Fear and Trembling

SØREN KIERKEGAARD
1813–1855

Fear and Trembling

Frygt og Bæven

Translated from the Danish with AI (Claude) and edited



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Translated from the Danish with AI (Claude) and edited. Parallel-text edition, Forage, October 2026. forage.com/kierkegaard/fear-and-trembling

Danish text: *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, vol. 4 (Copenhagen, 1997), which reproduces the first edition of 1843 with a few corrections, from the SKS electronic edition (github.com/kb-dk/SKS_tei) published by the Royal Danish Library (CC0). English: translated from the Danish with AI (Claude), then edited for accuracy and consistency. Not reviewed by a human specialist. Free to reuse under CC BY-SA 4.0. Margin numbers are the page numbers of *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, vol. 4 (SKS 4).

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Set in Source Serif 4, with Gentium Book Plus.

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INTRODUCTION

Fear and Trembling appeared in Copenhagen in October 1843, under the pseudonym Johannes de silentio, "John of silence." Kierkegaard gave it the subtitle "dialectical lyric," and it is both: a tightly argued essay and a passionate, sometimes comic, meditation on a single story, God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac.

Johannes insists that he does not have faith; he can only admire it, and be appalled by it. If Abraham is the father of faith, then faith is not something we can easily "go beyond," as the philosophers of his day claimed. It means holding that the single individual can stand higher than the ethical, in a direct relation to God that cannot be explained to anyone. Either that is true, or Abraham is simply a man who was ready to murder his son.

The book opens with four retellings of the journey to Mount Moriah and a eulogy on Abraham, then works through three "problems": whether the ethical can be suspended, whether there is an absolute duty to God, and whether Abraham was right to keep silent.

Preface

Forord

Johannes de silentio on an age that wants to "go further" than doubt and faith, and on the modest aims of his own book.

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SKS 4.100 Was Tarquinius Superbus in seinem Garten mit den Mohnköpfen sprach, verstand der Sohn, aber nicht der Bote. / *Hamann*

SKS 4.101 Ikke blot i Handelens, men ogsaa i Ideernes Verden foranstalter vor Tid ein wirklicher Ausverkauf. Alt faaes for en saadan *Spot*-Priis, at det bliver et Spørgsmaal, om der tilsidst er Nogen, der vil byde. Enhver speculativ Marqueur, der samvittighedsfuldt pointerer den nyere Philosophies betydningsfulde Gang, enhver Privatdocent, Repetent, Student, enhver Udflytter og Indsidder i Philosophien bliver ikke staaende ved at tvivle om Alt, men gaaer videre. Maaskee vilde det være utidigt og ubetimeligt at spørge dem, hvor de dog egentlig komme hen, men høfligt og beskedent er det vel at ansee det for afgjort, at de have tvivlet om Alt, da det jo ellers var en besynderlig Tale, at de gik videre.

Denne foreløbige Bevægelse have de da Alle gjort og formodentlig saa let, at de ikke finde det fornødent at lade et Ord falde om, hvorledes; thi end ikke den, der ængstelig og bekymret søgte en lille Oplysning, fandt en saadan, et veiledende Vink, en lille diætetisk Forskrift om, hvorledes man forholder sig under denne uhyre Opgave. »Men Cartesius har jo gjort det?« Cartesius, en ærværdig, ydmyg, redelig Tænker, hvis Skrifter vist Ingen kan læse uden den dybeste Rørelse, han har gjort, hvad han har sagt, og sagt, hvad han har gjort. Ak! Ak! Ak! det er en stor Sjeldenhed i vor Tid! Cartesius har, som han selv ofte nok gjentager, ikke tvivlet i Forhold til Troen.

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Was Tarquinius Superbus in seinem Garten mit den Mohnköpfen sprach, verstand der Sohn, aber nicht der Bote. [What Tarquinius Superbus said in his garden with the poppy heads was understood by his son but not by the messenger.] / *Hamann*[1]

Not only in the world of commerce but also in the world of ideas, our age is staging ein wirklicher Ausverkauf [a real clearance sale]. Everything can be had at such a *derisory* price that the question becomes whether in the end there will be anyone who wants to bid. Every speculative billiard-marker who conscientiously keeps score of modern philosophy's momentous progress, every lecturer, tutor and student, every homesteader and lodger in philosophy, does not stop at doubting everything but goes further. It would perhaps be untimely and ill-judged to ask them where exactly they are going; but surely it is polite and modest to take it as settled that they have doubted everything, since otherwise it would be a strange thing to say that they went further.[2]

This preliminary movement, then, they have all made, and presumably so easily that they do not find it necessary to drop a word about how. For not even someone who anxiously and worriedly sought a little enlightenment found any—a guiding hint, a little dietary prescription for how one should conduct oneself under this enormous task. "But surely Descartes did it?" Descartes, a venerable, humble, honest thinker, whose writings surely no one can read without the deepest emotion—he did what he said, and said what he did. Alas! Alas! Alas! That is a great rarity in our age!

1 Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788), German thinker. The Roman king Tarquinius Superbus answered his son's messenger by silently striking off the tallest poppy heads; the son understood that he should kill the leading men of the city.
2 "Going further" than doubt and faith was the boast of the Danish Hegelians (notably H. L. Martensen), who held that philosophy begins by doubting everything.

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(»Memores tamen, ut jam dictum est, huic lumini naturali tamdiu tantum esse credendum, quamdiu nihil contrarium [102] 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. Cfr. Principia philosophiæ, pars prima § 28 og § 76).

SKS 4.102 Han har ikke raabt Brand og gjort det til Pligt for Alle at tvivle, thi Cartesius var en stille eensom Tænker, ikke en brølende Gadevægter; han har beskedent bekjendt, at hans Methode kun havde Betydning for ham selv og havde tildeels sin Grund i hans tidligere forqvaklede Viden. (Ne quis igitur putet, me hîc 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. Cfr. Dissertatio de methodo p.

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Descartes, as he himself repeats often enough, did not doubt with respect to faith.[3]

("Memores tamen, ut jam dictum est, huic lumini naturali tamdiu tantum esse credendum, quamdiu nihil contrarium [102] 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." [Mindful, however, as has already been said, that this natural light is to be trusted only so long as nothing contrary to it is revealed by God himself.... Above all, we must impress on our memory as the supreme rule that what God has revealed to us is to be believed as the most certain of all; and even if the light of reason, however clear and evident, should seem to suggest something else to us, we must nevertheless put our faith in divine authority alone rather than in our own judgment.] Cf. Principia philosophiae, Part One, § 28 and § 76.)[4]

He did not cry fire and make it everyone's duty to doubt, for Descartes was a quiet, solitary thinker, not a bellowing night watchman; he modestly admitted that his method had significance only for himself and was partly rooted in his earlier muddled learning. (Ne quis igitur putet, me hîc 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. [So let no one think that I mean to present here a method that everyone ought to follow in order to direct his reason rightly; I have resolved to set out only the one I myself have followed.... But as soon as I had

3 Key terms: "movement" renders *Bevægelse*; "faith" renders *Tro*, which also means "belief" (the verb *troe* is "to believe" or "to have faith"). Cartesius is the Latin name of René Descartes (1596–1650).
4 Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy* (1644).

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completed that course of study (namely, of my youth) at the end of which it is customary to be admitted to the ranks of the learned, I began to think quite otherwise. For I found myself entangled in so many doubts and so many errors that I judged all my efforts to learn had profited me nothing except that I had discovered my ignorance more and more.] Cf. Dissertatio de methodo, pp.[5]

2 og 3). – Hvad hine gamle Grækere, der dog ogsaa forstode sig lidt paa Philosophien, antog at være en Opgave for hele Livet, fordi den tvivlende Færdighed ikke erhverves i Dage og Uger, hvad den gamle udtjente Strider opnaaede, der havde bevaret Tvivlens Ligevægt gjennem alle Besnærelser, uforfærdet negtet Sandsens Vished og Tankens Vished, ubestikkelig trodset Selvkjærlighedens Angst og Medfølelsens Insinuationer – dermed begynder i vor Tid Enhver.

2 and 3).—What those ancient Greeks, who after all also knew a little about philosophy, took to be a task for a whole lifetime, because skill in doubting is not acquired in days and weeks; what the old veteran warrior attained, who had kept the equilibrium of doubt through every snare, fearlessly denied the certainty of the senses and the certainty of thought, incorruptibly defied the anxieties of self-love and the insinuations of sympathy—that is where everyone begins in our age.[6]

I vor Tid bliver Enhver ikke staaende ved Troen, men gaaer videre. Et Spørgsmaal om, hvor de komme hen, vilde maaskee være en Dumdristighed, derimod er det vel et Tegn paa Belevenhed og Dannelse, at jeg antager, at Enhver har Troen, da det ellers bliver en besynderlig Tale: at gaae videre. I hine gamle Dage var det anderledes, da var Troen en Opgave for hele Livet, fordi man antog, at den troende Færdighed ikke [103] erhverves hverken i Dage eller Uger.

In our age no one stops at faith; everyone goes further. To ask where they are going would perhaps be foolhardy; on the other hand it is surely a sign of good manners and culture that I assume everyone has faith, since otherwise it would be a strange thing to say: to go further. In those old days it was different. Then faith was a task for a whole lifetime, because it was assumed that skill in believing is not [103] acquired in days or in weeks.

