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99 *TSZ*. 175.
100 *This spontaneity in the innocence of being is called “mindfulness” in Buddhist terms.*
101 *TSZ*. 129.
love it. The transformation is from disgust at the eternal in man's littleness and nature's chaos, to the love of the return of man's littleness and nature's chaos. In other words, the transition is from the eternal return that we hate to the eternal return that we love.

Whenever we are sad and suffering, we want the future -- we want heirs -- we want things for our children. However, if we really love life and we are joyful, we want only that joy, over and over again. Joy does not want an heir; it wants eternity.

Woe entreats: Go! Away, woe! But all that suffers want to live, that it may become ripe and joyous and longing -- longing for what is farther, higher, brighter. "I want not heirs" -- thus speaks all that suffers; "I want children, I do not want myself."

Joy, however, does not want heirs, or children -- joy wants itself, wants eternity, wants recurrence, wants everything eternally the same.102

If we are really joyful, we want that joy forever. But joy is connected with sorrow, so that saying yes to joy is also saying yes to sorrow. Further, when we are really joyful, we go and seek sorrow because it is somehow connected with a higher or better joy.

\[102\] TSZ. 434.
You higher men, what do you think? Am I a soothsayer? A dreamer? A drunkard? An interpreter of dreams? A midnight bell? A drop of dew? A haze and fragrance of eternity? Do you not hear it? Do you not smell it? Just now my world became perfect; midnight too is noon; pain too is a joy; curses too are a blessing; night too is a sun -- go away or you will learn: a sage too is a fool.

Have you ever said Yes to single joy? O my friends, then you said Yes too to all woe. All things are entangled, ensnared, enamored; if ever you wanted one thing twice, if every said, “You please me, happiness! Abide, moment!” then you wanted all back. All anew, all eternity, all entangled, ensnared, enamored -- oh, then you loved the world. Eternal ones, love it eternally and evermore; and to woe too, you say: go, but return! For all joy wants — eternity.103

Nietzsche’s idea of eternal return is that all things will happen again and again for all eternity. Everything will keep repeating, but we can learn to affirm it because it is joyful.

For both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, the eternal is related to time. The eternal for Nietzsche is the eternal return of the temporal. But the eternal for Kierkegaard is an eternal other than the extended present of temporality, even though it should be appropriated together with temporality.
The greatest weight. — What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: “This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence — even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!” Would you not throw yourself down and gnash you teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: “You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.” If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing, “Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?” would lie upon you action as the greatest weight. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to crave nothing more fervently than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?104

It is just this moment that continues on forever, by repeating itself over and over again. For Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, repetition has to do with repeating the temporal in a way that is not repetitive. Living in the basement (aesthete) is different from going up to the other floors. If we live in the eternal and the temporal, it is very different than just living in the basement (aesthete) or on the first floor (ethical). That is what the eternal means for Kierkegaard. It is something that we must existentially live in, in such a way that we come back and really live in the temporal. This is the whole point of the double-movement leap of repetition which de Silentio explains in

the "Preliminary Expectoration" of Fear and Trembling. Thus, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard put great emphasis on the repetition of the temporal. Also, they are showing that it could be done in two different ways: with faith, or with affirmation. The eternal return for Nietzsche is not something beyond this temporal life, even in its randomness and chance. He would say that it comes back over and over again with the same chaos of chance.

However, for Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, repetition is different. Nietzsche does not really have what might be called a philosophy of the person. In Kierkegaard’s model, the order of becoming is chaotic; however, although Nietzsche affirms that nature is chaotic, he does make it part of the person because he does not discuss self-becoming. Nietzsche tries to affirm the melancholy, connecting it with joy. For Kierkegaard, when we have faith, we can have peacefulness that takes us beyond the melancholy and despair. Similarly, Nietzsche says that suffering is going to return again and again, but we can affirm it because it is connected with the joyful. In the beginning, the idea of eternal suffering disgusts us, but then we can find a way to live with it or to affirm it. Nietzsche does not require faith per se, but we are to trust that existence should be affirmed.

For Nietzsche, chaos and man’s littleness return again and again with their sorrow. He puts an end to this despair through joyful affirmation; whereas, Kierkegaard’s Knight of Faith can live in peach through faith with any misrelation he
may have. His faith also gets him out of boredom because the self lives in the whole house. It does not get fixed ideas in order to live in one particular place.

Thus, Nietzsche has an idea of will to power. Will to power is the set of forces that can be affirmed or negated. Also, it can either be active or reactive. All living things have this will to power within them which is the will to better their life. We can better our lives in two ways: by fooling ourselves (résentiment) or by love of fate (amor fati — faith). The will to power can be resentment or affirmation, and it is the kind of play of forces that can go in two different directions. That is what he has posited once he uses this idea of eternal return which can either disgust us or which we can love. Nietzsche introduced the idea of will to power after he conceived of eternal return in order to explain how we can look at the eternal return in two ways.

