FEAR AND TREMBLING

DIALECTICAL LYRIC

by Johannes de Silentio

Was Tarquinius Superbus in seinem Garten mit den Mohnköpfen sprach, verstand der Sohn, aber nicht der Bote [What Tarquinius Superbus said in the garden by means of the poppies, the son understood but the messenger did not].

HAMANN

PREFACE

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Not only in the business world but also in the world of ideas, our age stages *ein wirklicher Ausverkauf* [a real sale]. Everything can be had at such a bargain price that it becomes a question whether there is finally anyone who will make a bid. Every speculative monitor who conscientiously signals the important trends in modern philosophy, every assistant professor, tutor, and student, every rural outsider and tenant incumbent in philosophy is unwilling to stop with doubting everything but goes further.[1] Perhaps it would be premature and untimely to ask them where they really are going, but in all politeness and modesty it can probably be taken for granted that they have doubted everything, since otherwise it certainly would be odd to speak of their having gone further. They have all made this preliminary movement and presumably so easily that they find it unnecessary to say a word about how, for not even the person who in apprehension and concern sought a little enlightenment found any, not one suggestive hint or one little dietetic prescription with respect to how a person is to act in carrying out this enormous task. "But did not Descartes do it?" Descartes,[2] a venerable, humble, honest thinker, whose writings no one can read without being profoundly affected—he did what he said and said what he did. Alas! Alas! Alas! That is a great rarity in our day! As Descartes himself so frequently said, he did not doubt with respect to faith. "Memores tamen, ut jam III
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dictum est, huic lumini naturali tamdiu tantum esse credendum, quamdiu nihil contrarium a Deo ipso revelatur . . . . . Præter cætera autem, memoriæ nostræ pro summa regula est infigendum, ea quæ nobis a Deo revelata sunt, ut omnium certissima esse credenda; et quamvis forte lumen rationis, quam maxime clarum et evidens, aliud quid nobis suggerere videretur, soli tamen auctoritati divinæ potius quam proprio nostro judicio fidem esse adhibendam [but we must keep in mind

what has been said, that we must trust to this natural light only so long as nothing contrary to it is revealed by God Himself . . . . . Above all we should impress on our memory as an infallible rule that what God has revealed to us is incomparably more certain than anything else; and that we ought to submit to the Divine authority rather than to our own judgment even though the light of reason may seem to us to suggest, with the utmost clearness and evidence, something opposite]." *Principles of Philosophy,* I, para. 28 and para. 76.[3] He did not shout "Fire! Fire!" and make it obligatory for everyone to doubt, for Descartes was a quiet and solitary thinker, not a shouting street watchman; he modestly let it be known that his method had significance only for him and was partly the result of his earlier warped knowledge. "Ne quis igitur putet, me hic traditurum aliquam methodum, quam unusquisque sequi debeat ad recte regendam rationem; illam enim tantum, quam ipsemet secutus sum, exponere decrevi. . . . Sed simul ac illud studiorum curriculum absolvi (sc. juventutis), quo decurso mos est in eruditorum numerum cooptari, plane aliud coepi cogitare. Tot enim me dubiis totque erroribus implicatum esse animadverti, ut omnes discendi conatus nihil aliud mihi profuisse judicarem, quam quod ignorantiam meam magis magisque detexissem [Thus my design is not here to teach the Method which everyone should follow in order to promote the good conduct of his Reason, but only to show in what manner I have endeavoured to conduct my own. . . . But so soon as I had achieved the entire course of study at the close of which one is usually received into the ranks of the learned, I entirely changed my opinion. For I found myself embarrassed with so many doubts and errors that it seemed to me that the effort to instruct myself had no effect other than the increasing discovery of my own ignorance]." *Dissertation on Method,* pp. 2 and 3.[4]

What those ancient Greeks,[5] who after all did know a little about philosophy, assumed to be a task for a whole lifetime, because proficiency in doubting is not acquired in days and weeks, what the old veteran disputant attained, he who had maintained the equilibrium of doubt throughout all the spe-

cious arguments, who had intrepidly denied the certainty of the senses and the certainty of thought, who, uncompromising, had defied the anxiety of self-love and the insinuations of fellow feeling—with that everyone begins in our age.

In our age, everyone is unwilling to stop with faith but goes further. It perhaps would be rash to ask where they are going, whereas it is a sign of urbanity and culture for me to assume that everyone has faith, since otherwise it certainly would be odd to speak of going further. It was different in those ancient days. Faith was then a task for a whole lifetime, because it was assumed that proficiency in believing is not acquired either in days or in weeks. When the tried and tested oldster approached his end, had fought the good fight and kept the faith,[6] his heart was still young enough not to have forgotten the anxiety and trembling that disciplined the youth, that the adult learned to control, but that no man outgrows—except to the extent that he succeeds in going further as early as possible. The point attained by those venerable personages is in our age the point where everyone begins in order to go further. III 59

[7]The present author is by no means a philosopher.[8] He has not understood the system, whether there is one, whether it is completed; it is already enough for his weak head to ponder what a prodigious head everyone must have these days when everyone has such a prodigious idea. Even if someone were able to transpose the whole content of faith into conceptual form, it does not follow that he has comprehended faith, comprehended how he entered into it or how it entered into him. The present author is by no means a philosopher. He is *poetice et eleganter* [in a poetic and refined way] a supplementary clerk who neither writes the system nor gives *promises* of the system, who neither exhausts himself on the system nor binds himself to the system. He writes because to him it is a luxury that is all the more pleasant and apparent the fewer there are who buy and read what he writes. He easily envisions his fate in an age that has crossed out passion in order to serve science,[9] [10]in an age when an author who desires readers must be careful to write in such a way that

his book can be conveniently skimmed during the after-dinner nap, must be careful to look and act like that polite gardener's handyman in *Adresseavisen* [The Advertiser] who with hat in hand and good references from his most recent employer recommends himself to the esteemed public.[11] He foresees his fate of being totally ignored; he has a terrible foreboding that the zealous critic will call him on the carpet
III 60 many times. He dreads the even more terrible fate that some enterprising abstracter, a gobbler of paragraphs (who, in order to save science, is always willing to do to the writing of others what Trop[12] magnanimously did with [his] *The Destruction of the Human Race* in order to "save good taste"), will cut him up into paragraphs and do so with the same inflexibility as the man who, in order to serve the science of punctuation, divided his discourse by counting out the words, fifty words to a period and thirty-five to a semicolon. —I throw myself down in deepest submission before every systematic ransacker: "This is not the system; it has not the least thing to do with the system. I invoke everything good for the system and for the Danish shareholders in this omnibus,[13] for it will hardly become a tower.[14] I wish them all, each and every one, success and good fortune."

Respectfully,
JOHANNES DE SILENTIO

EXORDIUM[1]

III 61

Once upon a time there was a man who as a child had heard that beautiful story of how God tempted [*fristede*][2] Abraham and of how Abraham withstood the temptation [*Fristelsen*], kept the faith, and, contrary to expectation, got a son a second time.[3] When he grew older, he read the same story with even greater admiration, for life had fractured what had been united in the pious simplicity of the child. The older he became, the more often his thoughts turned to that story; his enthusiasm for it became greater and greater, and yet he could understand the story less and less. Finally, he forgot everything else because of it; his soul had but one wish, to see Abraham, but one longing, to have witnessed that event. His craving was not to see the beautiful regions of the East, not the earthly glory of the promised land, not that God-fearing couple whose old age God had blessed, not the venerable figure of the aged patriarch, not the vigorous adolescence God bestowed upon Isaac—the same thing could just as well have occurred on a barren heath. [4]His craving was to go along on the three-day journey when Abraham rode with sorrow before him and Isaac beside him. His wish was to be present in that hour when Abraham raised his eyes and saw Mount Moriah in the distance, the hour when he left the asses behind and went up the mountain alone with Isaac—for what occupied him was not the beautiful tapestry of imagination but the shudder of the idea.

That man was not a thinker.[5] He did not feel any need to III 62 go beyond faith; he thought that it must be supremely glorious to be remembered as its father, an enviable destiny to possess it, even if no one knew it.

That man was not an exegetical scholar. He did not know Hebrew; if he had known Hebrew, he perhaps would easily have understood the story and Abraham.

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I.[6]

"And God tempted [fristede][7] Abraham and said to him, take Isaac, your only son, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering on a mountain that I shall show you."[8]

It was early in the morning when Abraham arose, had the asses saddled, and left his tent, taking Isaac with him, but Sarah watched them from the window as they went down the valley—until she could see them no longer.[9] They rode in silence for three days. On the morning of the fourth day, Abraham said not a word but raised his eyes and saw Mount Moriah in the distance. He left the young servants behind and, taking Isaac's hand, went up the mountain alone. But Abraham said to himself, "I will not hide from Isaac where this walk is taking him." He stood still, he laid his hand on Isaac's head in blessing, and Isaac kneeled to receive it. And Abraham's face epitomized fatherliness;[10] his gaze was gentle, his words admonishing. But Isaac could not understand him, his soul could not be uplifted; he clasped Abraham's knees, he pleaded at his feet, he begged for his young life, for his beautiful hopes; he called to mind the joy in Abraham's house, he called to mind the sorrow and the solitude. Then Abraham lifted the boy up and walked on, holding his hand, and his words were full of comfort and admonition. But Isaac
III 64 could not understand him. Abraham climbed Mount Moriah, but Isaac did not understand him. Then Abraham turned away from him for a moment, but when Isaac saw Abraham's face again, it had changed: his gaze was wild, his whole being was sheer terror. He seized Isaac by the chest, threw him to the ground, and said, "Stupid boy, do you think I am your father?[11] I am an idolater. Do you think it is God's command? No, it is my desire." Then Isaac trembled and cried out in his anguish: "God in heaven, have mercy on me, God of Abraham, have mercy on me; if I have no father on earth, then you be my father!" But Abraham said softly to himself, "Lord God in heaven, I thank you; it is better that he believes me a monster than that he should lose faith in you."

When the child is to be weaned, the mother blackens her breast. It would be hard to have the breast look inviting when the child must not have it. So the child believes that the breast has changed, but the mother—she is still the same, her gaze is tender and loving as ever. How fortunate the one who did not need more terrible means to wean the child!

III 65

II.

It was early in the morning when Abraham arose: he embraced Sarah, the bride of his old age, and Sarah kissed Isaac, who took away her disgrace, Isaac her pride, her hope for all the generations to come.[12] They rode along the road in silence, and Abraham stared continuously and fixedly at the ground until the fourth day, when he looked up and saw Mount Moriah far away, but once again he turned his eyes toward the ground. Silently he arranged the firewood and bound Isaac; silently he drew the knife—then he saw the ram that God had selected. This he sacrificed and went home. — — —From that day henceforth, Abraham was old; he could not forget that God had ordered him to do this. Isaac flourished as before, but Abraham's eyes were darkened, and he saw joy no more.

[13]When the child has grown big and is to be weaned, the mother virginally conceals her breast, and then the child no longer has a mother. How fortunate the child who has not lost his mother in some other way!

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III.

It was early in the morning when Abraham arose: he kissed Sarah, the young mother, and Sarah kissed Isaac, her delight, her joy forever. And Abraham rode thoughtfully down the road; he thought of Hagar and the son, whom he drove out into the desert.[14] He climbed Mount Moriah, he drew the knife.

It was a quiet evening when Abraham rode out alone, and he rode to Mount Moriah; he threw himself down on his face, he prayed God to forgive him his sin, that he had been willing to sacrifice Isaac, that the father had forgotten his duty to his son. He often rode his lonesome road, but he found no peace. He could not comprehend that it was a sin that he had been willing to sacrifice to God the best that he had, the possession for which he himself would have gladly died many times; and if it was a sin, if he had not loved Isaac in this manner, he could not understand that it could be forgiven, for what more terrible sin was there?

[15]When the child is to be weaned, the mother, too, is not without sorrow, because she and the child are more and more to be separated, because the child who first lay under her heart and later rested upon her breast will never again be so close. So they grieve together the brief sorrow. How fortunate the one who kept the child so close and did not need to grieve any more!

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IV.

It was early in the morning, and everything in Abraham's house was ready for the journey. He took leave of Sarah, and Eliezer,[16] the faithful servant, accompanied him along the road until he turned back again. They rode along in harmony, Abraham and Isaac, until they came to Mount Moriah. Abraham made everything ready for the sacrifice, calmly and gently, but when he turned away and drew the knife, Isaac saw that Abraham's left hand was clenched in despair, that a shudder went through his whole body—but Abraham drew the knife.

Then they returned home again, and Sarah hurried to meet them, but Isaac had lost the faith. Not a word is ever said of this in the world, and Isaac never talked to anyone about what he had seen, and Abraham did not suspect that anyone had seen it.

[17]When the child is to be weaned, the mother has stronger sustenance at hand so that the child does not perish. How fortunate the one who has this stronger sustenance at hand.

[18]Thus and in many similar ways did the man of whom we speak ponder this event. Every time he returned from a pilgrimage to Mount Moriah, he sank down wearily, folded his hands, and said, "No one was as great as Abraham. Who is able to understand him?"[19]

EULOGY ON ABRAHAM[1]

III 68

If a human being did not have an eternal consciousness,[2] if underlying everything there were only a wild, fermenting power that writhing in dark passions produced everything, be it significant or insignificant, if a vast, never appeased emptiness hid beneath everything, what would life be then but despair? If such were the situation, if there were no sacred bond that knit humankind together, if one generation emerged after another like forest foliage,[3] if one generation succeeded another like the singing of birds in the forest, if a generation passed through the world as a ship through the sea, as wind through the desert, an unthinking and unproductive performance, if an eternal oblivion, perpetually hungry, lurked for its prey and there were no power strong enough to wrench that away from it—how empty and devoid of consolation life would be! But precisely for that reason it is not so, and just as God created man and woman, so he created the hero and the poet or orator. The poet or orator can do nothing that the hero does; he can only admire, love, and delight in him. Yet he, too, is happy—no less than that one is, for the hero is, so to speak, his better nature, with which he is enamored—yet happy that the other is not himself, that his love can be admiration. He is recollection's genius. He can do nothing but bring to mind what has been done, can do nothing but admire what has been done; he takes nothing of his own but is zealous for what has been entrusted. He follows his heart's desire, but when he has found the object of his search, he roams about to every man's door with his song and speech so that all may admire the hero as he does, may be proud of the hero as he is. This is III 69 his occupation, his humble task; this is his faithful service in the house of the hero. If he remains true to his love in this way, if he contends night and day against the craftiness of oblivion, which wants to trick him out of his hero, then he

has fulfilled his task, then he is gathered together with the hero, who has loved him just as faithfully, for the poet is, so to speak, the hero's better nature, powerless, to be sure, just as a memory is, but also transfigured just as a memory is. Therefore, no one who was great will be forgotten, and even though it takes time, even though a cloud[4] of misunderstanding takes away the hero, his lover will nevertheless come, and the longer the passage of time, the more faithfully he adheres to him.

No! No one who was great in the world will be forgotten, but everyone was great in his own way, and everyone in proportion to the greatness of that which *he loved*. He who loved himself became great by virtue of himself, and he who loved other men became great by his devotedness, but he who loved God became the greatest of all. Everyone shall be remembered, but everyone became great in proportion to his *expectancy*. One became great by expecting the possible, another by expecting the eternal; but he who expected the impossible became the greatest of all. Everyone shall be remembered, but everyone was great wholly in proportion to the magnitude of that with which he *struggled*. For he who struggled with the world became great by conquering the world, and he who struggled with himself became great by conquering himself, but he who struggled with God became the greatest of all. Thus did they struggle in the world, man against man, one against thousands, but he who struggled with God was the greatest of all. Thus did they struggle on earth: there was one who conquered everything by his power, and there was one who conquered God by his powerlessness. There was one who relied upon himself and gained everything; there was one who in the security of his own strength sacrificed everything; but the one who believed God was the greatest of all. There was one who was great by virtue of his power, and one who was great by virtue of his wisdom, and one who was great by virtue of his hope, and one who was great by virtue of his love, but Abraham was the greatest of all, great by that power whose strength is powerlessness, great by that wisdom whose secret is foolishness, great by

that hope whose form is madness, great by the love that is hatred to oneself.