SKS 4.103 Naar da den prøvede Olding nærmede sig sit Endeligt, havde stridt den gode Strid og bevaret Troen, da var hans Hjerte ungt nok til ikke at have glemt hiin Angst og Bævelse, der tugtede Ynglingen, som Manden vel beherskede, men som intet Menneske ganske voxer fra – uden forsaavidt det skulde lykkes ved saa tidlig som mulig at gaae videre. Hvor da hine ærværdige Skikkelser naaede hen, der begynder i vor Tid Enhver for at gaae videre.

When the tested old man drew near his end, having fought the good fight and kept the faith, his heart was still young enough not to have forgotten that fear and trembling which disciplined the youth, which the grown man mastered, but which no human being ever entirely outgrows—unless, that is, one manages it by going further as early as possible. Where those venerable figures arrived, that is where everyone in our age begins, in order to go further.[7]

Nærværende Forfatter er ingenlunde Philosoph, han har ikke forstaaet Systemet, om det er til, om det er færdigt, han har allerede nok for sit svage Hoved i den Tanke, hvilket uhyre Hoved Enhver i vor Tid maa have, da Enhver har en saadan uhyre Tanke. Om man end var istand til at omsætte hele Troens Indhold i Begrebets

The present author is by no means a philosopher. He has not understood the System, whether there is one, whether it is finished; he already has enough for his weak head in the thought of what an enormous head everyone in our age must have, since everyone has such an enormous thought.

5 Copenhagen's night watchmen called out the hours and raised the alarm for fire. The Latin is from Descartes' *Discourse on Method* (1637).

6 The ancient Greek skeptics, who cultivated suspension of judgment as a lifelong discipline.

7 "Fear and trembling" (*Angst og Bævelse*) is Philippians 2:12 and gives the book its title; "fought the good fight … kept the faith" is 2 Timothy 4:7.

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Form, saa følger deraf ikke, at man har begrebet Troen, begrebet, hvorledes man kom ind i den, eller hvorledes den kom ind i Een. Nærværende Forfatter er ingenlunde Philosoph, han er, poetice et eleganter, en Extra-Skriver, der hverken skriver Systemet eller *Løfter* om Systemet, der hverken forskriver sig paa Systemet, eller *til* Systemet.

Han skriver, fordi det er ham en Luxus, der vinder i Behagelighed og Evidents, jo Færre der kjøbe og læse, hvad han skriver. Han forudseer let sin Skjebne i en Tid, da man har slaaet en Streg over Lidenskaben for at tjene Videnskaben, i en Tid, da en Forfatter, der vil have Læsere, maa passe paa at skrive saaledes, at det beqvemt lader sig gjennemblade under Middagssøvnen, og passe paa at danne sin ydre Optræden i Lighed med hiin høflige Gartnersvends i Adresseavisen, der med Hatten i Haanden og gode Recommendationer fra det Sted, hvor han har tjent sidst, anbefaler sig til et høistæret Publikum.

Han forudseer sin Skjæbne, at blive aldeles ignoreret, han aner det Forfærdelige, at den nidkjære Kritik vil lade ham flere Gange staae Skoleret; han gruer for det endnu Forfærdeligere, at en eller anden driftig Registrator, en Paragraphsluger, (der, for at frelse Videnskaben, altid er villig til at gjøre ved Andres Skrifter, hvad Trop for »at redde Smagen« høimodigen gjorde ved »Menneskeslægtens [104] Ødelæggelse«) – skal skære ham over i §§, og gjøre det med samme Ubøielighed som den Mand, der for at tjene Interpunctions-Videnskaben inddeelte sin Tale ved at tælle Ordene, saa der gik 50 Ord paa et Punktum og 35 paa et Semikolon.

SKS 4.104 – Jeg falder i dybeste Underdanighed ned for enhver systematisk Posekigger: »Det er ikke Systemet, det har ikke det Mindste med Systemet at gjøre. Jeg nedbeder alt Godt over Systemet og over de danske Interessenter i denne Omnibus; thi et Taarn bliver det nok neppe. Jeg ønsker dem alle samtlige og hver især til Lykke og Velsignelse.«

ENGLISH

Even if one were able to translate the whole content of faith into the form of the concept, it would not follow that one has comprehended faith, comprehended how one came into it or how it came into one. The present author is by no means a philosopher; he is, poetice et eleganter [to put it poetically and elegantly], a supernumerary clerk who neither writes the System nor *promises* of the System, who neither stakes his pen on the System nor signs himself away *to* it.[8]

He writes because for him it is a luxury, one that gains in pleasantness and obviousness the fewer there are who buy and read what he writes. He easily foresees his fate in an age that has crossed out passion in order to serve science, an age in which an author who wants readers must take care to write so that his book can be comfortably leafed through during an after-dinner nap, and must take care to shape his outward manner after that polite gardener's boy in the advertiser who, hat in hand and with good references from his last place of service, recommends himself to an esteemed public.[9]

He foresees his fate: to be entirely ignored. He has a presentiment of the terrible prospect that zealous criticism will make him run the gauntlet more than once; he dreads the still more terrible prospect that some enterprising abstractor, some swallower of paragraphs (who, to save science, is always willing to do to other people's writings what Trop, "to save taste," magnanimously did to "The Destruction of the Human [104] Race")—will chop him up into §§, and do it with the same inflexibility as the man who, to serve the science of punctuation, divided up his speech by counting the words, so that 50 words went to a period and 35 to a semicolon.[10]

— I fall down in deepest submission before every systematic bag-inspector: "This is not the System; it has not the least thing to do with the System. I call down every blessing on the System and on the Danish shareholders in this omnibus; for a tower it will hardly become. I wish them all, collectively and individually, happiness and blessing."[11]

8 "The System" is Hegel's philosophy and its Danish followers' promises to complete it.
9 Key term: "passion" renders *Lidenskab*. *Adresseavisen* was Copenhagen's advertising paper, full of notices from servants seeking positions.
10 Trop, a perpetual student in J. L. Heiberg's vaudeville *The Inseparables* (1827), grandly tears up his own tragedy "The Destruction of the Human Race."

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Ærbødigst / Johannes de silentio.	Respectfully, / Johannes de silentio.[12]

11 Customs officers at the Copenhagen city gates searched travelers' bags. The "tower" recalls the unfinished Tower of Babel (Genesis 11) and the tower in Luke 14:28–30.
12 The pseudonym means "John of silence."

Tuning Up

Stemning

Four retellings of the journey to Mount Moriah, each imagining an Abraham who falls short of faith.

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SKS 4.105 Der var engang en Mand, han havde som Barn hørt hiin skjønne Fortælling om, hvorledes Gud fristede Abraham, og hvorledes han bestod i Fristelsen, bevarede Troen og anden Gang fik en Søn mod Forventning. Da han blev ældre, læste han den samme Fortælling med endnu større Beundring; thi Livet havde adskilt, hvad der var forenet i Barnets fromme Eenfoldighed. Jo ældre han blev, desto oftere vendte hans Tanke sig til hiin Fortælling, hans Begeistring blev stærkere og stærkere, og dog kunde han mindre og mindre forstaae Fortællingen. Tilsidst glemte han alt Andet over den; hans Sjæl havde kun eet Ønske, at see Abraham, een Længsel, at have været Vidne til hiin Begivenhed.

Once upon a time there was a man who as a child had heard that beautiful story of how God tempted Abraham, and how he withstood the temptation, kept the faith, and for the second time received a son against all expectation. When he grew older he read the same story with even greater admiration, for life had separated what had been united in the child's pious simplicity. The older he grew, the more often his thoughts turned to that story; his enthusiasm grew stronger and stronger, and yet he could understand the story less and less. At last he forgot everything else for it; his soul had only one wish, to see Abraham, one longing, to have been a witness to that event.[1]

Hans Begjering var ikke at see Østerlandets skjønne Egne, ikke det forjættede Lands jordiske Herlighed, ikke hiint gudfrygtige Ægtepar, hvis Alderdom Gud velsignede, ikke den bedagede Patriarchs ærværdige Skikkelse, ikke den af Gud skjænkede Isaaks frodige Ungdom – han havde Intet mod, at det Samme foregik paa en gold Hede. Hans Attraa var at følge med de 3 Dages Reise, da Abraham reed med Sorgen foran sig og Isaak ved sin Side. Hans Ønske var at være tilstede i den Stund, da Abraham opløftede sit Øie og saae Morijabjerget i det Fjerne, den Stund han lod Æslerne tilbage, og gik ene med Isaak op til Bjerget; thi det, der beskæftigede ham, var ikke Phantasiens kunstrige Væven, men Tankens Gysen.

His desire was not to see the beautiful lands of the East, not the earthly glory of the Promised Land, not that God-fearing couple whose old age God blessed, not the venerable figure of the aged patriarch, not the vigorous youth of Isaac, God's gift—he would not have minded if the same thing had taken place on a barren heath. His yearning was to go along on the three days' journey, when Abraham rode with grief before him and Isaac at his side. His wish was to be present at the hour when Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw Mount Moriah in the distance, the hour when he left the donkeys behind and went up the mountain alone with Isaac; for what occupied him was not the ingenious weaving of imagination but the shudder of thought.

Hiin Mand var ikke Tænker, han følte ingen Trang til at komme ud over Troen; det tyktes ham at maatte være det Herligste, at ihukommes som dens Fader, et misundelsesværdigt Lod, at eie den, om end Ingen vidste det.