Now I shall relate the history of Zarathustra. The fundamental conception of this work, the idea of eternal recurrence, this highest formula of affirmation that is all attainable, belongs in August 1881: it was penned on a sheet with the notation underneath, “600 feet beyond man and time.” That day I was walking through the woods along the lake of Silvaplana; at a powerful pyramidal rock not far from Surlei I stopped. It was then that this idea came to me.105

If we do not have the possibility of affirmation, then we go in the direction of nihilism, which is in some sense the same as despairing or sinning for Kierkegaard. Taking offence at ourselves and existence for Kierkegaard is like being resentful for

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Nietzsche. To have faith is to affirm the temporal for Kierkegaard just as Nietzsche’s “Yes and Amen” is an affirmation of the temporal. Nietzsche first discovers the bad repetition that is the eternal return of man’s littleness and nature’s chaos. Then he sees a way to make good repetition by using the will to power to affirm it and to be active rather than to be negative and merely reactive.

Kierkegaard and Nietzsche both have a philosophy of becoming. For Kierkegaard, it is the becoming of the self, but for Nietzsche, it is the eternal return of the same. Nietzsche never works out the philosophy of personal self-becoming, although, in a certain sense, the self for him is the will to power. Nevertheless, there are two different concepts of repetition: one is a repetition of becoming a self, and the other is just the repetition of will to power rather than the irreducible self.

For Kierkegaard, the self is a threefold relation which he calls a ‘dynamic synthesis.’ It is constantly undergoing change. When a person is a relation of the temporal and the eternal without reflecting on it, he is an aesthete, and repetition is not yet possible. When a person reflects on himself and begins to take temporal consequences seriously he is beginning to become ethical. But still there is no repetition. When a person absolutely relates to the absolute in religiousness (A), he lives in the eternal. That too is not yet repetition although it is necessary for repetition since only then can he renew the aesthetic and the ethical through the absolute. A relationship to God is acquired in religiousness (A) by the Knight of
Infinite Resignation. Being related to all three of the preceding spheres is religiousness (B).

In Kierkegaard’s philosophy, the key for repetition is that we have to be related to the absolute. If we substitute the eternal return for the absolute, then we can understand Nietzsche by using a Kierkegaardian model. To begin with, we must get rid of the religious absolute or God. For Nietzsche, “God is dead.” Then there is no absolute truth or value. The Knight of Faith is replaced by the overman.

When we believe in repetition or the eternal return, we are affirming it and thereby fixing it. In other words, we are making it permanent through an ethical commitment. For instance, according to Nietzsche, believing in eternal return is transforming because we have the metamorphoses of spirit in accordance with different beliefs. The camel believes the values of the past and voluntarily burdens itself with them. The lion, on the other hand, throws them off. It is life-affirming, despite the fact that it is a negative movement. It only destroys values and does not create them. To create new values, the child is required. It is the transformation of the individual. The individual undergoes change in his attitude toward existence. The child (like the Knight of Faith) has the overman in sight. He is someone so life-affirming that he can accept the thought of the eternal return. It does not mean that one must necessarily believe it, but believing that it is true and living one’s life accordingly, transforms one’s relationship with the world.
Kierkegaard has a formula for self-becoming, for despair, and for repetition. He shows us how we become aware of the self through despair and sin. Also, despair and sin help us learn our possibilities and freedoms. A self is free and also a relation. However, Nietzsche thinks that human beings are composed of many forces when we look at ourselves in terms of will to power. The will to power suggests that the individual is made up of bundles of power. He does not have a concept of person, but a self is in a direct relation with his nature. He does not try to develop a concept or formula of the person, but he does refer to the body or the will as the self.

"Body am I, and soul" — thus speaks the child. And why should one not speak like children?

But the awakened and knowing say: body am I entirely, and nothing else; and soul is only a word for something about the body.

The body is a great reason...

What the sense feels, what the spirit knows, never has its end in itself. But sense and spirit would persuade you that they are the end of all things: that is how vain they are. Instruments and toys are sense and spirit: behind them still lies the self....

Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, there stands a mighty ruler, an unknown sage — whose name is self. In your body he dwells; he is your body.106

In a sense, the self for Nietzsche is a relation that relates itself to itself, and by relating itself to itself, indeed, it relates to another (nature). These bundles of power are always becoming.

We can see the Kierkegaardian self in Nietzsche, as well as the relation between the temporal, the eternal, and the possibility of repetition. I think that the

106TSZ. 146.
eternal return of the same does exactly the same thing for Nietzsche that repetition
does for Kierkegaard. Also, Nietzsche’s overman and Kierkegaard’s Knight of Faith
are the persons who end up thinking these thoughts. However, for Nietzsche, the
eternal return stamps becoming with the character of being. What we have is
perpetual change -- but it is the same change eternally. There is no newness in this
repetition. On the other hand, for Kierkegaard, the repetition means forever renewing
one’s faith in the absolute. One needs to perpetually renew, reaffirm, and recommitt
oneself to the absolute. We have to constantly renew ourselves in order to have an
absolute relationship with the absolute. To think either thought, it is not necessary
to believe that eternal return or repetition is true, but we should live as if it were true.

Deleuze is correct that there is a similarity between the eternal return and
repetition; however, he does not realize that both the eternal return and repetition
have their own, somewhat different formulas. For example, both talk about newness;
however, for Kierkegaard the newness is not random, while for Nietzsche, it is
random.
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