By faith Abraham emigrated from the land of his fathers and became an alien in the promised land.[5] He left one thing behind, took one thing along: he left behind his worldly understanding, and he took along his faith. Otherwise he certainly would not have emigrated but surely would have considered it unreasonable [*urimeligt*]. By faith he was an alien in the promised land, and there was nothing that reminded him of what he cherished, but everything by its newness III
tempted his soul to sorrowful longing. And yet he was God's 70
chosen one in whom the Lord was well pleased! As a matter of fact, if he had been an exile, banished from God's grace, he could have better understood it—but now it was as if he and his faith were being mocked. There was also in the world one who lived in exile from the native land he loved.[6] He is not forgotten, nor are his dirges of lamentation when he sorrowfully sought and found what was lost. There is no dirge by Abraham. It is human to lament, human to weep with one who weeps, but it is greater to have faith, more blessed to contemplate the man of faith.

By faith Abraham received the promise that in his seed all the generations of the earth would be blessed.[7] Time passed, the possibility was there, Abraham had faith; time passed, it became unreasonable, Abraham had faith. There was one in the world who also had an expectancy.[8] Time passed, evening drew near; he was not so contemptible as to forget his expectancy, and therefore he will not be forgotten, either. Then he sorrowed, and his sorrow did not disappoint him as life had done, it did everything it could for him; in the sweetness of his sorrow he possessed his disappointed expectancy. It is human to sorrow, human to sorrow with the sorrowing, but it is greater to have faith, more blessed to contemplate the man of faith. We have no dirge of sorrow by Abraham. As time passed, he did not gloomily count the days; he did not look suspiciously at Sarah, wondering if she was not getting old; he did not stop the course of the sun so she would not become old and along with her his expect-

ancy; he did not soothingly sing his mournful lay for Sarah. Abraham became old, Sarah the object of mockery in the land, and yet he was God's chosen one and heir to the promise that in his seed all the generations of the earth would be blessed. Would it not have been better, after all, if he were not God's chosen? What does it mean to be God's chosen? Is it to be denied in youth one's youthful desire in order to have it fulfilled with great difficulty in one's old age? But Abraham believed and held to the promise. If Abraham had wavered, he would have given it up. He would have said to God, "So maybe it is not your will that this should be; then I will give up my wish. It was my one and only wish, it was my blessedness. My soul is open and sincere; I am hiding no secret resentment because you denied me this." He would not have been forgotten, he would have saved many by his example, but he still would not have become the father of faith, for it is great to give up one's desire, but it is greater to hold fast to it after having given it up; it is great to lay hold of the eternal, but it is greater to hold fast to the temporal after having given it up.

III 71 Then came the fullness of time. If Abraham had not had faith, then Sarah would surely have died of sorrow, and Abraham, dulled by grief, would not have understood the fulfillment but would have smiled at it as at a youthful dream. But Abraham had faith, and therefore he was young, for he who always hopes for the best grows old and is deceived by life, and he who is always prepared for the worst grows old prematurely, but he who has faith—he preserves an eternal youth. So let us praise and honor that story! For Sarah, although well advanced in years, was young enough to desire the pleasure of motherhood, and Abraham with his gray hairs was young enough to wish to be a father. Outwardly, the wonder of it is that it happened according to their expectancy; in the more profound sense, the wonder of faith is that Abraham and Sarah were young enough to desire and that faith had preserved their desire and thereby their youth. He accepted the fulfillment of the promise, he accepted it in faith, and it happened according to the promise and according to

his faith. Moses struck the rock with his staff, but he did not have faith.[9]

So there was joy in Abraham's house when Sarah stood as bride on their golden wedding day.

But it was not to remain that way; once again Abraham was to be tried [*forsøges*].[10] He had fought with that crafty power that devises all things, with that vigilant enemy who never dozes, with that old man who outlives everything—he had fought with time and kept his faith. Now all the frightfulness of the struggle was concentrated in one moment. "And God tempted [*fristede*][11] Abraham and said to him, take Isaac, your only son, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah and offer him as a burnt offering on a mountain that I shall show you."

So everything was lost, even more appallingly than if it had never happened! So the Lord was only mocking Abraham! He wondrously made the preposterous come true; now he wanted to see it annihilated. This was indeed a piece of folly, but Abraham did not laugh at it as Sarah did when the promise was announced.[12] All was lost! Seventy years[13] of trusting expectancy, the brief joy over the fulfillment of faith. Who is this who seizes the staff from the old man, who is this who demands that he himself shall break it! Who is this who makes a man's gray hairs disconsolate, who is this who demands that he himself shall do it! Is there no sympathy for III 72 this venerable old man, none for the innocent child? And yet Abraham was God's chosen one, and it was the Lord who imposed the ordeal [*Prøvelse*].[14] Now everything would be lost! All the glorious remembrance of his posterity, the promise in Abraham's seed—it was nothing but a whim, a fleeting thought that the Lord had had and that Abraham was now supposed to obliterate. That glorious treasure,[15] which was just as old as the faith in Abraham's heart and many, many years older than Isaac, the fruit of Abraham's life, sanctified by prayer, matured in battle, the blessing on Abraham's lips—this fruit was now to be torn off prematurely and rendered meaningless, for what meaning would it have if Isaac should be sacrificed! That sad but nevertheless blessed hour when

Abraham was to take leave of everything he held dear, when he once more would raise his venerable head, when his face would shine as the Lord's, when he would concentrate all his soul upon a blessing that would be so powerful it would bless Isaac all his days—this hour was not to come! For Abraham would indeed take leave of Isaac, but in such a way that he himself would remain behind; death would separate them, but in such a way that Isaac would become its booty. The old man would not, rejoicing in death, lay his hand in blessing on Isaac, but, weary of life, he would lay a violent hand upon Isaac. And it was God who tested him! Woe to the messenger who brought such news to Abraham! Who would have dared to be the emissary of this sorrow? But it was God who tested [*prøvede*][16] Abraham.

Yet Abraham had faith, and had faith for this life. In fact, if his faith had been only for a life to come, he certainly would have more readily discarded everything in order to rush out of a world to which he did not belong. But Abraham's faith was not of this sort, if there is such a faith at all, for actually it is not faith but the most remote possibility of faith that faintly sees its object on the most distant horizon but is separated from it by a chasmal abyss in which doubt plays its tricks. But Abraham had faith specifically for this life—faith that he would grow old in this country, be honored among the people, blessed by posterity, and unforgettable in Isaac, the most precious thing in his life, whom he embraced with a love that is inadequately described by saying he faithfully fulfilled the father's duty to love the son,
III 73 which is indeed stated in the command:[17] the son, whom you love. Jacob had twelve sons, one of whom he loved;[18] Abraham had but one, whom he loved.

But Abraham had faith and did not doubt; he believed the preposterous. If Abraham had doubted, then he would have done something else, something great and glorious, for how could Abraham do anything else but what is great and glorious! He would have gone to Mount Moriah, he would have split the firewood, lit the fire, drawn the knife. He would have cried out to God, "Reject not this sacrifice; it is not the

best that I have, that I know very well, for what is an old man compared with the child of promise, but it is the best I can give you. Let Isaac never find this out so that he may take comfort in his youth." He would have thrust the knife into his own breast.[19] He would have been admired in the world, and his name would never be forgotten; but it is one thing to be admired and another to become a guiding star that saves the anguished.

But Abraham had faith. He did not pray for himself, trying to influence the Lord; it was only when righteous punishment fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah that Abraham came forward with his prayers.[20]

We read in sacred scripture:[21] "And God tempted [*fristede*] Abraham and said: Abraham, Abraham, where are you? But Abraham answered: Here am I." You to whom these words are addressed, was this the case with you? When in the far distance you saw overwhelming vicissitudes approaching, did you not say to the mountains, "Hide me," and to the hills, "Fall on me"?[22] Or, if you were stronger, did your feet nevertheless not drag along the way, did they not long, so to speak, for the old trails? And when your name was called, did you answer, perhaps answer softly, in a whisper? Not so with Abraham. Cheerfully, freely, confidently, loudly he answered: Here am I. We read on: "And Abraham arose early in the morning." He hurried as if to a celebration, and early in the morning he was at the appointed place on Mount Moriah. He said nothing to Sarah, nothing to Eliezer[23]—who, after all, could understand him, for did not the nature of the temptation [*Fristelsen*] extract from him the pledge of silence? "He split the firewood, he bound Isaac, he lit the fire, he III 74
drew the knife."[24] My listener! Many a father has thought himself deprived of every hope for the future when he lost his child, the dearest thing in the world to him; nevertheless, no one was the child of promise in the sense in which Isaac was that to Abraham. Many a father has lost his child, but then it was God, the unchangeable, inscrutable will of the Almighty, it was his hand that took it. Not so with Abraham! A harder test [*Prøve*] was reserved for him, and Isaac's

fate was placed, along with the knife, in Abraham's hand. And there he stood, the old man with his solitary hope. But he did not doubt, he did not look in anguish to the left and to the right, he did not challenge heaven with his prayers. He knew it was God the Almighty who was testing [*prøvede*] him; he knew it was the hardest sacrifice that could be demanded of him; but he knew also that no sacrifice is too severe when God demands it—and he drew the knife.

Who strengthened Abraham's arm, who braced up his right arm so that it did not sink down powerless! Anyone who looks upon this scene is paralyzed. Who strengthened Abraham's soul lest everything go black for him and he see neither Isaac nor the ram! Anyone who looks upon this scene is blinded. And yet it perhaps rarely happens that anyone is paralyzed or blinded, and still more rarely does anyone tell what happened as it deserves to be told. We know it all—it was only an ordeal [*Prøvelse*].

If Abraham had doubted as he stood there on Mount Moriah, if irresolute he had looked around, if he had happened to spot the ram before drawing the knife, if God had allowed him to sacrifice it instead of Isaac—then he would have gone home, everything would have been the same, he would have had Sarah, he would have kept Isaac, and yet how changed! For his return would have been a flight, his deliverance an accident, his reward disgrace, his future perhaps perdition. Then he would have witnessed neither to his faith nor to God's grace but would have witnessed to how appalling it is to go to Mount Moriah. Then Abraham would not be forgotten, nor would Mount Moriah. Then it would not be mentioned in the way Ararat,[25] where the ark landed, is mentioned, but it would be called a place of terror, for it was here that Abraham doubted.

Venerable Father Abraham! When you went home from Mount Moriah, you did not need a eulogy to comfort you
III 75 for what was lost, for you gained everything and kept Isaac—was it not so? The Lord did not take him away from you again, but you sat happily together at the dinner table in

your tent, as you do in the next world for all eternity. Venerable Father Abraham! Centuries have passed since those days, but you have no need of a late lover to snatch your memory from the power of oblivion, for every language calls you to mind—and yet you reward your lover more gloriously than anyone else. In the life to come you make him eternally happy in your bosom; here in this life you captivate his eyes and his heart with the wonder of your act. Venerable Father Abraham! Second Father of the race! You who were the first to feel and to bear witness to that prodigious passion that disdains the terrifying battle with the raging elements and the forces of creation in order to contend with God, you who were the first to know that supreme passion, the holy, pure, and humble expression for the divine madness[26] that was admired by the pagans—forgive the one who aspired to speak your praise if he has not done it properly. He spoke humbly, as his heart demanded; he spoke briefly, as is seemly. But he will never forget that you needed 100 years to get the son of your old age against all expectancy, that you had to draw the knife before you kept Isaac; he will never forget that in 130 years[27] you got no further than faith.[28]

PROBLEMATA[1]

PRELIMINARY EXPECTORATION[2]

III 79

From the external and visible world there comes an old adage: "Only one who works gets bread."[3] Oddly enough, the adage does not fit the world in which it is most at home, for imperfection is the fundamental law of the external world, and here it happens again and again that he who does not work does get bread, and he who sleeps gets it even more abundantly than he who works. In the external world, everything belongs to the possessor. It is subject to the law of indifference, and the spirit of the ring[4] obeys the one who has the ring, whether he is an Aladdin or a Noureddin,[5] and he who has the wealth of the world has it regardless of how he got it.

It is different in the world of the spirit. Here an eternal divine order prevails. Here it does not rain on both the just and the unjust; here the sun does not shine on both good and evil.[6] Here it holds true that only the one who works gets bread, that only the one who was in anxiety finds rest, that only the one who descends into the lower world rescues the beloved, that only the one who draws the knife gets Isaac. He who will not work does not get bread but is deceived just as the gods deceived Orpheus[7] with an ethereal phantom instead of the beloved, deceived him because he was soft, not boldly brave, deceived him because he was a zither player and not a man. Here it does not help to have Abraham as father[8] or to have seventeen ancestors. The one who will not III 80 work fits what is written about the virgins of Israel:[9] he gives birth to wind—but the one who will work gives birth to his own father.

There is a knowledge that presumptuously wants to introduce into the world of spirit the same law of indifference under which the external world sighs. It believes that it is enough to know what is great—no other work is needed. But for this reason it does not get bread; it perishes of hunger

while everything changes to gold. And what in fact does it know? There were many thousands of Greek contemporaries, countless numbers in later generations, who knew all the triumphs of Miltiades, but there was only one who became sleepless over them.[10] There were countless generations who knew the story of Abraham by heart, word for word, but how many did it render sleepless?

The story about Abraham is remarkable in that it is always glorious no matter how poorly it is understood, but here again it is a matter of whether or not we are willing to work and be burdened. But we are unwilling to work, and yet we want to understand the story. We glorify Abraham, but how? We recite the whole story in clichés: "The great thing was that he loved God in such a way that he was willing to offer him the best." This is very true, but "the best" is a vague term. Mentally and orally we homologize Isaac and the best, and the contemplator can very well smoke his pipe while cogitating, and the listener may very well stretch out his legs comfortably. If that rich young man whom Jesus met along the way[11] had sold all his possessions and given the money to the poor, we would praise him as we praise every great deed, even if we could not understand him without working, but he still would not become an Abraham, even though he sacrificed the best. What is omitted from Abraham's story is the anxiety,[12] because to money I have no ethical obligation, but to the son the father has the highest and holiest. We forget it and yet want to talk about Abraham. So we talk and in the process of talking interchange the two terms, Isaac and the best, and everything goes fine. But just suppose that someone listening is a man who suffers from sleeplessness—then the most terrifying, the most profound, tragic, and comic misunderstanding is very close at hand. He goes home, he wants to do just as Abraham did, for the son, after all, is the best. If the preacher found out about it, he perhaps would go to the man, he would muster all his ecclesiastical dignity and shout, "You despicable man, you scum of society, what devil has so possessed you that you want to murder your son." And the pastor, who had not noticed any heat or perspiration when preaching about Abraham, would be surprised at himself, at the wrathful earnestness with which he thunders at the poor man. He would be pleased with himself, for he had never spoken with such emphasis and emotion. He would say to himself and his wife, "I am an orator—what was lacking was the occasion. When I spoke about Abraham on Sunday, I did not feel gripped at all." If the same speaker had a little superfluity of understanding to spare, I am sure he would have lost it if the sinner had calmly and with dignity answered: But, after all, that was what you yourself preached about on Sunday. How could the preacher ever get such a thing in his head, and yet it was so, and his only mistake was that he did not know what he was saying. And to think that there is no poet who could bring himself to prefer situations such as this to the nonsense and trumpery with which comedies and novels are stuffed! The comic and the tragic make contact here in absolute infinitude. By itself, the preacher's discourse was perhaps ludicrous enough, but it became infinitely ludicrous through its effect, and yet this was quite natural. [13]Or suppose that the unprotesting sinner is convinced by the pastor's severe lecture, suppose that the zealous pastor goes home happy—happy in the consciousness that he not only was effective in the pulpit but above all had irresistible power as a spiritual counselor, inasmuch as on Sunday he inspired the congregation, while on Monday, like a cherub with a flaming sword, he placed himself in front of the person whose actions would give the lie to the old saying that things do not go in the world as the preacher preaches.*

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But if the sinner remains unconvinced, his situation is really tragic. Then he probably will be executed or sent to the madhouse. In short, in relation to so-called reality, he be-

* In the old days, people said: It is too bad that things do not go in the world as the preacher preaches. Maybe the time will come, especially with the aid of philosophy, when they can say: Fortunately things do not go as the preacher preaches, for there is still some meaning in life, but there is none in his sermons.