That man was not a thinker; he felt no need to get beyond faith. It seemed to him that it must be the most glorious thing of all to be remembered as its father, an enviable lot to possess it, even if no one knew it.

SKS 4.106

That man was no learned exegete; he did not know Hebrew. Had he known Hebrew, then perhaps he

DANISH

Hiin Mand var ikke lærd Exeget, han kunde ikke Hebraisk; havde han kunnet Hebraisk, da havde han maaskee let forstaaet Fortællingen og Abraham.

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would easily have understood the story and Abraham.

I

DANISH

SKS 4.107 *»Og Gud fristede Abraham og sagde til ham, tag Isaak, Din eneste Søn, som Du elsker, og gaae hen i det Land Morija og offer ham der til et Brændoffer paa et Bjerg, som jeg vil vise Dig.«*

Det var en aarle Morgen, Abraham stod tidlig op, han lod Æslerne sadle, forlod sit Paulun, og Isaak med ham, men Sara saae ud ad Vinduet efter dem, ned gjennem Dalen, indtil hun ikke saae dem mere. De rede tause i 3 Dage, paa den 4de Dags Morgen sagde Abraham end ikke et Ord, men opløftede Øiet og saae Morijabjerget i det Fjerne. Han lod Drengene tilbage og gik ene med Isaak ved Haanden op til Bjerget. Men Abraham sagde til sig selv: »jeg vil dog ikke dølge for Isaak, hvorhen denne Gang fører ham.« Han stod stille, han lagde sin Haand paa Isaaks Hoved til en Velsignelse, og Isaak bøiede sig for at modtage den.

Og Abrahams Aasyn var Faderlighed, hans Blik var mildt, hans Tale formanende. Men Isaak kunde ikke forstaae ham, hans Sjæl kunde ikke opløftes; han omfattede Abrahams Knæe, han bønfaldt ved hans Fod, han bad for sit unge Liv, for sin skjønne Forhaabning, han mindede om Glæden i Abrahams Huus, han mindede om Sorgen og Eensomheden. Da reiste Abraham Drengen op og gik med ham ved sin Haand, og hans Ord vare fulde af Trøst og Formaning. Men Isaak kunde ikke forstaae ham. Han besteg Morijabjerget, men Isaak forstod ham ikke. Da vendte han sig bort et Øieblik fra ham, men da Isaak anden Gang saae Abrahams Aasyn, da var det forandret, hans Blik var vildt, hans Skikkelse var Rædsel.

Han greb Isaak i Brystet, kastede ham til Jorden og sagde: »Dumme Dreng, troer Du jeg er Din Fader? Jeg er en Afgudsdyrker. Troer Du det er Guds Befaling? Nei det er min Lyst.« Da skjælvede Isaak og raabte i sin Angst: »Gud i Himlene forbarm Dig over mig, Abrahams Gud forbarm Dig over mig, har jeg ingen Fader paa Jorden, [108] saa vær

ENGLISH

“And God tempted 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 will show you.”[2]

It was early in the morning. Abraham got up early, had the donkeys saddled, and left his tent, and Isaac with him; but Sarah looked out of the window after them, down through the valley, until she could see them no more. They rode in silence for three days; on the morning of the fourth day Abraham still said not a word, but lifted up his eyes and saw Mount Moriah in the distance. He left the servants behind and went up the mountain alone, with Isaac by the hand. But Abraham said to himself: “I will not hide from Isaac where this walk is leading him.” He stood still, he laid his hand on Isaac’s head in blessing, and Isaac bowed to receive it.

And Abraham’s face was fatherliness, his gaze was gentle, his words admonishing. But Isaac could not understand him; his soul could not be lifted up. He clasped Abraham’s knees, he pleaded at his feet, he begged for his young life, for his fair hopes; he reminded him of the joy in Abraham’s house, he reminded him of the sorrow and the loneliness. Then Abraham raised the boy up and walked with him by the hand, and his words were full of comfort and admonition. But Isaac could not understand him. He climbed Mount Moriah, but Isaac did not understand him. Then he turned away from him for a moment; but when Isaac saw Abraham’s face the second time, it was changed: his gaze was wild, his whole form was horror.

He seized Isaac by the chest, threw him to the ground, and said: “Stupid boy, do you think I am your father? I am an idolater. Do you think this is God’s command? No, it is my own desire.” Then Isaac trembled and cried out in his anguish: “God

1 Key term: “temptation” renders *Fristelse*, the word of the Danish Bible in Genesis 22:1.
2 Genesis 22:1–2, slightly abridged.

DANISH

Du min Fader!« Men Abraham sagde sagte ved sig selv: »Herre i Himlene, jeg takker Dig; det er dog bedre at han troer, jeg er et Umenneske, end at han skulde tabe Troen paa Dig.«

ENGLISH

in heaven, have mercy on me; God of Abraham, have mercy on me; if I have no father on earth, [108] then you be my father!" But Abraham said softly to himself: "Lord in heaven, I thank you; after all, it is better that he believes I am a monster than that he should lose faith in you."[3]

SKS 4.108 Naar Barnet skal vænnes fra, da sværter Moderen sit Bryst, det var jo og Synd, at Brystet skulde see lifligt ud, naar Barnet ikke maa faae det. Saa troer Barnet, at Brystet har forandret sig, men Moderen hun er den samme, hendes Blik er kjærligt og ømt som altid. Held den, der ikke behøvede forfærdeligere Midler for at vænne Barnet fra!

When the child is to be weaned, the mother blackens her breast; it would be a shame, after all, for the breast to look delightful when the child is not to have it. So the child believes that the breast has changed, but the mother—she is the same; her gaze is loving and tender as ever. Happy the one who needed no more terrible means to wean the child!

II

DANISH

SKS 4.109 Det var en aarle Morgen, Abraham stod tidlig op, han omfavnede Sara, sin Alderdoms Brud, og Sara kyssede Isaak, der tog Skjendselen fra hende, hendes Stolthed, hendes Haab i alle Slægter. Saa rede de tause hen ad Veien, og Abrahams Blik var fæstet mod Jorden, til paa den 4de Dag, da opløftede han Øiet og saae langt borte Morija Bjerget, men hans Blik vendte sig atter mod Jorden. Taus lagde han Brændet til Orden, bandt Isaak, taus drog han Kniven; da saae han Væderen, som Gud havde udseet. Den offrede han og drog hjem. – – – Fra den Dag af blev Abraham gammel, han kunde ikke glemme, at Gud havde fordret det af ham.

Isaak trivedes som forhen; men Abrahams Øie var fordunklet, han saae ikke Glæden mere.

Naar Barnet er blevet stort og skal vænnes fra, da skjuler Moderen jomfrueligt sin Barm, saa har Barnet ingen Moder mere. Held det Barn, der ikke anderledes tabte Moderen!

ENGLISH

It was early in the morning. Abraham got up early; he embraced Sarah, the bride of his old age, and Sarah kissed Isaac, who had taken away her disgrace, her pride, her hope for all generations. Then they rode in silence along the road, and Abraham's gaze was fixed on the ground until the fourth day; then he lifted up his eyes and saw Mount Moriah far away, but his gaze turned again to the ground. Silently he laid the wood in order, bound Isaac; silently he drew the knife—then he saw the ram that God had chosen. This he sacrificed, and went home.———From that day on Abraham became old; he could not forget that God had demanded this of him.

Isaac flourished as before; but Abraham's eye was darkened, he saw joy no more.

When the child has grown big and is to be weaned, the mother modestly covers her bosom, and then the child no longer has a mother. Happy the child who lost its mother in no other way!

III

DANISH

SKS 4.110 Det var en aarle Morgen, Abraham stod tidlig op; han kyssede Sara, den unge Moder, og Sara kyssede Isaak, hendes Lyst, hendes Glæde i alle Tider. Og Abraham reed tankefuld hen ad Veien, han tænkte paa Hagar og

ENGLISH

It was early in the morning. Abraham got up early; he kissed Sarah, the young mother, and Sarah kissed Isaac, her delight, her joy for all time. And

3 Key term: "anguish" renders *Angst*.

DANISH

Sønnen, som han jog ud i Ørkenen. Han besteg Morijabjerget, han drog Kniven.

Det var en stille Aften, da reed Abraham ene ud, og han reed til Morijabjerget; han kastede sig paa sit Aasyn, han bad Gud at tilgive ham hans Synd, at han havde villet offre Isaak, at Faderen havde glemt sin Pligt mod Sønnen. Han reed oftere sin eensomme Vei, men han havde ikke Ro. Han kunde ikke begribe, at det var en Synd, at han havde villet offre Gud det Bedste, han eiede, det, hvorfor han gjerne selv havde ladet sit Liv mange Gange; og hvis det var en Synd, hvis han ikke havde elsket Isaak saaledes, da kunde han ikke forstaae, at den kunde tilgives; thi hvilken Synd var forfærdeligere?

Naar Barnet skal vænnes fra, da er ei heller Moderen uden Sorg, at hun og Barnet mere og mere skilles ad; at Barnet, der først laae under hendes Hjerte, senere dog hvilede ved hendes Bryst, ikke skal være saa nær mere. Saa sørge de sammen den korte Sorg. Held den, der beholdt Barnet saa nær, og ikke behøvede at sørge mere!