III 82 came unhappy; in another sense, I am sure, Abraham made him happy, for he who works does not perish.

How is a contradiction such as that of the speaker to be explained? Is it because Abraham has gained a prescriptive right to be a great man, so that what he does is great and when another man does the same thing it is a sin, an atrocious sin? In that case, I do not wish to participate in such empty praise. If faith cannot make it a holy act to be willing to murder his son, then let the same judgment be passed on Abraham as on everyone else. If a person lacks the courage to think his thought all the way through and say that Abraham was a murderer, then it is certainly better to attain this courage than to waste time on unmerited eulogies. The ethical expression for what Abraham did is that he meant to murder Isaac; the religious expression is that he meant to sacrifice Isaac—but precisely in this contradiction is the anxiety that can make a person sleepless, and yet without this anxiety Abraham is not who he is. Or if Abraham perhaps did not do at all what the story tells, if perhaps because of the local conditions of that day it was something entirely different, then let us forget him, for what is the value of going to the trouble of remembering that past which cannot become a present. Or perhaps the speaker forgot something equivalent to the ethical oversight that Isaac was the son. In other words, if faith is taken away by becoming *Nul* and *Nichts*, all that remains is the brutal fact that Abraham meant to murder Isaac, which is easy enough for anyone to imitate if he does not have faith—that is, the faith that makes it difficult for him.

As for me, I do not lack the courage to think a complete thought. Up to now I have feared none, and if I should encounter such a one, I hope that I at least will have the honesty to say: This thought makes me afraid, it shocks me, and therefore I will not think it. If I am wrong in so doing, my punishment will not fail to come. If I had acknowledged as true the judgment that Abraham was a murderer, I am not sure that I would have been able to silence my reverence for him. But if I did think that, I probably would have said

nothing, for one should not initiate others into such thoughts. But Abraham is no illusion, he did not sleep his way to fame, he does not owe it to a whim of fate.

Is it possible to speak unreservedly about Abraham without running the risk that some individual will become unbalanced and do the same thing? If I dare not, I will say nothing at all about Abraham, and the last thing I will do is to scale him down in such a way that he thereby becomes a III 83 snare for the weak. As a matter of fact, if one makes faith everything—that is, makes it what it is—then I certainly believe that I dare to speak of it without danger in our day, which is scarcely prodigal in faith. It is only by faith that one achieves any resemblance to Abraham, not by murder. If one makes love into a fleeting mood, a sensual feeling in a person, then one only lays snares for the weak by talking about the achievements of love. Everyone, to be sure, has momentary feelings, but if everyone therefore would do the dreadful thing that love has sanctified as an immortal achievement, then everything is lost, both the achievement and the one led astray.

It is permissible, then, to speak about Abraham, for whatever is great can never do damage when it is understood in its greatness; it is like a two-edged sword that kills and saves. If it fell to my lot to speak about him, I would begin by showing what a devout and God-fearing man Abraham was, worthy of being called God's chosen one. Only a person of that kind is put to such a test [*Prøve*], but who is such a person? Next I would describe how Abraham loved Isaac. For that purpose I would call upon all the good spirits to stand by me so that what I said would have the glow of fatherly love. I hope to describe it in such a way that there would not be many a father in the realms and lands of the king who would dare to maintain that he loved in this way. But if he did not love as Abraham loved, then any thought of sacrificing Isaac would surely be a spiritual trial [*Anfægtelse*].[14] On this point alone, one could talk for several Sundays—after all, one does not need to be in a great hurry. If it were done properly, the result would be that some of

the fathers would by no means demand to hear more but for the time being would be pleased if they actually succeeded in loving as Abraham loved. But if there was one who, having heard the greatness as well as the dreadfulness in Abraham's deed, ventured to proceed along that path, I would saddle my horse and ride along with him. At every station before coming to Mount Moriah, I would explain to him that he still could turn around, could repent of the misunderstanding that he was called to be tried [*forsøges*] in such a conflict, could confess that he lacked the courage, so that God himself would have to take Isaac if he wanted to have him. It is my conviction that such a man is not repudiated, that he can be blessed along with all the others, but not within time. Even in the periods of the greatest faith, would not such a judgment be passed on a man like that? I knew a man who once could have saved my life if he had been magnanimous. He spoke bluntly, "I see very well what I could do, but I dare not; I fear that eventually I shall lack strength, that
III 84 I shall regret it." He was not magnanimous, but who would therefore not go on loving him?

Having spoken thus, having stirred the listeners to an awareness of the dialectical struggles of faith and its gigantic passion, then I would not become guilty of an error on the part of the listeners, [15]so they would think, "He has faith to such a degree that all we have to do is hang onto his coattails." I would add, "By no means do I have faith. By nature I am a shrewd fellow, and shrewd people always have great difficulty in making the movement of faith, but I do not attribute per se any *worth to the difficulty that brought the shrewd person further in the overcoming of it than to the point at which the simplest and most unsophisticated person arrives more easily.*"

Love indeed has its priests in the poets, and occasionally we hear a voice that knows how to honor it, but not a word is heard about faith. Who speaks to the honor of this passion? Philosophy goes further. Theology sits all rouged and powdered in the window and courts its favor, offers its charms to philosophy. It is supposed to be difficult to understand Hegel, but to understand Abraham is a small matter. To go

beyond Hegel[16] is a miraculous achievement, but to go beyond Abraham is the easiest of all. I for my part have applied considerable time to understanding Hegelian philosophy and believe that I have understood it fairly well; I am sufficiently brash to think that when I cannot understand particular passages despite all my pains, he himself may not have been entirely clear. All this I do easily, naturally, without any mental strain. Thinking about Abraham is another matter, however; then I am shattered. I am constantly aware of the prodigious paradox that is the content of Abraham's life, I am constantly repelled, and, despite all its passion, my thought cannot penetrate it, cannot get ahead by a hairsbreadth. I stretch every muscle to get a perspective, and at the very same instant I become paralyzed.

I am not unfamiliar with what the world has admired as great and magnanimous. My soul feels its kinship with it and in all humility is certain that the cause for which the hero strives is also my cause, and when I consider it, I cry out to myself: *jam tua res agitur* [now your cause is at stake].[17] I *think* III myself *into* the hero; I cannot think myself into Abraham; 85 when I reach that eminence, I sink down, for what is offered me is a paradox. I by no means conclude that faith is something inferior but rather that it is the highest, also that it is dishonest of philosophy to give something else in its place and to disparage faith. Philosophy cannot and must not give faith, but it must understand itself and know what it offers and take nothing away, least of all trick men out of something by pretending that it is nothing. I am not unfamiliar with the hardships and dangers of life. I fear them not and approach them confidently. I am not unfamiliar with the terrifying. My memory is a faithful spouse, and my imagination, unlike myself, is a busy little maid who sits all day at her work and in the evening can coax me so charmingly that I have to look at it, even though it is not always landscapes or flowers or *Schäfer-Historier* [pastoral idylls] that she paints. I have seen the terrifying face to face, and I do not flee from it in horror, but I know very well that even though I advance toward it courageously, my courage is still not the courage

of faith and is not something to be compared with it. I cannot make the movement of faith, I cannot shut my eyes and plunge confidently into the absurd;[18] it is for me an impossibility, but I do not praise myself for that. I am convinced that God is love; for me this thought has a primal lyrical validity. When it is present to me, I am unspeakably happy; when it is absent, I long for it more vehemently than the lover for the object of his love. But I do not have faith; this courage I lack. To me God's love, in both the direct and the converse sense, is incommensurable with the whole of actuality. Knowing that, I am not so cowardly that I whimper and complain, but neither am I so perfidious as to deny that faith is something far higher. I can bear to live in my own fashion, I am happy and satisfied, but my joy is not the joy of faith, and by comparison with that, it is unhappy. I do not trouble God with my little troubles, details do not concern me; I gaze only at my love and keep its virgin flame pure and clear. Faith is convinced that God is concerned about the smallest things. I am satisfied with a left-handed marriage in this life; faith is humble enough to insist on the right hand, for I do not deny that this is humility and will never deny it.

I wonder if anyone in my generation is able to make the movements of faith? If I am not mistaken, my generation is rather inclined to be proud of doing what it probably does not even believe me capable of—that is, the imperfect. My soul balks at doing what is so often done—talking inhumanly about the great, as if a few centuries were an enormous distance. I prefer to speak humanly about it, as if it happened
III 86 yesterday, and only let the greatness itself be the distance that either elevates or judges. If I (*in the capacity of tragic hero*, for higher I cannot come) had been ordered to take such an extraordinary royal journey as the one to Mount Moriah, I know very well what I would have done. I would not have been cowardly enough to stay at home, nor would I have dragged and drifted along the road or forgotten the knife in order to cause a delay. I am quite sure that I would have been punctual and all prepared—more than likely, I would

have arrived too early in order to get it over sooner. But I also know what else I would have done. The moment I mounted the horse, I would have said to myself: Now all is lost, God demands Isaac, I sacrifice him and along with him all my joy—yet God is love and continues to be that for me, for in the world of time God and I cannot talk with each other, we have no language in common. Perhaps someone in our time would be so foolish, so envious of the great, as to want to delude himself and me into believing that if I had actually done this I would have done something even greater than what Abraham did, for my immense resignation [*Resignation*][19] would be far more ideal and poetic than Abraham's small-mindedness. But this is utterly false, for my immense resignation would be a substitute for faith. I would not be able to do more than make the infinite movement in order to find myself and again rest in myself. Neither would I have loved Isaac as Abraham loved him. That I was determined to make the movement could prove my courage, humanly speaking—that I loved him with my whole soul is the presupposition without which the whole thing becomes a misdeed—nevertheless I would not love as Abraham loved, for then I would have held back at the very last minute, without, however, arriving too late at Mount Moriah. Furthermore, by my behavior I would have spoiled the whole story, for if I had gotten Isaac again, I would have been in an awkward position. What was the easiest for Abraham would have been difficult for me—once again to be happy in Isaac!—for he who with all the infinity of his soul, *proprio motu et propriis auspiciis* [of his own accord and on his own responsibility], has made the infinite movement and cannot do more, he keeps Isaac only with pain.

But what did Abraham do? He arrived neither too early nor too late. He mounted the ass, he rode slowly down the road. During all this time he had faith, he had faith that God III
would not demand Isaac of him, and yet he was willing to 87
sacrifice him if it was demanded. He had faith by virtue of the absurd, for human calculation was out of the question, and it certainly was absurd that God, who required it of him,

should in the next moment rescind the requirement. He climbed the mountain, and even in the moment when the knife gleamed he had faith—that God would not require Isaac. No doubt he was surprised at the outcome, but through a double-movement he had attained his first condition, and therefore he received Isaac more joyfully than the first time. Let us go further. We let Isaac actually be sacrificed. Abraham had faith. He did not have faith that he would be blessed in a future life but that he would be blessed here in the world. God could give him a new Isaac, could restore to life the one sacrificed. He had faith by virtue of the absurd, for all human calculation ceased long ago. It is evident that sorrow can make a man mentally ill, and that is hard enough; it is also evident that there is a willpower that can haul to the wind so drastically that it rescues the understanding, even though a person becomes a little odd (and I do not intend to disparage this). But to be able to lose one's understanding and along with it everything finite, for which it is the stockbroker, and then to win the very same finitude again by virtue of the absurd—this appalls me, but that does not make me say it is something inferior, since, on the contrary, it is the one and only marvel. It is commonly supposed that what faith produces is no work of art, that it is a coarse and boorish piece of work, only for the more uncouth natures, but it is far from being that. The dialectic of faith is the finest and the most extraordinary of all; it has an elevation of which I can certainly form a conception, but no more than that. I can make the mighty trampoline leap[20] 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. Indeed, if Abraham, the moment he swung his leg over the ass's back, had said to himself: Now Isaac is lost, I could just as well sacrifice him here at home as ride the long way to Moriah—then I do not need Abraham, whereas now I bow seven times to his name and seventy times[21] to his deed. This he did not do, as I can prove by his

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really fervent joy on receiving Isaac and by his needing no preparation and no time to rally to finitude and its joy. If it had been otherwise with Abraham, he perhaps would have loved God but would not have had faith, for he who loves God without faith reflects upon himself; he who loves God in faith reflects upon God.

This is the peak on which Abraham stands. The last stage to pass from his view is the stage of infinite resignation. He actually goes further and comes to faith. All those travesties of faith—the wretched, lukewarm lethargy that thinks: There's no urgency, there's no use in grieving beforehand; the despicable hope that says: One just can't know what will happen, it could just possibly be—those travesties are native to the paltriness of life, and infinite resignation has already infinitely disdained them.

Abraham I cannot understand; in a certain sense I can learn nothing from him except to be amazed. If someone deludes himself into thinking he may be moved to have faith by pondering the outcome of that story, he cheats himself and cheats God out of the first movement of faith—he wants to suck worldly wisdom out of the paradox. Someone might succeed, for our generation does not stop with faith, does not stop with the miracle of faith, turning water into wine[22]—it goes further and turns wine into water.

Would it not be best to stop with faith, and is it not shocking that everyone wants to go further? Where will it all end when in our age, as declared in so many ways, one does not want to stop with love? In worldly shrewdness, in petty calculation, in paltriness and meanness, in everything that can make man's divine origin doubtful. Would it not be best to remain standing at faith and for him who stands to see to it that he does not fall,[23] for 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. For my part, I presumably can describe the movements of faith, but I cannot make them. In learning to go through the motions of swimming, one can be suspended from the ceiling in a harness and then presumably

describe the movements, but one is not swimming. In the same way I can describe the movements of faith. If I am thrown out into the water, I presumably do swim (for I do not belong to the waders), but I make different movements, III 89 the movements of infinity, whereas faith makes the opposite movements: after having made the movements of infinity, it makes the movements of finitude. Fortunate is the person who can make these movements! He does the marvelous, and I shall never weary of admiring him; it makes no difference to me whether it is Abraham or a slave in Abraham's house, whether it is a professor of philosophy or a poor servant girl—I pay attention only to the movements. But I do pay attention to them, and I do not let myself be fooled, either by myself or by anyone else. The knights of the infinite resignation are easily recognizable—their walk is light and bold. But they who carry the treasure of faith are likely to disappoint, for externally they have a striking resemblance to bourgeois philistinism, which infinite resignation, like faith, deeply disdains.

I honestly confess that in my experience I have not found a single authentic instance, although I do not therefore deny that every second person may be such an instance. Meanwhile, I have been looking for it for many years, but in vain. Generally, people travel around the world to see rivers and mountains, new stars, colorful birds, freakish fish, preposterous races of mankind; they indulge in the brutish stupor that gawks at life and thinks it has seen something. That does not occupy me. But if I knew where a knight of faith lived, I would travel on foot to him, for this marvel occupies me absolutely. I would not leave him for a second, I would watch him every minute to see how he made the movements; I would consider myself taken care of for life and would divide my time between watching him and practicing myself, and thus spend all my time in admiring him. As I said before, I have not found anyone like that; meanwhile, I may very well imagine him. Here he is. The acquaintance is made, I am introduced to him. The instant I first lay eyes on him, I set him apart at once; I jump back, clap my hands, and say

half aloud, "Good Lord, is this the man, is this really the one—he looks just like a tax collector!" But this is indeed the one. I move a little closer to him, watch his slightest movement to see if it reveals a bit of heterogeneous optical telegraphy[24] from the infinite, a glance, a facial expression, a gesture, a sadness, a smile that would betray the infinite in its heterogeneity with the finite. No! I examine his figure III 90 from top to toe to see if there may not be a crack through which the infinite would peek. No! He is solid all the way through. His stance? It is vigorous, belongs entirely to finitude; no spruced-up burgher walking out to Fresberg[25] on a Sunday afternoon treads the earth more solidly. He belongs entirely to the world; no bourgeois philistine could belong to it more. Nothing is detectable of that distant and aristocratic nature by which the knight of the infinite is recognized. He finds pleasure in everything, takes part in everything, and every time one sees him participating in something particular, he does it with an assiduousness that marks the worldly man who is attached to such things. He attends to his job. To see him makes one think of him as a pen-pusher who has lost his soul to Italian bookkeeping, so punctilious is he. Sunday is for him a holiday. He goes to church. No heavenly gaze or any sign of the incommensurable betrays him; if one did not know him, it would be impossible to distinguish him from the rest of the crowd, for at most his hearty and powerful singing of the hymns proves that he has good lungs. In the afternoon, he takes a walk to the woods. He enjoys everything he sees, the swarms of people, the new omnibuses,[26] the Sound.[27] Encountering him on Strandveien, one would take him for a mercantile soul enjoying himself. He finds pleasure in this way, for he is not a poet, and I have tried in vain to lure the poetic incommensurability out of him. Toward evening, he goes home, and his gait is as steady as a postman's. On the way, he thinks that his wife surely will have a special hot meal for him when he comes home—for example, roast lamb's head with vegetables. If he meets a kindred soul, he would go on talking all the way to Østerport about this delicacy with a passion befitting a res-

taurant operator. It so happens that he does not have four shillings[28] to his name, and yet he firmly believes that his wife has this delectable meal waiting for him. If she has, to see him eat would be the envy of the elite and an inspiration to the common man, for his appetite is keener than Esau's.[29] His wife does not have it—curiously enough, he is just the same. On the way he passes a building site and meets another man. They converse for a moment; in an instant he erects a building, and he himself has at his disposition everything required. The stranger leaves him thinking that he surely
III 91 is a capitalist, while my admired knight thinks: Well, if it came right down to it, I could easily get it. He sits at an open window and surveys the neighborhood where he lives: everything that happens—a rat scurrying under a plank across the gutter, children playing—engages him with an equanimity akin to that of a sixteen-year-old girl. And yet he is no genius, for I have sought in vain to spy out the incommensurability of genius in him. In the evening, he smokes his pipe; seeing him, one would swear it was the butcher across the way vegetating in the gloaming. With the freedom from care of a reckless good-for-nothing, he lets things take care of themselves, and yet every moment of his life he buys the opportune time at the highest price, for he does not do even the slightest thing except by virtue of the absurd. And yet, yet—yes, I could be infuriated over it if for no other reason than envy—and yet this man has made and at every moment is making the movement of infinity. He drains the deep sadness of life in infinite resignation, he knows the blessedness of infinity, he has felt the pain of renouncing everything, the most precious thing in the world, and yet the finite tastes just as good to him as to one who never knew anything higher, because his remaining in finitude would have no trace of a timorous, anxious routine, and yet he has this security that makes him delight in it as if finitude were the surest thing of all. And yet, yet the whole earthly figure he presents is a new creation by virtue of the absurd. He resigned everything infinitely, and then he grasped everything again by virtue of the absurd. He is continually making

the movement of infinity, but he does it with such precision and assurance that he continually gets finitude out of it, and no one ever suspects anything else. It is supposed to be the most difficult feat for a ballet dancer to leap into a specific posture in such a way that he never once strains for the posture but in the very leap assumes the posture. Perhaps there is no ballet dancer who can do it—but this knight does it. Most people live completely absorbed in worldly joys and sorrows; they are benchwarmers who do not take part in the dance. The knights of infinity are ballet dancers and have elevation. They make the upward movement and come down again, and this, too, is not an unhappy diversion and is not unlovely to see. But every time they come down, they are unable to assume the posture immediately, they waver for a moment, and this wavering shows that they are aliens in the world. It is more or less conspicuous according to their skill, but even the most skillful of these knights cannot hide this wavering. One does not need to see them in the air; one III 92 needs only to see them the instant they touch and have touched the earth—and then one recognizes them. But to be able to come down in such a way that instantaneously one seems to stand and to walk, to change the leap into life into walking, absolutely to express the sublime in the pedestrian—only that knight can do it, and this is the one and only marvel.

Nevertheless, this marvel can so easily deceive that I shall describe the movements in a specific case that can illuminate their relation to actuality, for this is the central issue. A young lad falls in love with a princess, and this love is the entire substance of his life, and yet the relation is such that it cannot possibly be realized, cannot possibly be translated from ideality into reality.* Of course, the slaves of the finite, the frogs in the swamp of life, scream: That kind of love is foolishness;

* It goes without saying that any other interest in which an individual has concentrated the whole reality [*Realitet*] of actuality [*Virkelighedens*] can, if it proves to be unrealizable, prompt the movement of resignation. I have chosen a love affair to show the movements, because this interest is far easier to understand and thus frees me from all preliminary considerations that in a deeper sense could be of concern only to very few individuals.

the rich brewer's widow is just as good and solid a match. Let them go on croaking in the swamp. The knight of infinite resignation does not do any such thing; he does not give up the love, not for all the glories of the world. He is no fool. First of all, he assures himself that it actually is the substance of his life, and his soul is too healthy and too proud to waste the least of it in an intoxication. He is not cowardly; he is not afraid to let it steal into his most secret, his most remote thoughts, to let it twist and entwine itself intricately around every ligament of his consciousness—if his love comes to grief, he will never be able to wrench himself out of it. He feels a blissful delight in letting love palpitate in every nerve, and yet his soul is as solemn as the soul of one who has drunk the poisoned cup[30] and feels the juice penetrate every drop of blood—for this is the moment of crisis. Having totally absorbed this love and immersed himself in it, he does not lack the courage to attempt and to risk everything. He examines the conditions of his life, he convenes the swift thoughts that obey his every hint, like well-trained doves, he flourishes his staff, and they scatter in all directions. But
III 93 now when they all come back, all of them like messengers of grief, and explain that it is an impossibility, he becomes very quiet, he dismisses them, he becomes solitary, and then he undertakes the movement. If what I say here is to have any meaning, the point is that the movement is carried out normatively.* In the first place, the knight will then have the

* *This requires passion. Every movement of infinity is carried out through passion, and no reflection can produce a movement. This is the continual leap in existence that explains the movement, whereas mediation is a chimera, which in Hegel*[31] *is supposed to explain everything and which is also the only thing he never has tried to explain.* Just to make the celebrated Socratic distinction between what one understands and what one does not understand[32] requires passion; and even more, of course, [passion is necessary in order] to make the authentic Socratic movement, the movement of ignorance. What our generation lacks is not reflection but passion. In one sense, therefore, our age is actually too tenacious of life to die, for dying is one of the most remarkable leaps, and a little poem has always appealed to me very much because the poet, after beautifully and simply expressing his desire for the good things of life in five or six lines, ends thus:

ein seliger Sprung in die Ewigkeit [a blessed leap into eternity].[33]

power to concentrate the whole substance of his life and the meaning of actuality into one single desire. If a person lacks this concentration, this focus, his soul is dissipated in multiplicity from the beginning, and then he never manages to make the movement; he acts as shrewdly in life as the financiers who put their resources into widely diversified investments in order to gain on one if they lose on another—in short, he is not a knight. In the next place, the knight will have the power to concentrate the conclusion of all his thinking into one act of consciousness. If he lacks this focus, his soul is dissipated in multiplicity from the beginning, and he will never find the time to make the movement; he will continually be running errands in life and will never enter into eternity, for in the very moment he approaches it, he will suddenly discover that he has forgotten something and therefore must go back. In the next moment, he thinks, it will be possible, and this is quite true, but with such observations one will never come to make the movement but with their help will sink deeper and deeper into the mire.

The knight, then, makes the movement, but which one? Will he forget it all, for this, too, constitutes a kind of concentration? No, for the knight does not contradict himself, and it is a contradiction to forget the whole substance of his III 94 life and yet remain the same. He feels no inclination to become another person, by no means regards that as something great. Only the lower natures forget themselves and become something new. The butterfly, for example, completely forgets that it was a caterpillar, and may in turn so completely forget that it was a butterfly that it may become a fish. The deeper natures never forget themselves and never become anything other than what they were. The knight, then, will recollect everything, but this recollection is precisely the pain, and yet in infinite resignation he is reconciled with existence. His love for that princess would become for him the expression of an eternal love, would assume a religious character, would be transfigured into a love of the eternal being, which true enough denied the fulfillment but nevertheless did reconcile him once more in the eternal consciousness of its validity in an eternal form that no actuality can take away from

him. Fools and young people say that everything is possible for a human being. But that is a gross error. Spiritually speaking, everything is possible, but in the finite world there is much that is not possible. The knight, however, makes this impossibility possible by expressing it spiritually, but he expresses it spiritually by renouncing it. The desire that would lead him out into actuality but has been stranded on impossibility is now turned inward, but it is not therefore lost, nor is it forgotten. Sometimes it is the vague emotions of desire in him that awaken recollection; sometimes he awakens it himself, for he is too proud to be willing to let the whole substance of his life turn out to have been an affair of the fleeting moment. He keeps this love young, and it grows along with him in years and in beauty. But he needs no finite occasion for its growth. From the moment he has made the movement, the princess is lost. He does not need the erotic titillation of seeing the beloved etc., nor does he in the finite sense continually need to be bidding her farewell, because in the eternal sense he recollects her,[34] and he knows very well that the lovers who are so bent on seeing each other for the last time in order to say farewell once again are justified in their eagerness, justified in thinking it to be the last time, for they forget each other very quickly. He has grasped the deep secret that even in loving another person one ought to be sufficient to oneself. He is no longer finitely concerned about what the princess does, and precisely this proves that he has made the movement infinitely. Here one has occasion to see whether the movement in an individual is authentic or feigned.
III 95 There was one who also believed that he had made the movement; but look, time passed, the princess did something else—she married, for example, a prince—and his soul lost the resilience of resignation. He thereby demonstrated that he had not made the movement properly, for one who has resigned infinitely is sufficient to oneself. The knight does not cancel his resignation, he keeps his love just as young as it was in the first moment; he never loses it simply because he has made the movement infinitely. What the princess does cannot disturb him; it is only the lower natures who have

the law for their actions in someone else, the premises for their actions outside themselves. If, however, the princess is similarly disposed, something beautiful will emerge. She will then introduce herself into the order of knighthood into which one is not taken by election but of which everyone is a member who has the courage to enroll oneself, the order of knighthood that proves its immortality by making no distinction between male and female. She, too, will keep her love young and sound; she, too, will have overcome her agony, even though she does not, as the ballad[35] says, lie by her lord's side every night. These two will in all eternity be compatible, with such a rhythmical *harmonia præstabilita*[36] that if the moment ever came—a moment, however, that does not concern them finitely, for then they would grow old—if the moment ever came that allowed them to give love its expression in time, they would be capable of beginning right where they would have begun if they had been united in the beginning. The person who understands this, whether man or woman, can never be deceived, for it is only the baser natures that fancy that they are deceived. No girl who does not have this pride actually understands what it means to love, but if she does have this pride, the craftiness and cunning of the whole world cannot deceive her.

In infinite resignation there is peace and rest; every person who wills it, who has not debased himself by self-disdain—which is still more dreadful than being too proud—can discipline himself to make this movement, which in its pain reconciles one to existence. Infinite resignation is that shirt mentioned in an old legend.[37] The thread is spun with tears, bleached with tears; the shirt is sewn in tears—but then it also gives protection better than iron or steel. The defect in the legend is that a third person can work up this linen. The secret in life is that each person must sew it himself, and the remarkable thing is that a man can sew it fully as well as a woman. In infinite resignation there is peace and rest and comfort in the pain, that is, when the movement is made normatively. I could easily write a whole book if I were to expound the various misunderstandings, the awkward posi-

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tions, the botched up movements I have encountered in just my own little experience. There is little belief in spirit, and yet the essential thing in making this movement is spirit. It is essential that it not be a unilateral result of a *dira necessitas* [cruel constraint of necessity],[38] and the more this is present, the more doubtful it always is that the movement is normal. Thus, if one believes that cold, barren necessity must necessarily be present, then one is declaring thereby that no one can experience death before one actually dies, which to me seems to be crass materialism. But in our age people are less concerned about making pure movements. If someone who wanted to learn to dance were to say: For centuries, one generation after the other has learned the positions, and it is high time that I take advantage of this and promptly begin with the quadrille—people would presumably laugh a little at him, but in the world of spirit this is very plausible. What, then, is education? I believed it is the course the individual goes through in order to catch up with himself, and the person who will not go through this course is not much helped by being born in the most enlightened age.

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,[39] and only then can one speak of grasping existence by virtue of faith.

Now let us meet the knight of faith on the occasion previously mentioned. He does exactly the same as the other knight did: he infinitely renounces the love that is the substance of his life, he is reconciled in pain. But then the marvel happens; he makes one more movement even more wonderful than all the others, for he says: Nevertheless I have faith III 97 that I will get her—that is, by virtue of the absurd, by virtue of the fact that for God all things are possible.[40] The absurd does not belong to the differences that lie within the proper domain of the understanding. It is not identical with the improbable, the unexpected, the unforeseen. The moment the knight executed the act of resignation, he was convinced of the impossibility, humanly speaking; that was the conclusion

of the understanding, and he had sufficient energy to think it. But in the infinite sense it was possible, that is, by relinquishing it [*resignere derpaa*], but this having, after all, is also a giving up. Nevertheless, to the understanding this having is no absurdity, for the understanding continues to be right in maintaining that in the finite world where it dominates this having was and continues to be an impossibility. The knight of faith realizes this just as clearly; consequently, he can be saved only by the absurd, and this he grasps by faith. Consequently, he acknowledges the impossibility, and in the very same moment he believes the absurd, for if he wants to imagine that he has faith without passionately acknowledging the impossibility with his whole heart and soul, he is deceiving himself and his testimony is neither here nor there, since he has not even attained infinite resignation.

Precisely because resignation is antecedent, faith is no esthetic emotion but something far higher; it is not the spontaneous inclination of the heart but the paradox of existence. If, for example, in the face of every difficulty, a young girl still remains convinced that her desire will be fulfilled, this assurance is by no means the assurance of faith, even though she has been brought up by Christian parents and perhaps has had confirmation instruction from the pastor for a whole year. She is convinced in all her childlike naiveté and innocence, and this assurance ennobles her nature and gives her a supranatural magnitude so that like a thaumaturge she can invoke the finite powers of existence and bring the very stones to tears, while on the other hand in her perplexity she can just as well run to Herod as to Pilate and move the whole world with her pleas. Her assurance is most captivating, and one can learn much from her, but there is one thing that cannot be learned from her—how to make movements—for her assurance does not dare, in the pain of resignation, to look the impossibility in the eye.