ENGLISH

Abraham rode thoughtfully along the road; he thought of Hagar and the son whom he drove out into the desert. He climbed Mount Moriah; he drew the knife.[4]

It was a quiet evening when Abraham rode out alone, and he rode to Mount Moriah; he threw himself 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 the son. He rode his lonely way more often, but he found no rest. He could not grasp that it was a sin to have been willing to sacrifice to God the best thing he owned, that for which he himself would gladly have laid down his life many times over; and if it was a sin, if he had not loved Isaac in that way, then he could not understand that it could be forgiven; for what sin was more terrible?

When the child is to be weaned, the mother too is not without sorrow that she and the child are more and more separated, that the child who first lay under her heart and later rested at her breast will no longer be so near. So they grieve together the brief grief. Happy the one who kept the child so near and needed to grieve no more!

IV

DANISH

SKS 4.111 Det var en aarle Morgen, Alt var beredt til Reisen i Abrahams Huus. Han tog Afsked med Sara, og Elieser den troe Tjener fulgte ham ud ad Veien, indtil han atter vendte tilbage. De rede eendrægtigen sammen, Abraham og Isaak, indtil de kom til Morijabjerget. Men Abraham beredte Alt til Offret, rolig og mild, men idet han vendte sig bort og drog Kniven, da saae Isaak, at Abrahams Venstre knyttede sig i Fortvivlelse, at der gik en Skjælven igjennem hans Legeme – men Abraham drog Kniven.

Da vendte de atter hjem, og Sara ilede dem imøde, men Isaak havde tabt Troen. Der er i Verden aldrig sagt et Ord derom, og Isaak talte aldrig til noget Menneske, om hvad han havde seet, og Abraham anede ikke, at Nogen havde seet det.

ENGLISH

It was early in the morning; everything was ready for the journey in Abraham's house. He took leave of Sarah, and Eliezer, the faithful servant, accompanied him along the road until he turned back again. They rode together in harmony, Abraham and Isaac, until they came to Mount Moriah. But Abraham prepared everything for the sacrifice, calmly and gently; yet as 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.[5]

Then they returned home again, and Sarah hurried to meet them, but Isaac had lost his faith. Not a word has ever been said about it in the world, and Isaac never spoke to anyone about what he had seen, and Abraham had no idea that anyone had seen it.

4 Abraham drove out his slave Hagar and their son Ishmael at Sarah's demand (Genesis 21:9–21).
5 Eliezer of Damascus, Abraham's steward (Genesis 15:2).

DANISH

Naar Barnet skal vænnes fra, da har Moderen den stærkere Føde ved Haanden, at Barnet ikke skal omkomme. Held den, der har den stærkere Føde ved Haanden!

Saaledes og paa mange lignende Maader tænkte hiin Mand, om hvilken vi tale, over denne Begivenhed. Hver Gang han da efter en Vandring til Morija-Bjerget vendte hjem, da sank han sammen af Træthed, han foldede sine Hænder og sagde: »Ingen var dog stor som Abraham, hvo er istand til at forstaae ham?«

ENGLISH

When the child is to be weaned, the mother has stronger food at hand, so that the child will not perish. Happy the one who has the stronger food at hand!

In this way and in many similar ways the man of whom we speak thought about this event. Each time he returned home after a pilgrimage to Mount Moriah, he sank down in weariness, folded his hands and said: “No one, after all, was as great as Abraham; who is able to understand him?”

Eulogy on Abraham

Lovtale over Abraham
A hymn of praise to Abraham, greatest of all because he believed and expected the impossible.

DANISH

SKS 4.112 Dersom der ingen evig Bevidsthed var i et Menneske, dersom der til Grund for Alt kun laae en vildt gjærende Magt, der vridende sig i dunkle Lidenskaber frembragte Alt, hvad der var stort og hvad der var ubetydeligt, dersom en bundløs Tomhed, aldrig mættet, skjulte sig under Alt, hvad var da Livet Andet end Fortvivlelse?

Dersom det forholdt sig saaledes, dersom der intet helligt Baand var, der sammenknyttede Menneskeheden, dersom den ene Slægt stod op efter den anden som Løvet i Skoven, dersom den ene Slægt afløste den anden som Fuglesangen i Skoven, dersom Slægten gik gjennem Verden, som Skibet gaaer gjennem Havet, som Veiret gjennem Ørkenen, en tankeløs og ufrugtbar Gjerning, dersom en evig Glemsel altid hungrig lurede paa sit Bytte, og der var ingen Magt stærk nok til at frarive den det – hvor var da Livet tomt og trøstesløst! Men derfor er det ikke saaledes, og som Gud skabte Mand og Qvinde, saa dannede han Helten og Digteren eller Taleren. Denne kan Intet gjøre af hvad hiin gjør, han kan kun beundre, elske, glæde sig ved Helten.

Dog er ogsaa han lykkelig, ikke mindre end denne; thi Helten er ligesom hans bedre Væsen, i hvilket han er forelsket, glad ved, at det dog ikke er ham selv, at hans Kjærlighed kan være Beundring. Han er Erindringens Genius, kan Intet gjøre uden minde om, hvad der er gjort, Intet gjøre uden beundre, hvad der er gjort; han tager Intet af sit Eget, men er misundelig paa det Betroede. Han følger sit Hjertes Valg, men naar han har fundet det Søgte, da vandrer han om for hver Mands Dør med sin Sang og med sin Tale, at Alle maae beundre Helten som han, være stolt af Helten, som han er det.

Dette er hans Bedrift, hans ydmyge Gjerning, dette er hans tro [113] Tjeneste i Heltens Huus. Bliver han saaledes sin Kjærlighed tro, strider han Dag og Nat med

ENGLISH

If there were no eternal consciousness in a human being, if at the bottom of everything there lay only a wild, fermenting power that, writhing in dark passions, produced everything, both what was great and what was insignificant; if a bottomless emptiness, never satisfied, lay hidden beneath everything—what then would life be but despair?

If it were so, if there were no sacred bond that knit humankind together, if one generation rose up after another like the leaves in the forest, if one generation succeeded another like the songs of birds in the forest, if the human race passed through the world as a ship passes through the sea, as the wind through the desert, a thoughtless and fruitless doing; if an eternal oblivion, ever hungry, lay in wait for its prey and there were no power strong enough to wrest it away—how empty and comfortless life would be! But that is precisely why it is not so; and as God created man and woman, so he formed the hero and the poet or orator. The latter can do nothing of what the former does; he can only admire, love, and rejoice in the hero.[1]

Yet he too is happy, no less than the hero; for the hero is, as it were, his better self, with which he is in love, glad that it is not himself after all, that his love can be admiration. He is the genius of recollection; he can do nothing but call to mind what has been done, nothing but admire what has been done; he takes nothing of his own, but is jealous of what has been entrusted to him. He follows his heart's choice, but when he has found what he sought, he goes from door to door with his song and his speech, so that all may admire the hero as he does, be proud of the hero as he is.

This is his achievement, his humble work; this is his faithful [113] service in the hero's house. If he remains true to his love in this way, if he strives day

1 The generations of men as leaves is a famous simile from Homer's *Iliad* (6.146).

DANISH

Glemselens Underfundighed, der vil fraliste ham Helten, da har han fuldkommet sin Gjerning, da samles han med Helten, der har elsket ham ligesaa trofast, thi Digteren er ligesom Heltens bedre Væsen, vel kraftesløs som et Minde er det, men ogsaa forklaret, som et Minde er det. Derfor skal Ingen være glemt, der var stor, og varer det end længere, tager Misforstaaelsens Sky end Helten bort, hans Elsker kommer dog, og jo længere Tiden gik hen, desto trofastere hænger han ved ham.

SKS 4.113 Nei! Ingen skal glemmes, der var stor i Verden; men Enhver var stor paa sin Viis, og Enhver i Forhold til dets Storhed, *han elskede.* Thi den, der elskede sig selv, blev stor ved sig selv, og den, der elskede andre Mennesker, blev stor ved sin Hengivenhed, men den, der elskede Gud, blev større end Alle. Enhver skal mindes, men Enhver blev stor i Forhold til sin *Forventning.* Een blev stor ved at forvente det Mulige; en Anden ved at forvente det Evige; men den, der forventede det Umulige, blev større end Alle. Enhver skal mindes, men Enhver var stor alt i Forhold til dets Størrelse, han *stred* med.

Thi den, der stred med Verden, blev stor ved at overvinde Verden, og den, der stred med sig selv, blev større ved at overvinde sig selv; men den, der stred med Gud, blev større end Alle. Saaledes blev der stridt i Verden, Mand mod Mand, Een mod Tusinde, men den, der stred med Gud, var større end Alle. Saaledes blev der stridt paa Jorden: der var den, der overvandt Alt ved sin Kraft, og der var den, der overvandt Gud ved sin Afmagt. Der var den, der stolede paa sig selv og vandt Alt, der var den, der tryg ved sin Styrke offrede Alt, men den, der troede Gud, var større end Alle.

Der var den, der var stor ved sin Kraft, og den, der var stor ved sin Viisdom, og den, der var stor ved sit Haab, og den, der var stor ved sin Kjærlighed, men Abraham var større end Alle, stor ved den Kraft, hvis Styrke er Afmagt, stor ved den Viisdom, hvis Hemmelighed er Daarskab, stor ved det Haab, hvis Form er Vanvid, stor ved den Kjærlighed, der er Had til sig selv.