So I can perceive that it takes strength and energy and spiritual freedom to make the infinite movement of resignation; I can also perceive that it can be done. The next [movement] amazes me, my brain reels, for, after having made the

movement of resignation, then by virtue of the absurd to get everything, to get one's desire totally and completely—that
III 98 is over and beyond human powers, that is a marvel. But this I can perceive: that the young girl's assurance is nothing but rashness compared with the unshakability of faith in the full recognition of the impossibility. Every time I want to make this movement, I almost faint; the very same moment I admire absolutely, I am seized with great anxiety. For what is it to tempt [*friste*] God? And yet this is the movement of faith and continues to be that, even though philosophy, so as to confuse the concepts, wants to delude us into thinking it has faith, even though theology is willing to sell it off at a low price.

The act of resignation does not require faith, for what I gain in resignation is my eternal consciousness. This is a purely philosophical movement that I venture to make when it is demanded and can discipline myself to make, because every time some finitude will take power over me, I starve myself into submission until I make the movement, for my eternal consciousness is my love for God, and for me that is the highest of all. The act of resignation does not require faith, but to get the least little bit more than my eternal consciousness requires faith, for this is the paradox. The movements are often confused. It is said that faith is needed in order to renounce everything. Indeed, one hears what is even more curious: a person laments that he has lost his faith, and when a check is made to see where he is on the scale, curiously enough, he has only reached the point where he is to make the infinite movement of resignation. Through resignation I renounce everything. I make this movement all by myself, and if I do not make it, it is because I am too cowardly and soft and devoid of enthusiasm and do not feel the significance of the high dignity assigned to every human being, to be his own censor, which is far more exalted than to be the censor general of the whole Roman republic. This movement I make all by myself, and what I gain thereby is my eternal consciousness in blessed harmony with my love for the eternal being. By faith I do not renounce anything; on the contrary,

by faith I receive everything exactly in the sense in which it is said that one who has faith like a mustard seed can move mountains.[41] It takes a purely human courage to renounce the whole temporal realm in order to gain eternity, but this I do gain and in all eternity can never renounce—it is a self-contradiction. But it takes a paradoxical and humble courage III 99 to grasp the whole temporal realm now by virtue of the absurd, and this is the courage of faith. By faith Abraham did not renounce Isaac, but by faith Abraham received Isaac. By virtue of resignation, that rich young man[42] should have given away everything, but if he had done so, then the knight of faith would have said to him: By virtue of the absurd, you will get every penny back again—believe it! And the formerly rich young man should by no means treat these words lightly, for if he were to give away his possessions because he is bored with them, then his resignation would not amount to much.

Temporality, finitude—that is what it is all about. I can resign everything by my own strength and find peace and rest in the pain; I can put up with everything—even if that dreadful demon, more horrifying than the skeletal one who terrifies men, even if madness held its fool's costume before my eyes and I understood from its face that it was I who should put it on—I can still save my soul as long as my concern that my love of God conquer within me is greater than my concern that I achieve earthly happiness. In his very last moment, a person can still concentrate his whole soul in one single look to heaven, from whence come all good gifts, and this look will be understood by himself and by him whom it seeks to mean that he has been true to his love. Then he will calmly put on the costume. He whose soul lacks this romanticism has sold his soul, whether he gets a kingdom or a wretched piece of silver for it. By my own strength I cannot get the least little thing that belongs to finitude, for I continually use my strength in resigning everything. By my own strength I can give up the princess, and I will not sulk about it but find joy and peace and rest in my pain, but by my own strength I cannot get her back again, for I use all

my strength in resigning. On the other hand, by faith, says that marvelous knight, by faith you will get her by virtue of the absurd.

But this movement I cannot make. As soon as I want to begin, everything reverses itself, and I take refuge in the pain of resignation. I am able to swim in life, but I am too heavy for this mystical hovering. To exist [*existere*] in such a way that my contrast to existence constantly expresses itself as the most beautiful and secure harmony with it—this I cannot do. And yet, I repeatedly say, it must be wonderful to get the princess. The knight of resignation who does not say this is a deceiver; he has not had one single desire, and he has not
III 100 kept his desire young in his pain. There may be someone who found it quite convenient that the desire was no longer alive and that the arrow of his pain had grown dull, but such a person is no knight. A free-born soul who caught himself doing this would despise himself and begin all over again, and above all would not allow his soul to be self-deceived. And yet it must be wonderful to get the princess, and the knight of faith is the only happy man, the heir to the finite, while the knight of resignation is a stranger and an alien. To get the princess this way, to live happily with her day after day (for it is also conceivable that the knight of resignation could get the princess, but his soul had full insight into the impossibility of their future happiness), to live happily every moment this way by virtue of the absurd, every moment to see the sword hanging over the beloved's head, and yet not to find rest in the pain of resignation but to find joy by virtue of the absurd—this is wonderful. The person who does this is great, the only great one; the thought of it stirs my soul, which never was stingy in admiring the great.

If everyone in my generation who does not wish to stop with faith is actually a person who has grasped the horror of life, has grasped the meaning of Daub's statement that a soldier standing alone with a loaded rifle at his post near a powder magazine on a stormy night thinks strange thoughts;[43] if everyone who does not wish to stop with faith is actually a person who has the spiritual power to comprehend that the

wish was an impossibility and then to take time to be alone with the thought; if everyone who does not wish to stop with faith is a person who in pain is reconciled and is reconciled through pain; if everyone who does not wish to stop with faith is a person who subsequently (and if he has not done all the foregoing, then he should not trouble himself when the issue is that of faith) performed the marvel and grasped existence in its totality by virtue of the absurd—then what I am writing is the loftiest eulogy upon the generation by its most inferior member, who could make only the movement of resignation. But why are they not willing to stop with faith? Why do we sometimes hear that people are ashamed to acknowledge that they have faith? I cannot comprehend it. If I ever manage to be able to make this move- III
ment, I will in the future drive with four horses. 101

Is it actually the case that all the bourgeois philistinism I see in life—which I do not permit myself to condemn with my words but with my deeds—is actually not what it seems, is the marvel? It is indeed conceivable, for that hero of faith did, after all, have a striking resemblance to it, for that hero of faith was not even an ironist and humorist but something much higher. There is a lot of talk these days about irony and humor, especially by people who have never been able to practice them but nevertheless know how to explain everything. I am not completely unfamiliar with these two passions;[44] I know a little more about them than is found in German and German-Danish compendiums. Therefore I know that these two passions are essentially different from the passion of faith. Irony and humor are also self-reflective and thus belong to the sphere of infinite resignation; their elasticity is owing to the individual's incommensurability with actuality.

Be it a duty or whatever, I cannot make the final movement, the paradoxical movement of faith, although there is nothing I wish more. Whether a person has the right to say this must be his own decision; whether he can come to an amicable agreement in this respect is a matter between himself and the eternal being, who is the object of faith. Every

person can make the movement of infinite resignation, and for my part I would not hesitate to call a coward anyone who imagines that he cannot do it. Faith is another matter, but no one has the right to lead others to believe that faith is something inferior or that it is an easy matter, since on the contrary it is the greatest and most difficult of all.

The story of Abraham is understood in another way. We praise God's mercy, that he gave him Isaac again and that the whole thing was only an ordeal [*Prøvelse*]. An ordeal, this word can say much and little, and yet the whole thing is over as soon as it is spoken. We mount a winged horse, and in the same instant we are on Mount Moriah, in the same instant we see the ram. We forget that Abraham only rode an ass, which trudges along the road, that he had a journey of three days, that he needed some time to chop the firewood, to bind Isaac, and to sharpen the knife.

And yet we pay tribute to Abraham. The speaker can just as well sleep until the last quarter hour before he has to speak; the listener can just as well go to sleep during the speech, for
III 102 everything goes along splendidly without any trouble on either side. If someone were present who suffered from sleeplessness, he would perhaps go home, sit down in a corner, and think: The whole thing is over in a moment; all you have to do is wait for a minute and you will see the ram, and the ordeal will be over. If the speaker were to meet him in this situation, I think he would step up to him in all his dignity and say, "What a wretched man, to let your soul sink into such foolishness; no miracle takes place, and all life is an ordeal." As the speaker grew more effusive, he would become more and more emotional, more and more pleased with himself, and although he noticed no gorged blood vessels when he was talking about Abraham, he now would feel the veins on his forehead swell. Perhaps he would be dumbfounded if the sinner quietly and with dignity answered: After all, that was what you preached about last Sunday.

Let us then either cancel out Abraham or learn to be horrified by the prodigious paradox that is the meaning of his

life, so that we may understand that our age, like every other age, can rejoice if it has faith. If Abraham is not a nobody, a phantom, a showpiece used for diversion, then the sinner can never err in wanting to do likewise, but the point is to perceive the greatness of what Abraham did so that the person can judge for himself whether he has the vocation and the courage to be tried [*forsøges*] in something like this. The comic contradiction in the speaker's behavior was that he made a nonentity of Abraham and yet wanted to forbid the other to conduct himself in the same way.

Should we, then, not dare to speak about Abraham? I surely think we can. If I were to speak about him, I would first of all describe the pain of the ordeal. To that end, I would, like a leech, suck all the anxiety and distress and torment out of a father's suffering in order to describe what Abraham suffered, although under it all he had faith. I would point out that the journey lasted three days and a good part of the fourth; indeed, these three and a half days could be infinitely longer than the few thousand years that separate me from Abraham. I would point out—and this is my view—that every person may still turn back before he begins such a thing and at any time may repentantly turn back. If one does this, I am not apprehensive; I do not fear arousing a desire in people to be tried as Abraham was. But to sell a cheap edition of Abraham and yet forbid everyone to do likewise is ludicrous.

In order to perceive the prodigious paradox of faith, a par- III
adox that makes a murder into a holy and God-pleasing act, 103
a paradox that gives Isaac back to Abraham again, which no thought can grasp, because faith begins precisely where thought stops—in order to perceive this, it is now my intention to draw out in the form of problemata the dialectical aspects implicit in the story of Abraham.[45]

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PROBLEMA I

Is there a Teleological Suspension of the Ethical?

The ethical as such is the universal,[1] and as the universal it applies to everyone, which from another angle means that it applies at all times. It rests immanent in itself, has nothing outside itself that is its τέλος [end, purpose] but is itself the τέλος for everything outside itself, and when the ethical has absorbed this into itself, it goes not further. The single individual,[2] sensately and psychically qualified in immediacy, is the individual who has his τέλος in the universal, and it is his ethical task continually to express himself in this, to annul his singularity in order to become the universal. As soon as the single individual asserts himself in his singularity before the universal, he sins, and only by acknowledging this can he be reconciled again with the universal. Every time the single individual, after having entered the universal, feels an impulse to assert himself as the single individual, he is in a spiritual trial [*Anfægtelse*],[3] from which he can work himself only by repentantly surrendering as the single individual in the universal. If this is the highest that can be said of man and his existence, then the ethical is of the same nature as a person's eternal salvation, which is his τέλος forevermore and at all times, since it would be a contradiction for this to be capable of being surrendered (that is, teleologically suspended), because as soon as this is suspended it is relinquished, whereas that which is suspended is not relinquished but is preserved in the higher, which is its τέλος.

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If this is the case, then Hegel is right in "The Good and Conscience,"[4] where he qualifies man only as the individual and considers this qualification as a "moral form of evil"[5] (see especially *The Philosophy of Right*), which must be annulled [*ophævet*] in the teleology of the moral in such a way that the single individual who remains in that stage either sins or is immersed in spiritual trial. But Hegel is wrong in

speaking about faith; he is wrong in not protesting loudly and clearly against Abraham's enjoying honor and glory as a father of faith when he ought to be sent back to a lower court and shown up as a murderer.

Faith is namely this paradox that the single individual is higher than the universal—yet, please note, in such a way that the movement repeats itself, so that after having been in the universal he as the single individual isolates himself as higher than the universal. If this is not faith, then Abraham is lost, then faith has never existed in the world precisely because it has always existed.[6] For if the ethical—that is, social morality[7]—is the highest and if there is in a person no residual incommensurability in some way such that this incommensurability is not evil (i.e., the single individual, who is to be expressed in the universal), then no categories are needed other than what Greek philosophy had or what can be deduced from them by consistent thought. Hegel should not have concealed this, for, after all, he had studied Greek philosophy.

People who are profoundly lacking in learning and are given to clichés are frequently heard to say that a light shines over the Christian world, whereas a darkness enshrouds paganism. This kind of talk has always struck me as strange, inasmuch as every more thorough thinker, every more earnest artist still regenerates himself in the eternal youth of the Greeks. The explanation for such a statement is that one does not know what one should say but only that one must say something. It is quite right to say that paganism did not have faith, but if something is supposed to have been said thereby, then one must have a clearer understanding of what faith is, for otherwise one falls into such clichés. It is easy to explain all existence, faith along with it, without having a conception of what faith is, and the one who counts on being admired for such an explanation is not such a bad calculator, for it is as Boileau[8] says: *Un sot trouve toujours un plus sot, qui l'admire* [One fool always finds a bigger fool, who admires him].

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Faith is precisely the paradox that the single individual as the single individual is higher than the universal, is justified

before it, not as inferior to it but as superior—yet in such a way, please note, that it is the single individual who, after being subordinate as the single individual to the universal, now by means of the universal becomes the single individual who as the single individual is superior, that the single individual as the single individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute. This position cannot be mediated, for all mediation takes place only by virtue of the universal; it is and remains for all eternity a paradox, impervious to thought. And yet faith is this paradox, or else (and I ask the reader to bear these consequences *in mente* [in mind] even though it would be too prolix for me to write them all down) or else faith has never existed simply because it has always existed, or else Abraham is lost.

It is certainly true that the single individual can easily confuse this paradox with spiritual trial [*Anfægtelse*],[9] but it ought not to be concealed for that reason. It is certainly true that many persons may be so constituted that they are repulsed by it, but faith ought not therefore to be made into something else to enable one to have it, but one ought rather to admit to not having it, while those who have faith ought to be prepared to set forth some characteristics whereby the paradox can be distinguished from a spiritual trial.

The story of Abraham contains just such a teleological suspension of the ethical. There is no dearth of keen minds and careful scholars who have found analogies to it. What their wisdom amounts to is the beautiful proposition that basically everything is the same. If one looks more closely, I doubt very much that anyone in the whole wide world will find one single analogy, except for a later one, which proves nothing if it is certain that Abraham represents faith and that it is manifested normatively in him, whose life not only is the most paradoxical that can be thought but is also so paradoxical that it simply cannot be thought. He acts by virtue of the absurd, for it is precisely the absurd that he as the single individual is higher than the universal. This paradox cannot be mediated, for as soon as Abraham begins to do so, he has to confess that he was in a spiritual trial, and if

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that is the case, he will never sacrifice Isaac, or if he did sacrifice Isaac, then in repentance he must come back to the universal. He gets Isaac back again by virtue of the absurd. Therefore, Abraham is at no time a tragic hero but is something entirely different, either a murderer or a man of faith. Abraham does not have the middle term that saves the tragic hero. This is why I can understand a tragic hero but cannot understand Abraham, even though in a certain demented sense I admire him more than all others.

In ethical terms, Abraham's relation to Isaac is quite simply this: the father shall love the son more than himself. But within its own confines the ethical has various gradations. We shall see whether this story contains any higher expression for the ethical that can ethically explain his behavior, can ethically justify his suspending the ethical obligation to the son, but without moving beyond the teleology of the ethical.

When an enterprise of concern to a whole nation[10] is impeded, when such a project is halted by divine displeasure, when the angry deity sends a dead calm that mocks every effort, when the soothsayer carries out his sad task and announces that the deity demands a young girl as sacrifice—then the father must heroically bring this sacrifice. He must nobly conceal his agony, even though he could wish he were "the lowly man who dares to weep"[11] and not the king who must behave in a kingly manner. Although the lonely agony penetrates his breast and there are only three persons[12] in the whole nation who know his agony, soon the whole nation will be initiated into his agony and also into his deed, that for the welfare of all he will sacrifice her, his daughter, this lovely young girl. O bosom! O fair cheeks, flaxen hair (v. 687).[13] And the daughter's tears will agitate him, and the father will turn away his face, but the hero must raise the knife. And when the news of it reaches the father's house, the beautiful Greek maidens will blush with enthusiasm, and if the daughter was engaged, her betrothed will not be angry but will be proud to share in the father's deed, for the girl belonged more tenderly to him than to the father.

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When the valiant judge[14] who in the hour of need saved Israel binds God and himself in one breath by the same promise, he will heroically transform the young maiden's jubilation, the beloved daughter's joy to sorrow, and all Israel will sorrow with her over her virginal youth. But every freeborn man will understand, every resolute woman will admire Jephthah, and every virgin in Israel will wish to behave as his daughter did, because what good would it be for Jephthah to win the victory by means of a promise if he did not keep it—would not the victory be taken away from the people again?

When a son forgets his duty,[15] when the state entrusts the sword of judgment to the father, when the laws demand punishment from the father's hand, then the father must heroically forget that the guilty one is his son, he must nobly hide his agony, but no one in the nation, not even the son, will fail to admire the father, and every time the Roman laws are interpreted, it will be remembered that many interpreted them more learnedly but no one more magnificently than Brutus.

But if Agamemnon, while a favorable wind was taking the fleet under full sail to its destination, had dispatched that messenger who fetched Iphigenia to be sacrificed; if Jephthah, without being bound by any promise that decided the fate of the nation, had said to his daughter: Grieve now for two months over your brief youth, and then I will sacrifice you; if Brutus had had a righteous son and yet had summoned the lictors to put him to death—who would have understood them? If, on being asked why they did this, these three men had answered: It is an ordeal in which we are being tried [*forsøges*]—would they have been better understood?

When in the crucial moment Agamemnon, Jephthah, and Brutus heroically have overcome the agony, heroically have lost the beloved, and have only to complete the task externally, there will never be a noble soul in the world without
III 109 tears of compassion for their agony, of admiration for their deed. But if in the crucial moment these three men were to

append to the heroic courage with which they bore the agony the little phrase: But it will not happen anyway—who then would understand them? If they went on to explain: This we believe by virtue of the absurd—who would understand them any better, for who would not readily understand that it was absurd, but who would understand that one could then believe it?

The difference between the tragic hero and Abraham is very obvious. The tragic hero is still within the ethical. He allows an expression of the ethical to have its τέλος in a higher expression of the ethical; he scales down the ethical relation between father and son or daughter and father to a feeling that has its dialectic in its relation to the idea of moral conduct. Here there can be no question of a teleological suspension of the ethical itself.

Abraham's situation is different. By his act he transgressed the ethical altogether and had a higher τέλος outside it, in relation to which he suspended it. For I certainly would like to know how Abraham's act can be related to the universal, whether any point of contact between what Abraham did and the universal can be found other than that Abraham transgressed it. It is not to save a nation, not to uphold the idea of the state that Abraham does it; it is not to appease the angry gods. If it were a matter of the deity's being angry, then he was, after all, angry only with Abraham, and Abraham's act is totally unrelated to the universal, is a purely private endeavor. Therefore, while the tragic hero is great because of his moral virtue,[16] Abraham is great because of a purely personal virtue. There is no higher expression for the ethical in Abraham's life than that the father shall love the son. The ethical in the sense of the moral is entirely beside the point. Insofar as the universal was present, it was cryptically in Isaac, hidden, so to speak, in Isaac's loins, and must cry out with Isaac's mouth: Do not do this, you are destroying everything.

Why, then, does Abraham do it? For God's sake and—the two are wholly identical—for his own sake.[17] He does it for God's sake because God demands this proof of his faith; he

does it for his own sake so that he can prove it. The unity of the two is altogether correctly expressed in the word already used to describe this relationship. It is an ordeal, a temptation.[18] A temptation—but what does that mean? As a rule, what tempts a person is something that will hold him back from doing his duty, but here the temptation is the ethical itself, which would hold him back from doing God's will. But what is duty? Duty is simply the expression for God's will.

III 110

Here the necessity of a new category for the understanding of Abraham becomes apparent. Paganism does not know such a relationship to the divine. The tragic hero does not enter into any private relationship to the divine, but the ethical is the divine, and thus the paradox therein can be mediated in the universal.

Abraham cannot be mediated; in other words, he cannot speak.[19] As soon as I speak, I express the universal, and if I do not do so, no one can understand me. As soon as Abraham wants to express himself in the universal, he must declare that his situation is a spiritual trial [*Anfægtelse*], for he has no higher expression of the universal that ranks above the universal he violates.

Therefore, although Abraham arouses my admiration, he also appalls me. The person who denies himself and sacrifices himself because of duty gives up the finite in order to grasp the infinite and is adequately assured; the tragic hero gives up the certain for the even more certain, and the observer's eye views him with confidence. But the person who gives up the universal in order to grasp something even higher that is not the universal—what does he do? Is it possible that this can be anything other than a spiritual trial? And if it is possible, but the individual makes a mistake, what salvation is there for him? He suffers all the agony of the tragic hero, he shatters his joy in the world, he renounces everything, and perhaps at the same time he barricades himself from the sublime joy that was so precious to him that he would buy it at any price. The observer cannot understand him at all; neither

can his eye rest upon him with confidence. Perhaps the believer's intention cannot be carried out at all, because it is inconceivable. Or if it could be done but the individual has misunderstood the deity—what salvation would there be for him? The tragic hero needs and demands tears, and where is the envious eye so arid that it could not weep with Agamemnon, but where is the soul so gone astray that it has the audacity to weep for Abraham? The tragic hero finishes his task at a specific moment in time, but as time passes he does what is no less significant: he visits the person encompassed by sorrow, who cannot breathe because of his anguished sighs, whose thoughts oppress him, heavy with tears. He appears to him, breaks the witchcraft of sorrow, loosens the bonds, evokes the tears, and the suffering one forgets his own sufferings in those of the tragic hero. One cannot weep over Abraham. One approaches him with a *horror religiosus*, as Israel approached Mount Sinai.[20] What if he himself is distraught, what if he had made a mistake, this lonely man who climbs Mount Moriah, whose peak towers sky-high over the flatlands of Aulis, what if he is not a sleepwalker safely crossing the abyss while the one standing at the foot of the mountain looks up, shakes with anxiety, and then in his deference and horror does not even dare to call to him? —Thanks, once again thanks, to a man who, to a person overwhelmed by life's sorrows and left behind naked, reaches out the words, the leafage of language by which he can conceal his misery. Thanks to you, great Shakespeare,[21] you who can say everything, everything, everything just as it is—and yet, why did you never articulate this torment? Did you perhaps reserve it for yourself, like the beloved's name that one cannot bear to have the world utter, for with his little secret that he cannot divulge the poet buys this power of the word to tell everybody else's dark secrets. A poet is not an apostle; he drives out devils only by the power of the devil.[22]

III 111

But if the ethical is teleologically suspended in this manner, how does the single individual in whom it is suspended exist? He exists as the single individual in contrast to the

universal. Does he sin, then, for from the point of view of the idea, this is the form of sin. Thus, even though the child does not sin, because it is not conscious of its existence as such, its existence, from the point of view of the idea, is nevertheless sin, and the ethical makes its claim upon it at all times. If it is denied that this form can be repeated in such a way that it is not sin, then judgment has fallen upon Abraham. How did Abraham exist? He had faith. This is the paradox by which he remains at the apex, the paradox that he cannot explain to anyone else, for the paradox is that he as the single individual places himself in an absolute relation to the absolute. Is he justified? Again, his justification is the paradoxical, for if he is, then he is justified not by virtue of being something universal but by virtue of being the single individual.

III 112 How does the single individual reassure himself that he is legitimate? It is a simple matter to level all existence to the idea of the state or the idea of a society. If this is done, it is also simple to mediate, for one never comes to the paradox that the single individual as the single individual is higher than the universal, something I can also express symbolically in a statement by Pythagoras to the effect that the odd number is more perfect than the even number.[23] If occasionally there is any response at all these days with regard to the paradox, it is likely to be: One judges it by the result. Aware that he is a paradox who cannot be understood, a hero who has become a σκάνδαλον [offense] to his age will shout confidently to his contemporaries: The result will indeed prove that I was justified. This cry is rarely heard in our age, inasmuch as it does not produce heroes—this is its defect—and it likewise has the advantage that it produces few caricatures. When in our age we hear these words: It will be judged by the result—then we know at once with whom we have the honor of speaking. Those who talk this way are a numerous type whom I shall designate under the common name of assistant professors.[24] With security in life, they live in their thoughts: they have a *permanent* position and a *secure* future

in a well-organized state. They have hundreds, yes, even thousands of years between them and the earthquakes of existence; they are not afraid that such things can be repeated, for then what would the police and the newspapers say? Their life task is to judge the great men, judge them according to the result. Such behavior toward greatness betrays a strange mixture of arrogance and wretchedness—arrogance because they feel called to pass judgment, wretchedness because they feel that their lives are in no way allied with the lives of the great. Anyone with even a smattering *erectioris ingenii* [of nobility of nature] never becomes an utterly cold and clammy worm, and when he approaches greatness, he is never devoid of the thought that since the creation of the world it has been customary for the result to come last and that if one is truly going to learn something from greatness one must be particularly aware of the beginning. If the one who is to act wants to judge himself by the result, he will never begin. Although the result may give joy to the entire world, it cannot help III 113 the hero, for he would not know the result until the whole thing was over, and he would not become a hero by that but by making a beginning.

Moreover, in its dialectic the result (insofar as it is finitude's response to the infinite question) is altogether incongruous with the hero's existence. Or should Abraham's receiving Isaac by a *marvel* be able to prove that Abraham was justified in relating himself as the single individual to the universal? If Abraham actually had sacrificed Isaac, would he therefore have been less justified?

But we are curious about the result, just as we are curious about the way a book turns out. We do not want to know anything about the anxiety, the distress, the paradox. We carry on an esthetic flirtation with the result. It arrives just as unexpectedly but also just as effortlessly as a prize in a lottery, and when we have heard the result, we have built ourselves up. And yet no manacled robber of churches is so despicable a criminal as the one who plunders holiness in this way, and not even Judas, who sold his Lord for thirty pieces

of silver, is more contemptible than someone who peddles greatness in this way.

It is against my very being to speak inhumanly about greatness, to make it a dim and nebulous far-distant shape or to let it be great but devoid of the emergence of the humanness without which it ceases to be great, for it is not what happens to me that makes me great but what I do, and certainly there is no one who believes that someone became great by winning the big lottery prize. A person might have been born in lowly circumstances, but I would still require him not to be so inhuman toward himself that he could imagine the king's castle only at a distance and ambiguously dream of its greatness, and destroy it at the same time he elevates it because he elevated it so basely. I require him to be man enough to tread confidently and with dignity there as well. He must not be so inhuman that he insolently violates everything by barging right off the street into the king's hall—he loses more thereby than the king. On the contrary, he should find a joy in observing every bidding of propriety with a happy and confident enthusiasm, which is precisely what makes him a free spirit. This is merely a metaphor, for that distinction is only a very imperfect expression of the
III 114 distance of spirit. I require every person not to think so inhumanly of himself that he does not dare to enter those palaces where the memory of the chosen ones lives or even those where they themselves live. He is not to enter rudely and foist his affinity upon them. He is to be happy for every time he bows before them, but he is to be confident, free of spirit, and always more than a charwoman, for if he wants to be no more than that, he will never get in. And the very thing that is going to help him is the anxiety and distress in which the great were tried, for otherwise, if he has any backbone, they will only arouse his righteous envy. And anything that can be great only at a distance, that someone wants to make great with empty and hollow phrases—is destroyed by that very person.

Who was as great in the world as that favored woman, the

mother of God, the Virgin Mary?[25] And yet how do we speak of her? That she was the favored one among women does not make her great, and if it would not be so very odd for those who listen to be able to think just as inhumanly as those who speak, then every young girl might ask: Why am I not so favored? And if I had nothing else to say, I certainly would not dismiss such a question as stupid, because, viewed abstractly, vis-à-vis a favor, every person is just as entitled to it as the other. We leave out the distress, the anxiety, the paradox. My thoughts are as pure as anybody's, and he who can think this way surely has pure thoughts, and, if not, he can expect something horrible, for anyone who has once experienced these images cannot get rid of them again, and if he sins against them, they take a terrible revenge in a silent rage, which is more terrifying than the stridency of ten ravenous critics. To be sure, Mary bore the child wondrously, but she nevertheless did it "after the manner of women,"[26] and such a time is one of anxiety, distress, and paradox. The angel was indeed a ministering spirit, but he was not a meddlesome spirit who went to the other young maidens in Israel and said: Do not scorn Mary, the extraordinary is happening to her. The angel went only to Mary, and no one could understand her. Has any woman been as infringed upon as was Mary, and is it not true here also that the one whom God blesses he curses in the same breath? This is the spirit's view of Mary, and she is by no means—it is revolting to me to say it but even more so that people have inanely and unc- III
tuously made her out to be thus—she is by no means a lady 115
idling in her finery and playing with a divine child. When, despite this, she said: Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord[27]—then she is great, and I believe it should not be difficult to explain why she became the mother of God. She needs worldly admiration as little as Abraham needs tears, for she was no heroine and he was no hero, but both of them became greater than these, not by being exempted in any way from the distress and the agony and the paradox, but became greater by means of these.

It is great when the poet in presenting his tragic hero for public admiration dares to say: Weep for him, for he deserves it. It is great to deserve the tears of those who deserve to shed tears. It is great that the poet dares to keep the crowd under restraint, dares to discipline men to examine themselves individually to see if they are worthy to weep for the hero, for the slop water of the snivellers is a debasement of the sacred. —But even greater than all this is the knight of faith's daring to say to the noble one who wants to weep for him: Do not weep for me, but weep for yourself.[28]

We are touched, we look back to those beautiful times. Sweet sentimental longing leads us to the goal of our desire, to see Christ walking about in the promised land. We forget the anxiety, the distress, the paradox. Was it such a simple matter not to make a mistake? Was it not terrifying that this man walking around among the others was God? Was it not terrifying to sit down to eat with him? Was it such an easy matter to become an apostle? But the result, the eighteen centuries—that helps, that contributes to this mean deception whereby we deceive ourselves and others. I do not feel brave enough to wish to be contemporary[29] with events like that, but I do not for that reason severely condemn those who made a mistake, nor do I depreciate those who saw what was right.

But I come back to Abraham. During the time before the result, either Abraham was a murderer every minute or we stand before a paradox that is higher than all mediations.

The story of Abraham contains, then, a teleological suspension of the ethical. As the single individual he became higher than the universal. This is the paradox, which cannot be mediated. How he entered into it is just as inexplicable as
III 116 how he remains in it. If this is not Abraham's situation, then Abraham is not even a tragic hero but a murderer. It is thoughtless to want to go on calling him the father of faith, to speak of it to men who have an interest only in words. A person can become a tragic hero through his own strength—but not the knight of faith. When a person walks what is in one sense the hard road of the tragic hero, there are many

who can give him advice, but he who walks the narrow road of faith has no one to advise him—no one understands him. Faith is a marvel, and yet no human being is excluded from it; for that which unites all human life is passion,* and faith is a passion.