ENGLISH

and night against the wiles of oblivion that would trick him out of his hero, then he has accomplished his work; then he is gathered to the hero, who has loved him just as faithfully, for the poet is, as it were, the hero's better self—powerless, to be sure, as a memory is, but also transfigured, as a memory is. Therefore no one who was great shall be forgotten; and even if it takes a long time, even if a cloud of misunderstanding carries the hero away, his lover still comes, and the longer the time that has passed, the more faithfully he clings to him.

No! No one who was great in the world shall be forgotten; but each was great in his own way, and each in proportion to the greatness of what *he loved.* For he who loved himself became great by himself, and he who loved other people became great by his devotion, but he who loved God became greater than all. Everyone shall be remembered, but each became great in proportion to his *expectation.* One became great by expecting the possible, another by expecting the eternal; but he who expected the impossible became greater than all. Everyone shall be remembered, but each was great in proportion to the magnitude of what he *strove* with.

For he who strove with the world became great by overcoming the world, and he who strove with himself became greater by overcoming himself; but he who strove with God became greater than all. So there was striving in the world, man against man, one against a thousand; but he who strove with God was greater than all. So there was striving on earth: there was one who overcame everything by his strength, and there was one who overcame God by his powerlessness. There was one who relied on himself and gained everything; there was one who, secure in his strength, sacrificed everything; but he who believed God was greater than all.[2]

There was one who was great by his strength, and one who was great by his wisdom, and one who was great by his hope, and one who was great by his love; but Abraham was greater than all—great by that power whose strength is powerlessness, great by that wisdom whose secret is foolishness,

2 Striving with God and prevailing recalls Jacob's wrestling at the Jabbok (Genesis 32:22–30).

DANISH

ENGLISH

great by that hope whose form is madness, great by that love which is hatred of oneself.[3]

Ved Troen vandrede Abraham ud fra Fædrenes Land og blev Fremmed i Forjættelsens. Han lod Eet tilbage, tog Eet med sig; han lod sin jordiske Forstand tilbage, og tog Troen med sig; ellers var han vel ikke vandret ud, men havde tænkt, det er jo urimeligt. Ved Troen var han en [114] Fremmed i Forjættelsens Land, og der var Intet, der erindrede ham om det Kjære, men Alt fristede ved sin Nyhed hans Sjæl til vemodig Længsel. Og dog var han Guds Udvalgte, i hvem Herren havde Velbehag! Ja havde han været en Forskudt, forstødt fra Guds Naade, da kunde han bedre have fattet det, nu var det jo som en Spot over ham og over hans Tro.

By faith Abraham went out from the land of his fathers and became a stranger in the land of promise. He left one thing behind and took one thing with him: he left his earthly understanding behind and took faith with him; otherwise he would surely not have gone out, but would have thought: this is preposterous. By faith he was a [114] stranger in the land of promise, and there was nothing that reminded him of what was dear to him, but everything by its newness tempted his soul to wistful longing. And yet he was God's chosen one, in whom the Lord was well pleased! Indeed, had he been an outcast, banished from God's grace, he could have grasped it better; as it was, it seemed a mockery of him and of his faith.[4]

SKS 4.114 Der var i Verden ogsaa den, der levede forviist fra det fædrene Land, som han elskede. Han er ikke glemt, ei heller hans Klagesange, naar han i Vemod søgte og fandt det Tabte. Af Abraham er der ingen Klagesang. Det er menneskeligt at klage, menneskeligt at græde med den Grædende, men det er større at troe, saligere at betragte den Troende.

There was also one in the world who lived exiled from the land of his fathers, which he loved. He is not forgotten, nor are his laments, when in his sorrow he sought and found what was lost. Of Abraham there is no lament. It is human to lament, human to weep with those who weep, but it is greater to believe, more blessed to contemplate the one who believes.[5]

Ved Troen modtog Abraham Forjættelsen, at i hans Sæd skulde alle Jordens Slægter velsignes. Tiden gik hen, Muligheden var der, Abraham troede; Tiden gik hen, det blev urimeligt, Abraham troede. Der var den i Verden, der ogsaa havde en Forventning. Tiden gik hen, det lakkede mod Aften, han var ikke ussel nok til at have glemt sin Forventning, derfor skal han heller ikke glemmes. Da sørgede han, og Sorgen bedrog ham ikke, som Livet havde gjort det, den gjorde for ham Alt hvad den kunde, i Sorgens Sødme eiede han sin skuffede Forventning. Det er menneskeligt at sørge, det er menneskeligt at sørge med den Sørgende, men det er større at troe, saligere at betragte den Troende. Af Abraham have vi ingen Sørgesang.

By faith Abraham received the promise that in his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. Time passed, the possibility was there, Abraham believed; time passed, it became preposterous, Abraham believed. There was one in the world who also had an expectation. Time passed, evening drew on; he was not wretched enough to have forgotten his expectation, and so he too shall not be forgotten. Then he grieved, and grief did not deceive him as life had done; it did for him all it could; in the sweetness of grief he possessed his disappointed expectation. It is human to grieve, human to grieve with those who grieve, but it is greater to believe, more blessed to contemplate the one who believes. Of Abraham we have no song of mourning.[6]

Han talte ikke vemodig Dagene, medens Tiderne gik, han betragtede ikke Sara med mistænksomme Blikke, om hun

He did not wistfully count the days as the seasons passed; he did not look at Sarah with suspicious

3 Echoes 2 Corinthians 12:9 (strength made perfect in weakness), 1 Corinthians 1:25 (the foolishness of God) and Luke 14:26 (hating one's own life).
4 Modeled on Hebrews 11:8–9. "Preposterous" renders *urimeligt* (unreasonable), kept distinct from *det Absurde*, "the absurd."
5 "Weep with those who weep": Romans 12:15. The exile is perhaps Ovid, whose *Tristia* lament his banishment from Rome.
6 The promise: Genesis 12:3 and 22:18.

DANISH

ikke blev gammel, han standsede ikke Solens Gang, at Sara ikke skulde ældes og med hende hans Forventning, dyssende sang han ikke for Sara sit vemodige Qvad. Abraham blev gammel, Sara til Spot i Landet, og dog var han Guds Udvalgte og Arving til Forjættelsen, at i hans Sæd skulde alle Jordens Slægter velsignes. Saa var det jo bedre, at han ikke var Guds Udvalgte? Hvad er det at være Guds Udvalgte? Er det at blive negtet i Ungdommen Ungdommens Ønske, for med stor Besværlighed at faae det opfyldt i Alderdommen. Men Abraham troede og holdt Forjættelsen fast. Hvis Abraham havde vaklet, da havde han opgivet den.

Han havde sagt til Gud: »saa er det dog maaskee ikke Din Villie, at det skal skee, saa vil jeg opgive Ønsket; det var mit eneste, det var min Salighed. Min Sjæl er oprigtig, jeg skjuler intet hemmeligt Nag, fordi Du negtede det.« Han skulde ikke være glemt, han skulde have [115] frelst Mange ved sit Exempel, men dog ikke være bleven Troens Fader; thi det er stort at opgive sit Ønske, men det er større at fastholde det, efter at have opgivet det; det er stort at gribe det Evige, men det er større at fastholde det Timelige, efterat have opgivet det. – Da kom Tidens Fylde.

SKS 4.115 Havde Abraham ikke troet, da var vel Sara død af Sorg, og Abraham, sløvet i Græmmelse, havde ikke forstaaet Opfyldelsen, men smilet ad den som ad en Ungdoms Drøm. Men Abraham troede, derfor var han ung; thi den, der altid haaber det Bedste, han bliver gammel, bedraget af Livet, og den, der altid er forberedt paa det Værste, han bliver tidlig gammel, men den, der troer, han bevarer en evig Ungdom. Priset derfor hiin Fortælling! Thi Sara, skjønt alderstegen, var ung nok til at begjere Moderens Lyst, og Abraham, skjønt graahærdet, var ung nok til at ønske at være Fader.

I udvortes Henseende ligger det Vidunderlige i, at det skete efter deres Forventning, i dybere Forstand ligger Troens Vidunder i, at Abraham og Sara vare unge nok til at ønske, og at Troen havde bevaret deres Ønske og dermed deres Ungdom. Han modtog Forjættelsens Opfyldelse, han modtog den troende, og det skete efter

ENGLISH

glances to see whether she was growing old; he did not stop the course of the sun so that Sarah would not age, and his expectation with her; he did not sing Sarah his mournful lay to lull her. Abraham grew old, Sarah became a laughingstock in the land, and yet he was God's chosen one and heir to the promise that in his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. Would it not have been better, then, if he had not been God's chosen one? What is it to be God's chosen one? Is it to be denied in youth the wish of youth, only to have it fulfilled with great difficulty in old age? But Abraham believed and held fast to the promise. If Abraham had wavered, he would have given it up.[7]

He would have said to God: "Then perhaps it is not your will after all that it should happen; so I will give up the wish. It was my only one, it was my bliss. My soul is sincere; I harbor no secret resentment because you denied it." He would not have been forgotten, he would have [115] saved many by his example, but he would not have become the father of faith. For it is great to give up one's wish, but it is greater to hold fast to it after having given it up; it is great to grasp the eternal, but it is greater to hold fast to the temporal after having given it up.—Then came the fullness of time.[8]

Had Abraham not believed, Sarah would probably have died of grief, and Abraham, dulled by sorrow, would not have understood the fulfillment but smiled at it as at a dream of youth. But Abraham believed; therefore he was young. For he who always hopes for the best grows old, deceived by life, and he who is always prepared for the worst grows old early; but he who believes preserves an eternal youth. Praised be that story, then! For Sarah, though advanced in years, was young enough to desire a mother's joy, and Abraham, though gray-haired, was young enough to wish to be a father.

Outwardly, the wonder lies in its happening according to their expectation; in a deeper sense, the wonder of faith lies in Abraham and Sarah's being young enough to wish, and in faith's having preserved their wish and with it their youth. He received the fulfillment of the promise; he received it in faith, and it happened according to the prom-

7 Joshua commanded the sun to stand still (Joshua 10:12–13).
8 "The fullness of time": Galatians 4:4.

DANISH	ENGLISH
Forjættelsen og efter Troen; thi Moses slog Klippen med sin Stav, men han troede ikke.	ise and according to faith. For Moses struck the rock with his staff, but he did not believe.[9]
Da var der Glæde i Abrahams Huus, da Sara stod Brud paa Guldbryllupsdagen.	Then there was joy in Abraham's house, when Sarah stood as a bride on their golden wedding day.

THE COMMAND

After long waiting Isaac is born, and then God commands Abraham to sacrifice him.

DANISH	ENGLISH
Dog saaledes skulde det ikke blive; endnu engang skulde Abraham forsøges. Han havde kæmpet med hiin snilde Magt, der opfinder Alt, med hiin aarvaagne Fjende, der aldrig blunder, med hiin gamle Mand, der overlever Alt, – han havde kæmpet med Tiden og bevaret Troen. Nu blev al Stridens Forfærdelse samlet i eet Øieblik. »Og Gud fristede Abraham og sagde til ham, tag Isaak Din eneste Søn, som Du elsker, gaa hen i det Land Morija og offer ham der til Brændoffer paa et Bjerg, som jeg vil vise Dig.«	Yet it was not to remain so; once more Abraham was to be put to the test. He had fought with that cunning power that devises everything, with that watchful enemy that never slumbers, with that old man who outlives everything—he had fought with time and kept the faith. Now all the terror of the struggle was gathered into one moment. "And God tempted Abraham and said to him: Take Isaac, your only son, whom you love, go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering on a mountain that I will show you."
Saa var da Alt forspildt, forfærdeligere end om det aldrig var skeet! Saa drev Herren da kun sin Spot med Abraham! Vidunderligt gjorde han det Urimelige virkeligt, nu vilde han atter see det tilintetgjort. Det var jo en Daarskab, men Abraham loe ikke deraf, som Sara, da Forjættelsen blev forkyndt. Alt var forspildt! 70 Aars trofaste Forventning, den korte Glæde ved Troens Opfyldelse. Hvo er da den, der river Staven fra Oldingen, hvo er den, der fordrer, at han selv skal bryde den! Hvo er [116] den, der gjør et Menneskes graae Haar trøstesløse, hvo er den, der fordrer, at han selv skal gjøre det! Er der ingen Medlidenhed med den ærværdige Olding, ingen med det uskyldige Barn!	So everything was lost, more terribly than if it had never happened! So the Lord was only mocking Abraham! Wondrously he had made the preposterous actual; now he wanted to see it destroyed again. It was folly, of course; but Abraham did not laugh at it, as Sarah did when the promise was announced. Everything was lost! Seventy years of faithful expectation, the brief joy at faith's fulfillment. Who is it, then, who snatches the staff from the old man, who is it who demands that he break it himself! Who is [116] it who makes a man's gray hairs comfortless, who is it who demands that he do it himself! Is there no compassion for the venerable old man, none for the innocent child![10]
SKS 4.116 Og dog var Abraham Guds Udvalgte, og det var Herren, der paalagde Prøvelsen. Alt skulde nu være forspildt! Slægtens herlige Ihukommelse, Forjættelsen i Abrahams Sæd, det var kun et Indfald, en flygtig Tanke, som Herren havde havt, som Abraham nu skulde udslette. Hiin herlige Skat, der var ligesaa gammel som Troen i Abrahams Hjerte, mange mange Aar ældre end Isaak, Frugten af Abrahams Liv, helliget ved Bønner, modnet i Kampe – Velsignelsen paa Abrahams Læber, denne Frugt	And yet Abraham was God's chosen one, and it was the Lord who imposed the trial. Now everything was to be lost! The glorious remembrance of the race, the promise in Abraham's seed —it was only a whim, a fleeting thought the Lord had had, which Abraham was now to erase. That glorious treasure, as old as the faith in Abraham's heart, many, many years older than Isaac, the fruit of Abraham's life, sanctified by prayers, ripened in struggles—the blessing on Abraham's lips: this

9 Moses struck the rock for water without trusting God, and was barred from the Promised Land (Numbers 20:7–12).
10 Sarah laughed at the promise of a son (Genesis 18:10–15).

DANISH

skulde nu rives af i Utide og blive uden Betydning; thi hvad Betydning havde den, naar Isaak skulde offres!

Hiin vemodige, men dog salige Time, da Abraham skulde tage Afsked med Alt, hvad ham kjært var, da han endnu engang skulde opløfte sit ærværdige Hoved, da hans Aasyn skulde straale som Herrens, da han skulde samle hele sin Sjæl i en Velsignelse, der var mægtig til at gjøre Isaak velsignet alle Dage – denne Stund skulde ikke komme! Thi Afsked skulde Abraham vel tage med Isaak, men saaledes, at han selv skulde blive tilbage; Døden skulde skille dem ad, men saaledes at Isaak blev dens Bytte. Den gamle Mand skulde ikke glad i Døden lægge velsignende sin Haand paa Isaak, men træt af Livet lægge voldsom Haand paa Isaak. Og det var Gud, der prøvede ham. Ja Vee!

Vee det Sendebud, der var kommet frem for Abraham med en saadan Tidende! Hvo havde vovet at være denne Sorgens Udsending. Men det var Gud, der prøvede Abraham.

Dog Abraham troede og troede for dette Liv. Ja havde hans Tro blot været for et tilkommende, da havde han vel lettere kastet Alt bort, for at haste ud af den Verden, han ikke tilhørte. Men Abrahams Tro var ikke en saadan, om der gives en saadan; thi egentlig er det ikke Tro, men Troens fjerneste Mulighed, der yderst i Synskredsen ahner sin Gjenstand, dog adskilt fra den ved et svælgende Dyb, indenfor hvilket Fortvivlelsen driver sit Spil.

Men Abraham troede netop for dette Liv, at han skulde blive gammel i Landet, hædret i Folket, velsignet i Slægten, uforglemmelig i Isaak, hans Kjæreste i Livet, hvem han omfattede med en Kjærlighed, for hvilken det kun var et fattigt Udtryk, at han troligen opfyldte Faderens Pligt, at elske Sønnen, som det jo og lyder med i [117] Tilsigelsen: den Søn, som Du elsker. Jacob havde 12 Sønner og 1 han elskede, Abraham havde kun een, som han elskede.

SKS 4.117 Men Abraham troede og tvivlede ikke, han troede det Urimelige. Hvis Abraham havde tvivlet – da skulde han have gjort noget Andet, noget Stort og Herligt; thi hvorledes kunde Abraham gjøre Andet end hvad stort og

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fruit was now to be torn off before its time and become meaningless; for what meaning did it have if Isaac was to be sacrificed![11]

That sad yet blessed hour when Abraham would take leave of all that was dear to him, when he would once more lift up his venerable head, when his face would shine like the Lord's, when he would gather his whole soul into a blessing powerful enough to make Isaac blessed 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 part them, but in such a way that Isaac became its prey. The old man was not to lay his hand in blessing on Isaac, glad in death, but, weary of life, to lay violent hands on Isaac. And it was God who tested him. Yes, woe!

Woe to the messenger who had come before Abraham with such tidings! Who would have dared to be this envoy of sorrow? But it was God who tested Abraham.

Yet Abraham believed, and believed for this life. Indeed, had his faith been only for a life to come, he would surely have found it easier to cast everything away, in order to hurry out of a world to which he did not belong. But Abraham's faith was not of that kind, if there is such a kind; for really it is not faith but faith's most remote possibility, which on the very edge of the horizon senses its object, yet is separated from it by a yawning abyss within which despair plays its game.

But Abraham believed precisely for this life: that he would grow old in the land, honored among the people, blessed in his descendants, unforgettable in Isaac, the dearest thing in his life, whom he embraced with a love for which it would be a poor expression to say that he faithfully fulfilled a father's duty to love his son—as indeed the [117] summons itself puts it: the son whom you love. Jacob had twelve sons and loved one; Abraham had only one, whom he loved.[12]

But Abraham believed 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

11 Key term: "trial" renders *Prøvelse* (test), as distinct from *Fristelse* (temptation).
12 Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons (Genesis 37:3).

DANISH

herligt er! Han var dragen ud til Morija Bjerget, han havde kløvet Brændet, antændt Baalet, draget Kniven – han havde raabt til Gud: »forsmaa ikke dette Offer, det er ikke det Bedste, jeg eier, det veed jeg vel; thi hvad er en gammel Mand mod Forjættelsens Barn, men det er det Bedste, jeg kan give Dig. Lad Isaak aldrig faae det at vide, at han maa trøste sig ved sin Ungdom.« Han havde stødt Kniven i sit eget Bryst.

Han var bleven beundret i Verden, og hans Navn skulde ikke være glemt; men Eet er, at blive beundret, et Andet, at blive en ledende Stjerne, der frelser den Ængstede.