* Lessing has somewhere said something similar from a purely esthetic point of view. He actually wants to show in this passage that grief, too, can yield a witty remark. With that in mind, he quotes the words spoken on a particular occasion by the unhappy king of England, Edward II. In contrast he quotes from Diderot a story about a peasant woman and a remark she made. He goes on to say: Auch das war Witz, und noch dazu Witz einer Bäuerin; aber die Umstände machten ihn unvermeidlich. Und folglich auch muss man die Entschuldigung der witzigen Ausdrücke des Schmerzes und der Betrübniss nicht darin suchen, dass die Person, welche sie sagt, eine vornehme, wohlerzogene, verständige, und auch sonst witzige Person sey; *denn die Leidenschaften machen alle Menschen wieder gleich*: sondern darin, dass wahrscheinlicher Weise ein jeder Mensch ohne Unterschied in den nämlichen Umständen das nämliche sagen würde. Den Gedanken der Bäuerin hätte eine Königin haben können und haben müssen: so wie das, was dort der König sagt, auch ein Bauer hätte sagen können und ohne Zweifel würde gesagt haben [That also was wit, and the wit of a peasant woman, besides; but the situation made it inevitable. And consequently one must not seek the excuse for the witty expressions of pain and sorrow in the fact that the person who said them was a distinguished, well-educated, intelligent, and also witty person; *for the passions make all men equal again*: but in this, that in the same situation probably every person, without exception, would have said the same thing. A queen could have had and must have had the thought of a peasant woman, just as a peasant could have said and no doubt would have said what the king said there]. See *Sämmtliche Werke*, XXX, p. 223.[30]

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NOTES

FEAR AND TREMBLING

TITLE PAGE AND OVERLEAF

TITLE. See Philippians 2:12-13. See Supplement, p. 243 (*Pap.* IV B 60, 78, 79).

SUBTITLE. See Historical Introduction, pp. xxv-xxvi. See p. 90 and note 21.

AUTHOR. For a discussion of the pseudonymous author, see Historical Introduction, pp. xvii, xxv-xxvi. See p. 90 and note 21.

EPIGRAPH. Johann Georg Hamann, letter to Johannes Gotthelf Lindner, Riga, March 29, 1763, *Hamann's Schriften*, I–VIII[1-2], ed. Friedrich Roth (Berlin: 1821-43; *ASKB* 536-44), III, p. 190. When the son of Tarquinius Superbus had craftily gotten Gabii in his power, he sent a messenger to his father asking what he should do with the city. Tarquinius, not trusting the messenger, gave no reply but took him into the garden, where with his cane he cut off the flowers of the tallest poppies. The son understood from this that he should eliminate the leading men of the city. See Valerius Maximus, VII, 4, 2; *Valerius Maximus Sammlung merkwürdiger Reden und Thaten*, I–V (Stuttgart: 1829; *ASKB* 1296), III, pp. 455-56. A similar story about Periander is found in Aristotle, *Politics*, 1284 a; *Aristoteles graece*, I–IV, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Berlin: 1831; *ASKB* 1074-75), II, p. 1284; *The Works of Aristotle*, I–XII, ed. J. A. Smith and W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908-52), X.

The epigraph is discussed by G. E. Lessing in *Abhandlungen über die Äsopische Fabel, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's sämmtliche Schriften*, I–XXXII (Berlin: 1825-28; *ASKB* 1747-62), XVIII, pp. 164-65. Lessing's treatise (1759) antedates the Hamann source by four years. Kierkegaard was a reader of Lessing's works (see *JP* III 2369-79; VII, p. 56) also in the years 1842-1843, when he was writing *Fear and Trembling*. A later entry (*Pap*: X[1] A 363) indicates that Kierkegaard was familiar with Lessing's essay on the fable. It is therefore not unlikely that he drew on Lessing's allegorical interpretation of the Tarquinius story in this essay.

Originally the epigraph was to have been a quotation from Herder. See Supplement, pp. 244, 249-50 (*Pap.* IV B 96:1 a-c, 96:4); *JP* V 5560, 5674 (*Pap.* III A 203; IV A 126). See *Works of Love*, *KW* XVI (*SV* IX 343).

PREFACE

1. The references are most likely to Danish Hegelians, notably Johan Ludvig Heiberg (1791-1860) and Hans Lassen Martensen (1808-1884). Heiberg had published *Om Philosophiens Betydning for den nuværende Tid* (1833) and *Perseus, Journal for den speculative Idee*, I–II (1837-38). See *Prefaces*, *KW* IX (*SV* V 37-38, 51-55, 60-62); *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, *KW* XII (*SV* VII 153); *Intelligensblade*, no. 1-48 (1842-44). See also Martensen's review of Heiberg's *Indlednings Foredrag til det i Novbr. 1834 begyndte logiske Kursus, Maanedsskrift for Litteratur*, XVI (1836), pp. 515-28. During a two-year European study tour (1832-1834), Martensen read Hegel's works and studied with the foremost Hegelian speculative theologian, Carl Daub. "Going further" refers to the system building attempted by Hegelians along the lines of Hegel's *Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, titled *System der Philosophie* after the third edition. See *Philosophical Fragments*, *KW* VII (*SV* IV 190, 193).

2. René Descartes (1596-1650), French philosopher, the so-called father of modern European philosophy. Descartes is mentioned in the article by Martensen referred to in note 1 above. See *JP* I 736 (*Pap.* IV C 14).

3. Renati Descartes, *Opera philosophica* (Amsterdam: 1685; *ASKB* 473), pp. 8, 23; *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, I–II, tr. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931), I, pp. 231, 253.

4. Descartes, *Opera; Philosophical Works*, I, p. 83. The phrase "sc. juventutis," i.e., of youth, is an addition to Descartes's text.

5. See, for example, *Fragments*, *KW* VII (*SV* IV 246-47); *Postscript*, *KW* XII (*SV* VII 290 fn., 307).

6. See II Timothy 4:7.

7. With reference to the following paragraph, see Supplement, p. 245 (*Pap.* IV B 80:3).

8. See p. 90 and note 21.

9. In Danish the nouns "passion" and "science" rhyme: *Lidenskab, Videnskab*.

10. With reference to the remainder of the sentence, see Supplement, p. 245 (*Pap.* IV B 89:1).

11. See *JP* V 5647 (*Pap.* IV A 88).

12. The writer of a tragedy, "The Destruction of the Human Race," in Johan Ludvig Heiberg, *Recensenten og Dyret*, sc. 7. In that scene, Trop tears his manuscript into two equal pieces, saying, "If it does not cost more to save good taste, why should we not do it?"

13. Approximately three years before the publication of *Fear and Trembling* (1843), the first omnibuses (horse-drawn) were put into use in Copenhagen.

14. Presumably an allusion to Luke 14:28-30. See p. 72.

EXORDIUM

1. See Supplement, p. 245 (*Pap.* IV B 81); *JP* V 5651 (*Pap.* IV A 93).

2. Throughout the work, four related basic terms are used: "to tempt," "temptation" (*friste, Fristelse*); "to test," "test," (*prøve, Prøve*); "to try" (*forsøge*); "ordeal" (*Prøvelse*). All have essentially the same meaning: to try by way of a test or an ordeal. "To tempt," however, is used in two senses in the work. (1) Whenever a version of the Biblical report is given, as on pp. 9, 63, the term means "to test" (as in the Revised Standard Version) and is used because it is the terminology of the Danish Bible of that time. Sometimes "test" and "temptation" are used together as synonyms, as on pp. 60, 71, 123. (2) Later, however, as on pp. 60, 115, Johannes de Silentio uses "temptation" in the ordinary sense of the attraction of the lower in relation to the higher. Therefore, the ethical as the universal in relation to an absolute duty toward God may be a temptation. The meaning of the three other terms—"to test," "to try," and "ordeal"—is synonymous with the first meaning of "to tempt" ("to test," "test"). For a discussion of "spiritual trial" (*Anfægtelse*), see p. 31 and note 14. See *Repetition*, p. 209, *KW* VI (*SV* III 243); *Postscript*, *KW* XII (*SV* VII 226, 399); *JP* II 2222 (*Pap.* X⁴ A 572).

3. See Genesis 22.

4. With reference to the following sentence, see Supplement, p. 245 (*Pap.* IV B 81).

5. See p. 90 and note 21.

6. See Supplement, p. 249 (*Pap.* IV B 73).

7. See p. 9 and note 2.

8. A free, but essentially accurate, rendition of Genesis 22:1-2 in the contemporary Danish translation of the Bible. See p. 9 and note 2.

9. See Judith 10:11: "and the men of the city watched her until she had gone down the mountain and passed through the valley and they could no longer see her." See also *Postscript*, *KW* XII (*SV* VII 291); *JP* III 3822 (*Pap.* III A 197).

10. See Supplement, pp. 241-42 (*Pap.* IV A 76).

11. See Supplement, pp. 255-56 (*Pap.* IV B 69-71).

12. For the promise to Abraham and Sarah, see Genesis 12:1-3, 17:2-21.

13. With reference to the following paragraph, see Supplement, p. 246 (*Pap.* IV B 83).

14. See Genesis 16, 21:9-21, for the story of Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian maid, and Ishmael, Hagar's son by Abraham. See p. 77.

15. With reference to the following paragraph, see Supplement, p. 246 (*Pap.* IV B 84).

16. The childless Abraham regarded Eliezer of Damascus as his heir. See Genesis 15:2.

17. With reference to the following paragraph, see Supplement, p. 246 (*Pap.* IV B 85).

18. With reference to the following paragraph, see Supplement, pp. 245-48 (*Pap.* IV B 66-68).

19. See Supplement, p. 248 (*Pap.* IV B 86).

EULOGY ON ABRAHAM

1. See Supplement, pp. 248-49 (*Pap.* IV B 72).

2. Here for the first time in the pseudonymous writings the expression "eternal consciousness" and variants are used. See, for example, *Philosophical Fragments, KW* VII (*SV* IV 173, 224, 271); *The Concept of Anxiety*, p. 153, *KW* VIII (*SV* IV 418); *Stages on Life's Way, KW* XI (*SV* VI 91); *Postscript, KW* XII (*SV* VII 6, 122, 483, 500); *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits, KW* XV (*SV* VIII 226); *The Sickness unto Death*, pp. 70-71, 79, 113, *KW* XIX (*SV* XI 182, 191, 223). In brief, it signifies consciousness of selfhood, particularly in the context of recollection (as in Plato) and ultimately before God.

3. See Homer, *Iliad*, VI, 146-48.

4. See ibid., III, 381, where Paris is carried away in a cloud.

5. See Hebrews 11:8-19.

6. Presumably the Roman poet Ovid (43 B.C.–A.D. 17?), who in A.D. 8 was banished by Caesar Augustus to Tomi on the Black Sea. See his *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto, P. Ovidii Nasonis opera quae extant*, ed. A. Richter (Leipzig: 1828; *ASKB* 1265); *Tristia [and] Ex Ponto*, tr. A. L. Wheeler (Loeb Classics, New York: Putnam, 1924).

7. See p. 12 and note 12.

8. See note 6.

9. See Numbers 20:11.

10. See p. 9 and note 2.

11. See p. 9 and note 2.

12. See Genesis 18:12. See also Genesis 17:17; Supplement, p. 255 (*Pap.* IV B 69).

13. See note 27.

14. See p. 9 and note 2.

15. See Genesis 12:2.

16. See p. 9 and note 2.

17. See Genesis 22:2.

18. Joseph. See Genesis 35:22-23, 37:3.

19. See Supplement, pp. 248-49 (*Pap.* IV B 72).

20. See Genesis 18:23.

21. Genesis 22:1-3. See Supplement, pp. 239-40 (*Pap.* III C 4). See p. 9 and note 2.

22. See Luke 23:30; Supplement, pp. 248-49 (*Pap.* IV B 72).

23. See p. 14, note 16.

24. A free rendition of Genesis 22:3, 9-10.

25. See Genesis 8:4. Ararat: a high or holy place.

26. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 244-45 c, 265 b; *Platonis quae exstant opera*, I–XI, ed. Fridericus Astius (Leipzig: 1819-32; *ASKB* 1144-54), I, pp. 164-67, 216-17; *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 491-92, 511.

27. Since Abraham was 100 years old at the time of Isaac's birth, Isaac's age is placed here at 30. Kierkegaard was 30 years old at the time *Fear and Trembling* was written.

28. See Supplement, p. 249 (*Pap.* IV B 87:2).

PROBLEMATA

Preliminary Expectoration

1. See Supplement, p. 243 (*Pap.* IV B 60). For deleted epigraph, see Supplement, pp. 249-50 (*Pap.* IV B 96:4).

2. From the Latin *ex* + *pectus* (from + heart, breast), an outpouring of the heart, in line with the subtitle, "Dialectical Lyric." In the final draft (Supplement, p. 250; *Pap.* IV B 88:1), the heading was changed from "Introduction." See *Repetition*, p. 157, *KW* VI (*SV* III 196).

3. See II Thessalonians 3:10.

4. Nourredin had control of both a ring and a lamp.

5. The symbolic figure of darkness in contrast to Aladdin in Oehlenschläger's *Aladdin, Adam Oehlenschlägers Poetiske Skrifter*, I–II (Copenhagen: 1805; *ASKB* 1597-98), II, pp. 75ff.

6. See Matthew 5:45.

7. See Plato, *Symposium*, 179 d; *Platonis opera*, III, p. 447; *Udvalgte Dialoger af Platon*, I–III, tr. C. J. Heise, (Copenhagen: 1830-38; *ASKB* 1164-66), II, p. 17; *Collected Dialogues*, pp. 533-34.

8. See Matthew 3:9.

9. Isaiah 26:18.

10. Themistocles. See Plutarch, *Lives*, "Themistocles," III, 3; *Plutarchs Levnetsbeskrivelser*, I–IV, tr. Stephan Tetens (Copenhagen: 1800-11; *ASKB* 1197-2000), I, p. 7; *Plutarch's Lives*, I–X, tr. Bernadotte Perrin (Loeb Classics, New York: Macmillan, 1914), II, p. 11.

11. See Matthew 19:16-22.

12. On June 17, 1845, nine months after the publication of *Fear and Trembling, The Concept of Anxiety*, by Vigilius Haufniensis, was published.

13. Three lines and marginal addition in the final draft were replaced by the following two sentences. See Supplement, p. 250 (*Pap.* IV B 88:2).

14. See p. 9 and note 2. "Spiritual trial," in contrast to "temptation" and in relation to "test," is the struggle and the anguish involved in venturing out beyond one's assumed capacities or generally approved expectations. For journal entries on this important category, see *JP* IV 4364-84 and pp. 692-94; VII, p. 90. See also, for example, *Either/Or*, II, *KW* IV (*SV* II 112-14, 126, 289, 298); *Anxiety*, pp. 117, 120, 143, *KW* VIII (*SV* IV 385, 388,

408-09); *Postscript*, *KW* XII (*SV* VII 12, 15, 18, 32-33, 109-10, 112, 226, 399-400).

15. With reference to the remainder of the paragraph, see Supplement, p. 251 (*Pap.* IV B 88:4).

16. See p. 5 and note 1.

17. *Nam tua res agitur, paries cum proximus ardet.* Horace, *Epistles*, I, 18, 84; *Q. Horatii Flacci opera* (Leipzig: 1828; *ASKB* 1248), p. 606; *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*, tr. H. Rushton Fairclough (Loeb Classics, New York: Putnam, 1929), p. 375: "'Tis your own safety that's at stake when your neighbor's wall is in flames . . .."

18. As a special expression, the phrase "the absurd" appears in the works for the first time in *Fear and Trembling* and, like its correlative, "the paradox," recurs only in the pseudonymous writings (almost exclusively in *Fragments*, *Postscript*, and *Practice in Christianity*) and the journals and papers. See *Fragments*, *KW* VII (*SV* IV 218, 227, 266, 291); *Stages*, *KW* XI (*SV* VI 156); *Postscript*, *KW* XII (*SV* VII 20, 80, 156, 171-72, 176-84, 222, 250, 327, 333, 347, 372, 375, 464, 470, 486-87, 490, 495-96, 504-05, 532); *Sickness unto Death*, pp. 71, 83, 87, *KW* XIX (*SV* XI 182, 195, 198). On this theme in the journals and papers, see *JP* I 5-12 and pp. 497-98; VII, p. 3.

19. "Resignation" [*Resignation*] and "resign" [*resignère*] here and later in this section denote an act, a movement (not apathetic acquiescence), presupposing a concentration of the person in an integrating choice of an encompassing goal or purpose. See, for example, pp. 42-43; Supplement, p. 254 (*Pap.* IV B 93:4).