Men Abraham troede. Han bad ikke for sig, at han maatte bevæge Herren, det var kun da den retfærdige Straf udgik over Sodoma og Gomorra, at Abraham traadte frem med sine Bønner.

Vi læse i hine hellige Skrifter: »og Gud fristede Abraham, og sagde: Abraham, Abraham hvor er Du? men Abraham svarede: her er jeg.« Du, til hvem min Tale henvender sig, var det saaledes Tilfælde med Dig? Naar Du langt borte saae de tunge Tilskikkelser nærme sig, sagde Du da ikke til Bjergene, skjuler mig, til Høiene, falder over mig? Eller var Du stærkere, flyttede dog ikke Foden sig langsomt hen ad Vejen, længtes den ikke ligesom tilbage efter de gamle Spoer? Naar der blev kaldet ad Dig, svarede Du da, eller svarede Du ikke, maaskee sagte, og hvidskende? Ikke saaledes Abraham, glad, freidig, tillidsfuld, høit svarede han: her er jeg.

Vi læse videre: »og Abraham stod aarle op om Morgenen.« Som var det til en Fest, saaledes ilede han, og aarle om Morgenen var han paa det aftalte Sted, paa Morija Bjerget. Han talte Intet til Sara, Intet til Elieser, hvo kunde ogsaa forstaae ham, havde Fristelsen ikke ved sit Væsen taget Tausheds Løfte af ham? »Han kløvede Brændet, han bandt Isaak, han antændte Baalet, han drog Kniven.« Min Tilhører! Der var mangen Fader, der troede i sit Barn at miste, hvad ham var kjærest i Verden, at berøves ethvert Fremtids Haab; men der var jo dog Ingen, der i den Forstand var Forjættelsens Barn, som Isaak var det for Abraham.

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do anything but what is great and glorious! He would have gone out to Mount Moriah, he would have split the wood, lit the fire, drawn the knife—he would have cried out to God: "Do not scorn this sacrifice; it is not the best I have, that I know 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 come to know of it, so that he may take comfort in his youth." He would have plunged the knife into his own breast.

He would have been admired in the world, and his name would not have been forgotten; but it is one thing to be admired and another to become a guiding star that saves the anguished.

But Abraham believed. He did not pray for himself, to move the Lord; it was only when the just punishment went forth over Sodom and Gomorrah that Abraham came forward with his prayers.[13]

We read in those holy scriptures: "And God tempted Abraham and said: Abraham, Abraham, where are you? But Abraham answered: Here I am." You to whom my words are addressed, was it so with you? When you saw heavy dispensations approaching from far off, did you not say to the mountains, Hide me, and to the hills, Fall on me? Or if you were stronger, did your foot not still move slowly along the way, did it not, as it were, long to go back to the old tracks? When you were called, did you answer, or did you not answer, perhaps softly and in a whisper? Not so Abraham: gladly, boldly, trustingly, loudly he answered: "Here I am."[14]

We read further: "And Abraham rose early in the morning." He hurried as if to a festival, and early in the morning he was at the appointed place, on Mount Moriah. He said nothing to Sarah, nothing to Eliezer—and who could have understood him? Had not the temptation by its very nature taken a vow of silence from him? "He split the wood, he bound Isaac, he lit the fire, he drew the knife." My listener! There was many a father who thought that in his child he was losing what was dearest to him in the world, being robbed of every hope for the future; but surely there was no one who was

13 Abraham's intercession for Sodom: Genesis 18:22–33.
14 Genesis 22:1 ("where are you?" is not in the biblical text); the mountains and hills echo Hosea 10:8 and Luke 23:30.

DANISH

Der var mangen Fader, der mistede sit Barn, men saa var det jo [118] Gud, den Almægtiges uforanderlige og urandsagelige Villie, hans Haand tog det. Ikke saaledes med Abraham. Ham var en tungere Prøve forbeholdt, og Isaaks Skjebne var med Kniven lagt i Abrahams Haand. Og han stod der, den gamle Mand med sit eneste Haab! Men han tvivlede ikke, han skuede ikke ængstelig til Høire eller Venstre, han udfordrede ikke Himlen ved sine Bønner. Han vidste, det var Gud den Almægtige, der prøvede ham, han vidste, det var det tungeste Offer, der kunde fordres af ham; men han vidste ogsaa, at intet Offer var for tungt, naar Gud fordrede det – og han drog Kniven.

SKS 4.118 Hvo styrkede Abrahams Arm, hvo holdt hans Høire opløftet, at den ikke sank afmægtig ned! Den, der seer derpaa, han bliver lammet. Hvo styrkede Abrahams Sjæl, at det ikke sortnede for hans Øie, saa han hverken saae Isaak eller Væderen! Den, der seer derpaa, han bliver blind. – Og dog sjelden nok er maaskee den, der bliver lam og blind, endnu sjeldnere den, der værdigen fortæller, hvad der skete. Vi vide det Alle – det var kun en Prøvelse.

Hvis Abraham, da han stod paa Morija Bjerget, havde tvivlet, hvis han raadvild havde skuet omkring sig, hvis han, inden han drog Kniven, ved et Tilfælde havde opdaget Væderen, hvis Gud havde tilladt ham at offre den istedenfor Isaak – da var han dragen hjem, Alt var det Samme, han havde Sara, han beholdt Isaak, og dog hvor forandret! Thi hans Tilbagetog var en Flugt, hans Frelse et Tilfælde, hans Løn Beskæmmelse, hans Fremtid maaskee Fortabelse. Da havde han hverken vidnet om sin Tro eller om Guds Naade, men vidnet om, hvor forfærdeligt det er, at drage op til Morija Bjerget. Da skulde Abraham ikke være glemt, ei heller Morija Bjerget.

Dette skulde da nævnes ikke som Ararat, hvor Arken landede, men nævnes som en Forfærdelse, fordi det var her, at Abraham tvivlede.

Ærværdige Fader Abraham! Da Du drog hjem fra Morija Bjerget, da behøvede Du ingen Lovtale, der kunde trøste

ENGLISH

the child of promise in the sense that Isaac was for Abraham.

There was many a father who lost his child, but then it was [118] God, the unchangeable and unsearchable will of the Almighty, his hand, that took it. Not so with Abraham. A harder test was reserved for him, and Isaac's fate was laid, along with the knife, in Abraham's hand. And there he stood, the old man with his only hope! But he did not doubt, he did not look anxiously to the right or to the left, he did not challenge heaven with his prayers. He knew it was God the Almighty who was testing him, he knew it was the hardest sacrifice that could be demanded of him; but he also knew that no sacrifice was too hard when God demanded it—and he drew the knife.

Who strengthened Abraham's arm, who held his right hand raised so that it did not sink down powerless! Whoever looks at this is paralyzed. Who strengthened Abraham's soul so that everything did not go black before his eyes, so that he saw neither Isaac nor the ram! Whoever looks at this goes blind.—And yet rare enough, perhaps, is the one who is paralyzed and blinded, rarer still the one who worthily tells what happened. We all know it—it was only a trial.

If Abraham, when he stood on Mount Moriah, had doubted, if he had looked around him at a loss, if before drawing the knife he had happened to catch sight of the ram, 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 borne witness neither to his faith nor to God's grace, but to how terrible it is to go up to Mount Moriah. Then Abraham would not have been forgotten, nor Mount Moriah either.

It would then be named, not like Ararat, where the Ark landed, but as a horror, because it was here that Abraham doubted.[15]

Venerable Father Abraham! When you went home from Mount Moriah, you needed no eulogy to con-

15 Noah's ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat (Genesis 8:4).

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Dig for det Tabte; thi Du vandt jo Alt, og beholdt Isaak, var det ikke saaledes? Herren tog ham ikke mere fra Dig, men Du sad glad tilbords med ham i Dit Paulun, som Du hisset gjør det i alle Evigheder. Ærværdige Fader Abraham! Aartu [119] sinder ere henrundne siden hine Dage, men Du behøver ingen sildig Elsker, der kan udrive Dit Minde af Glemsels Vold; thi ethvert Tungemaal minder Dig – og dog lønner Du Din Elsker herligere end Nogen, Du gjør ham hisset salig i Dit Skjød, Du fængsler her hans Øie og hans Hjerte ved Din Gjernings Vidunderlighed. Ærværdige Fader Abraham! Slægtens anden Fader!

SKS 4.119 Du, der først fornam og vidnede om hiin uhyre Lidenskab, der forsmaaer den forfærdelige Kamp med Elementers Rasen og Skabningens Kræfter for at stride med Gud, Du, der først kjendte hiin høieste Lidenskab, det hellige, rene, ydmyge Udtryk for det guddommelige Vanvid, der blev beundret af Hedninger – tilgiv den, der vilde tale til Din Priis, om han ikke gjorde det retteligen. Han talede ydmygt, som det var hans Hjertes Begjering, han talede kort, som det sømmer sig, men han skal aldrig glemme, at Du behøvede 100 Aar for at faae en Alderdoms Søn mod Forventning, at Du maatte drage Kniven, før Du beholdt Isaak, han skal aldrig glemme, at Du i 130 Aar ikke kom videre end til Troen.