20. See pp. 36, 41, 42, 170; *JP* III 2343 (*Pap.* V B 49:14). For other journal entries on this important category, see *JP* III 2338-59 and p. 794; VII, p. 56. See also, for example, *The Concept of Irony*, *KW* II (*SV* XIII 124); *Either/Or*, II, *KW* IV (*SV* II 20); *Fragments*, *KW* VII (*SV* IV 210-11); *Anxiety*, index, *KW* VIII (*SV* IV 289, 303-05, 309-12, 314, 318-19, 320, 323, 325, 331-33, 345-46, 348, 354, 361-63, 379-81, 390, 398-99); *Postscript*, *KW* XII (*SV* VII 3, 27, 78-85, 94, 102, 123, 218, 222, 253, 293, 296-97, 330, 333). The concept of the leap pertains to qualitative transitions, which cannot be accounted for by quantitative changes or by the continuity of mediation (see p. 42 fn.).

21. See Matthew 18:21-22.

22. See John 2:1-10.

23. See I Corinthians 10:12.

24. Before the development of electrical telegraphy, a system of mirrors (optical or fractional telegraphy) was used.

25. I.e., Frederiksberg, a castle and surrounding wooded park west of Copenhagen, a favorite outing place for Copenhageners, including Johannes Climacus and Kierkegaard, who also mentions Josty's café in the park. See *Postscript*, *KW* XII (*SV* VII 154-56); *JP* I 419; V 5756 (*Pap.* I A 172; V A 111).

26. See p. 8 and note 13.

27. The Øresund, between the Danish island Sjælland and the mainland of Sweden. Strandveien is the Øresund road running north from Copenhagen.

28. A rix-dollar (worth about $5.00 in 1973 money) contained 16 marks or 96 shillings, each worth about a nickel.

29. See Genesis 25:29-34.

30. An allusion to the death of Socrates, described by Plato at the end of *Phaedo*.

31. See *Repetition*, p. 148, *KW* VI (*SV* III 189), and note 30.

32. See *Apology*, 21 d; *Platonis opera*, VIII, p. 108; *Collected Dialogues*, p. 8. For the epigraph of *Anxiety* (1844), p. 3, *KW* VIII (*SV* IV 276), Vigilius Haufniensis uses this idea in a quotation from Hamann.

33. The source of this line has not been located. It may, however, be from Jacob Böhme, who is quoted in journal entry *JP* IV 5010 (*Pap.* VIII[1] A 105). The work cited, Moriz Carriere, *Die philosophische Weltanschauung der Reformationszeit* (Stuttgart, Tübingen: 1847; *ASKB* 458), also quotes Böhme's last words, which are in the same vein as the line in *Fear and Trembling*: "Nun fahre ich ins Paradies" (p. 620). Kierkegaard owned four works by Böhme: *Beschreibung der drey Principien Göttliches Wesens* (Amsterdam: 1660; *ASKB* 451); *Hohe und tiefe Gründe von dem dreyfachen Leben des Menschen* (Amsterdam: 1660; *ASKB* 452); *Mysterium Magnum* (Amsterdam: 1682; *ASKB* 453); *Christosophia oder Weg zu Christo* (Amsterdam: 1731; *ASKB* 454). See *JP* VI 6382 (*Pap.* X[1] A 247).

34. See *Repetition*, pp. 135-36, *KW* VI (*SV* III 177-78).

35. See "*Ridder Stig og Findal eller Runernes Magt*," V, 62: "She sleeps every night by the side of Knight Stig Hvide." *Udvalgte danske Viser fra Middelalderen*, I–IV, ed. W. H. Abrahamson, R. Nyerup, and K. L. Rahbek (Copenhagen: 1812-14; *ASKB* 1477-81), I, p. 301 (ed. tr.).

36. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's (1646-1716) hypothesis of preestablished harmony: each substance develops according to its own nature and is in harmony with other substances. See *Monadology*, para. 78-80, 86-87; *Guili Leibnitii opera philosophica . . .*, I–II, ed. J. E. Erdmann (Berlin: 1839-40; *ASKB* 620), II, pp. 711, 712; *Leibniz: The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, tr. Robert Latta (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 262-64, 267-68.

37. See J. N. Mailáth, "Erzi die Spinnerin," *Magyarische Sagen, Mährchen und Erzählungen*, I–II (Stuttgart, Tübingen: 1837; *ASKB* 1411), II, p. 18. See *JP* I 870 (*Pap.* II A 449).

38. Horace, *Odes*, III, 24, 6; *Carminum, Opera*, p. 218.

39. See, for example, *Either/Or*, II, *KW* IV (*SV* II 188-93).

40. See Matthew 19:26; Mark 10:27, 14:36; Luke 8:27.

41. See Matthew 17:20.

42. See Luke 18:18-23.

43. "So als Schildwacht, zur Nachtzeit auf einsamen Posten, etwa an einem Pulvermagazin, hat man Gedanken die auszerdem ganz unmöglich sind

[So like a sentry, at his lonely post at night, near a powder magazine, one has thoughts that otherwise are altogether impossible]." Karl Rosenkranz, *Erinnerungen an Karl Daub* (Berlin: 1837; *ASKB* 743), p. 24 (ed. tr.). See *JP* I 899 (*Pap.* IV A 92).

44. Kierkegaard's doctoral dissertation (1841) was *The Concept of Irony (KW* II [*SV* XIII]), on irony and humor. See, for example, numerous sections and passages in *Postscript, KW* XII (*SV* VII 229-32, 248-50, 434-58, 481-84, 524-25).

45. See Supplement, p. 251 (*Pap.* IV B 75).

Problema I

1. See, for example, G.W.F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, para. 104, 139, 142-57, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Werke. Vollständige Ausgabe*, I–XVIII, ed. Philipp Marheineke et al. (Berlin: 1832-41; *ASKB* 549-65), VIII, pp. 210-21; *Jubiläumsausgabe* [*J.A.*], I–XXVI, ed. Hermann Glockner (Stuttgart: 1927-40), VII, pp. 226-37; *Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (tr. of *Philosophie des Rechts*, 1 ed., 1821; Kierkegaard had 2 ed., 1833), tr. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), pp. 108-10.

2. On the important categories "individual" and "the single individual," see *JP* II 1964-2086 and pp. 597-99; *JP* VII, pp. 49-50. See also, for example, *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses, KW* V (*SV* IV 152-53); *Fragments, KW* VII (*SV* IV 263-64); *Anxiety*, pp. 111-13, *KW* VIII (*SV* IV 379-81); *Postscript, KW* XII (*SV* VII 179-80); *Two Ages*, pp. 84-96, *KW* XIV (*SV* VIII 79-89); *Discourses in Various Spirits, KW* XV (*SV* VIII 219-42); *Sickness unto Death*, pp. 119-24, *KW* XIX (*SV* XI 228-34); *Practice, KW* XX (*SV* XII 85-89); *Armed Neutrality, KW* XXII (*SV* XIII 439-40); *On My Work as an Author, KW* XXII (*SV* XIII 507-09); *The Point of View for My Work as an Author, KW* XXII (*SV* XIII 599-610).

3. See p. 31 and note 14.

4. Hegel, *Werke*, VIII, pp. 171-209; *J.A.*, VII, pp. 187-225; *Philosophy of Right*, pp. 86-103 (*aufgehoben* is translated as "annulled," para. 139, 141).

5. Hegel, *Werke*, VIII, p. xix; *J.A.*, VII, p. 16 (ed. tr.). "Moral Forms of Evil. Hypocrisy, Probabilism, Good Intentions, Conviction, Irony, Note to para. 140." The rubrics are omitted in the table of contents of *Philosophy of Right*; see note 1 above.

6. See, for example, Hegel, *Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften, Erster Theil, Die Logik*, para. 63, *Werke*, VI, p. 128; *J.A.*, VIII, p. 166; *Hegel's Logic* (tr. of *Encyclopädie*, 3 ed., 1830; the text of the edition Kierkegaard had was of the 3 ed.), tr. William Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 97: "But, seeing that derivative knowledge is restricted to the compass of facts, Reason is knowledge underivative, or Faith." See p. 69 and note 6.

7. Danish *det sædelige* or *Sædelighed*, corresponding to the German *Sittlichkeit*, is here translated as "social morality," whereas the translation of *Sittlichkeit* in Hegel is usually "ethical life." See, for example, Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts*, para. 141, *Werke*, VIII, p. 207; *J.A.*, VII, p. 223, *Philosophy of Right*, p. 103:

Transition from Morality to Ethical Life

141. For the good as the substantial universal of freedom, but as something still abstract, there are therefore required determinate characteristics of some sort and the principle for determining them, though a principle identical with the good itself. For conscience similarly, as the purely abstract principle of determination, it is required that its decisions shall be universal and objective. If good and conscience are each kept abstract and thereby elevated to independent totalities, then both become the indeterminate which ought to be determined.—But the integration of these two relative totalities into an absolute identity has already been implicitly achieved in that this very subjectivity of pure self-certainty, aware in its vacuity of its gradual evaporation, is identical with the abstract universality of the good. The identity of the good with the subjective will, an identity which therefore is concrete and the truth of them both, is Ethical Life.

On morality and the ethical in Kierkegaard's thought, see *JP* I, pp. 530-32.

8. Boileau, *L'Art poétique*, I, 232, *Œuvres de Boileau*, I–IV (Paris: 1830), II, p. 190; *The Art of Poetry*, tr. Albert S. Cook (Boston: Ginn, 1892), p. 172: "And in all times a forward scribbling fop / Has found some greater fool to cry him up."

9. See p. 31 and note 14.

10. The Trojan War.

11. Euripides, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, ll. 446-48; *Euripides*, tr. Christian Wilster (Copenhagen: 1840; *ASKB* 1115), p. 116; *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, I–IV, ed. David Grene and Richard Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958-60), IV, p. 316 (tr. Charles R. Walker):

> [*Agamemnon speaking*]
> O fortunate men of mean,
> Ignoble birth, freely you may weep and
> Empty out your hearts, but the highborn—
> Decorum rules our lives . . ..

12. Menelaus, Calchas, and Ulysses, ibid., l. 107; *Euripides*, tr. Wilster, p. 104; *Greek Tragedies*, IV, p. 301.

13. Line reference to *Iphigenia in Aulis, Euripides*, tr. Wilster, p. 125.

14. Jephthah. See Judges 11:30-40.

15. Brutus (Junius) had led the Romans in expelling the Tarquins after the rape of Lucrece. He then executed his sons for plotting a Tarquinian restoration. See Livy, *From the Founding of a City (History of Rome)*, II, 3-5; T. Livii Patavini, *Historiarum libri, quæ supersunt omnia*, I–V, ed. Augusto Guil. Ernesti (Leipzig: n.d.; *ASKB* 1251-55), I, pp. 75-77; *Livy*, I–XIV, tr.

B. O. Foster (Loeb Classics, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939-59), I, pp. 227-35.

16. See Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts*, para. 150, *Werke*, VIII, pp. 214-16; *J.A.*, VII, pp. 230-32; *Philosophy of Right*, pp. 107-08.

17. See Supplement, p. 251 (*Pap.* IV B 74).

18. For a clarification of "temptation" and "ordeal" and of the shifting relational meaning of "temptation" in the work, see p. 9 and note 2.

19. See Problema III, pp. 82-120.

20. See Exodus 19:12.

21. See Supplement, p. 248 (*Pap.* IV B 68).

22. See Mark 3:15-22.

23. See W. G. Tennemann, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, I–XI (Leipzig: 1798-1819; *ASKB* 815-26), I, p. 106. The Pythagoreans gave a number of reasons, not wholly satisfying, for this distinction. Odd numbers added successively to the number one give square numbers; even numbers added to the number two give "oblong" numbers. The whole universe is identified with the number one. Even numbers are "unlimited" and therefore are endless (no τέλος) and incomplete. See *JP* V 5616 (*Pap.* IV A 56).

24. *Docenter* (pl.) literally means tutors in the university setting of the time, university teachers who assisted the professors in the teaching of the discipline. The root *docere* (Latin and Danish) emphasizes the didactic. Here Johannes de Silentio uses the term broadly to include specifically the professors with their detached objectivity, their pontifical evaluations of the past, and their lifetime appointments. See *Point of View*, *KW* XXII (*SV* XIII 300).

25. The Virgin Mary is celebrated also in other writings. See, for example, *Irony*, *KW* II (*SV* XIII 181); *Either/Or*, I, *KW* III (*SV* I 173, 288, 303); *Eighteen Discourses*, *KW* V (*SV* 97, 159); *Fragments*, *KW* VII (*SV* IV 201); *Postscript*, *KW* XII (*SV* VII 220); *Discourses in Various Spirits*, *KW* XV (*SV* VIII 190, 339); *Christian Discourses*, *KW* XVII (*SV* X 47); *Practice*, *KW* XX (*SV* XII 157); *An Upbuilding Discourse*, in *Without Authority*, *KW* XVIII (*SV* XII 249); *Judge for Yourselves!*, *KW* XXI (*SV* XII 433); *The Moment and Late Writings*, *KW* XXIII (*SV* XIV 35). See also *JP* III 2669-74 and p. 814; VII, p. 60.

26. See Genesis 18:11.

27. See Luke 1:38.

28. See Luke 23:28.

29. On the theme of contemporaneity, see especially *Fragments*, *KW* VII (*SV* IV 221-34, 247-71).

30. *Auszüge aus Lessing's Antheil an den Litteratur-briefen*, Letter 81, *Schriften*, XXX, pp. 221-23 (ed.tr.).

Problema II

1. See Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (2 ed., Riga: 1786), for example, pp. 29, 73-74, 85-86; *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, I–XXIII (Berlin: 1902-55), IV, pp. 409-10, 433-34, 439; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, tr. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), pp. 25, 51, 58:

> Even the Holy One of the Gospel must be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before He is recognized as such; even He says of Himself, "Why call ye Me (whom you see) good? None is good (the archetype of the good) except God only (whom you do not see)." But whence do we have the concept of God as the highest Good? Solely from the idea of moral perfection which reason formulates a priori and which it inseparably connects with the concept of a free will.
>
> If we now look back upon all previous attempts which have ever been undertaken to discover the principle of morality, it is not to be wondered at that they all had to fail. Man was seen to be bound to laws by his duty, but it was not seen that he is subject only to his own, yet universal, legislation, and that he is only bound to act in accordance with his own will, which is, however, designed by nature to be a will giving universal laws. For if one thought of him as subject only to a law (whatever it may be), this necessarily implied some interest as a stimulus or compulsion to obedience because the law did not arise from his will. Rather, his will was constrained by something else according to a law to act in a certain way. By this strictly necessary consequence, however, all the labor of finding a supreme ground for duty was irrevocably lost, and one never arrived at duty but only at the necessity of action from a certain interest. This might be his own interest or that of another, but in either case the imperative always had to be conditional and could not at all serve as a moral command. This principle I will call the principle of *autonomy* of the will in contrast to all other principles which I accordingly count under *heteronomy*.
>
> The essence of things is not changed by their external relations, and without reference to these relations a man must be judged only by what constitutes his absolute worth; and this is true whoever his judge is, even if it be the Supreme Being. Morality is thus the relation of actions to the autonomy of the will, i.e., to possible universal lawgiving by maxims of the will. The action which can be compatible with the autonomy of the will is permitted; that which does not agree with it is prohibited. The will whose maxims necessarily are in harmony with the laws of autonomy is a holy will or an absolutely good will.

Kant's denial of an absolute duty to God transcending rational morality (or a conflation of divine will and the autonomy of man's rational will) is shared with variations by Fichte, Schleiermacher, and Hegel. In raising the question, Johannes de Silentio runs counter to the dominant ethical thought of the time.

2. See p. 54 and note 1.