ENGLISH

sole you for what was lost; for you gained everything and kept Isaac—was it not so? The Lord did not take him from you again, but you sat gladly at table with him in your tent, as you do in the world beyond for all eternity. Venerable Father Abraham! Thousands of [119] years have passed since those days, but you need no latecomer lover to snatch your memory from the power of oblivion, for every tongue remembers you—and yet you reward your lover more gloriously than anyone: in the world beyond you make him blessed in your bosom; here you captivate his eye and his heart with the wonder of your deed. Venerable Father Abraham! Second father of the human race![16]

You who first felt and bore witness to that tremendous passion that disdains the terrible struggle with the raging elements and the forces of creation in order to strive with God; you who first knew that highest passion, the holy, pure, humble expression of the divine madness that the pagans admired—forgive the one who wanted to speak in your praise if he has not done it rightly. He spoke humbly, as his heart desired; he spoke briefly, as is fitting; but he shall never forget that you needed a hundred years to get a son of your old age against all expectation, that you had to draw the knife before you kept Isaac; he shall never forget that in 130 years you got no further than faith.[17]

16 "Abraham's bosom" as the place of the blessed dead: Luke 16:22. He is the "second father" after Adam.
17 The "divine madness" praised by the Greeks recalls Plato, *Phaedrus* 244a–245a. Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born (Genesis 21:5).

Preliminary Expectoration

Foreløbig Expectoration
The opening of the Problemata: the knight of infinite resignation, the knight of faith, and the movement of faith by virtue of the absurd.

DANISH

SKS 4.123 Et gammelt Ord, hentet fra den udvortes og synlige Verden, siger: »kun den, der arbeider, faaer Brødet.« Besynderligt nok, Ordet passer ikke paa den Verden, hvor det nærmest har hjemme; thi den udvortes Verden er Ufuldkommenhedens Lov underlagt, og her gjentager det sig atter og atter, at ogsaa den, der ikke arbeider, faaer Brødet, at den, der sover, faaer det rigeligere, end den, der arbeider. I den udvortes Verden er Alt Ihændehaverens; den træller under Ligegyldighedens Lov, og den, der har Ringen, ham lyder Ringens Aand, enten han er en Noureddin eller en Aladdin, og den, der har Verdens Skatte, han har dem, hvorledes han end fik dem. I Aandens Verden er det anderledes.

Her hersker en evig guddommelig Orden, her regner det ikke baade over Retfærdige og Uretfærdige, her skinner Solen ikke baade over Gode og Onde, her gjælder det, at kun den, der arbeider, faaer Brødet, kun den, der var i Angst, finder Hvile, kun den, der stiger ned i Underverdenen, frelser den Elskede, kun den, der drager Kniven, faaer Isaak. Den, der ikke vil arbeide, han faaer ikke Brødet, men bliver bedragen, som Guderne bedrog Orpheus med en luftig Skikkelse istedenfor den Elskede, bedrog ham, fordi han var kjelen, ikke modig, bedrog ham, fordi han var Citharspiller, ikke Mand.

Her hjælper det ikke at have Abraham til Fader, eller 17 Ahner, den, der ikke vil arbeide, ham passer det paa, hvad der staaer skrevet om Israels Jomfruer, han føder Vind, men den, der vil arbeide, han føder sin egen Fader.

ENGLISH

An old saying, taken from the outward and visible world, says: “Only the one who works gets bread.” Strangely enough, the saying does not fit the world where it is most at home; for the outward world is subject to the law of imperfection, and here it happens again and again that the one who does not work also gets bread, and that the one who sleeps gets it more abundantly than the one who works. In the outward world everything belongs to whoever holds it; it is in bondage to the law of indifference, and the spirit of the ring obeys whoever has the ring, whether he is a Noureddin or an Aladdin, and whoever has the world’s treasures has them, however he got them. In the world of spirit it is different.[1]

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 the good and the evil; here it holds true that only the one who works gets bread, only the one who was in anguish finds rest, only the one who descends into the underworld saves the beloved, only the one who draws the knife gets Isaac. The one who will not work does not get bread but is deceived, as the gods deceived Orpheus with an airy phantom instead of the beloved—deceived him because he was soft, not brave; deceived him because he was a lyre player, not a man.[2]

Here it does not help to have Abraham as one’s father, or seventeen generations of noble ancestors. To the one who will not work applies what is written of the virgins of Israel: he gives birth to wind; but the one who will work gives birth to his own father.[3]

1 In Adam Oehlenschläger’s play *Aladdin* (1805), the undeserving Aladdin and the scheming sorcerer Noureddin each command the spirit of the lamp and ring. The saying echoes 2 Thessalonians 3:10.
2 Matthew 5:45. In Plato’s *Symposium* (179d) the gods show Orpheus only a phantom of Eurydice because, as a mere musician, he would not die for her.

DANISH

Der er en Viden, der formastelig vil indføre i Aandens Verden den samme Ligegyldighedens Lov, som den, under hvilken den udvortes Verden sukker. Den mener, at det er nok at vide det Store, andet Arbeide [124] behøves der ikke. Men derfor faaer den ikke Brødet, den omkommer af Hunger, medens Alt forvandler sig til Guld. Og hvad veed den ogsaa? Der var mange Tusinder i den græske Samtid, utallige i de senere Slægter, der vidste alle Miltiades's Triumpher, men der var kun Een, der blev søvnløs over dem. Der var talløse Slægter, der vidste Ord til andet udenad Fortællingen om Abraham, hvor Mange gjorde den søvnløs?

ENGLISH

There is a knowledge that would presumptuously bring into the world of spirit the same law of indifference under which the outward world groans. It thinks it is enough to know what is great; no other work [124] is needed. But that is why it gets no bread; it perishes of hunger while everything turns to gold. And what does it know, anyway? There were many thousands among his Greek contemporaries, countless numbers in later generations, who knew all the triumphs of Miltiades; but there was only one who was made sleepless by them. There were countless generations who knew the story of Abraham by heart, word for word—how many did it make sleepless?[4]

WHAT THE SERMONS LEAVE OUT

Preachers praise Abraham but omit the anguish; a sleepless listener might take them at their word.

DANISH

SKS 4.124 Fortællingen om Abraham har nu den mærkelige Egenskab, at den altid bliver herlig, hvor fattigt man end forstaaer den, men dog gjelder det atter her, om man vil arbeide og være besværet. Men arbeide vil man ikke, og dog vil man forstaae Fortællingen. Man taler til Abrahams Ære, men hvorledes? Man giver det Hele et ganske almindeligt Udtryk: »det var det Store, at han elskede Gud saaledes, at han vilde offre ham det Bedste.« Det er meget sandt; men det »Bedste« er et ubestemt Udtryk. Man identificerer i Tankens og Mundens Løb ganske trygt Isaak og det Bedste, og den Mediterende kan godt ryge sin Pibe under Meditationen, og den Hørende kan godt strække Benene mageligt ud fra sig.

Dersom hiin rige Yngling, hvem Christus mødte paa sin Vei, havde solgt alt sit Gods og givet det til de Fattige, da skulde vi prise ham, som alt hvad der er Stort, og end ikke forstaae ham uden at arbeide, men han var dog ikke bleven en Abraham, uagtet han offrede det Bedste. Det man udelader af Abrahams Historie er Angesten; thi mod Penge har jeg ingen ethisk Forpligtelse, men mod Sønnen har Faderen den høieste og helligste. Dog Angest er en farlig Sag for Blødagtige, derfor glemmer man den, og

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Now the story of Abraham has the remarkable property that it is always glorious, however poorly one understands it; yet here again it holds true that it depends on whether one is willing to labor and be heavy laden. But labor one will not, and yet one wants to understand the story. People speak in Abraham's honor, but how? They give the whole thing a perfectly commonplace expression: "The great thing was that he loved God so much that he was willing to sacrifice to him the best." That is very true; but "the best" is a vague expression. In the course of thought and speech one quite comfortably identifies Isaac and the best, and the one meditating can very well smoke his pipe during the meditation, and the listener can very well stretch his legs out in comfort.[5]

If that rich young man whom Christ met on his way had sold all his possessions and given the money to the poor, we would praise him, as we do everything great, and would not even understand him without working; but he would still not have become an Abraham, even though he sacrificed the best. What is left out of Abraham's story is the anguish; for toward money I have no ethical obligation, but toward the son the father has the

3 "We have Abraham as our father": Matthew 3:9. Giving birth to wind: Isaiah 26:18.
4 King Midas starved because all he touched turned to gold. Plutarch tells that Themistocles could not sleep for thinking of Miltiades' victory at Marathon (490 BC).
5 "Labor and are heavy laden": Matthew 11:28.

DANISH

desuagtet vil man tale om Abraham. Man taler da, i Talens Løb vexle de tvende Udtryk: Isaak og det Bedste, Alt gaaer ypperligt.

Traf det sig imidlertid saa, at der iblandt Tilhørerne var en Mand, der leed af Søvnløshed, da ligger den forfærdeligste, den dybeste, tragiske og comiske Misforstaaelse meget nær. Han gik hjem, han vilde gjøre ligesom Abraham; thi Sønnen er jo det Bedste.

Hvis hiin Taler fik det at vide, da gik han maaskee til ham, han samlede al sin geistlige Værdighed og raabte: »afskyelige Menneske, Udskud af Samfundet, hvilken Djævel har saaledes besat Dig, at Du vil myrde din Søn.« Og Præsten, som ikke havde sporet nogen Varme eller Transpiration ved at prædike om Abraham, han forbausedes over sig selv, over den Alvorens Vrede, med hvilken han nedtordnede hiint stakkels Menneske; han var glad over sig selv; thi han havde aldrig talet med saadan [125] Fynd og Salvelse; han sagde til sig selv og sin Kone: »Jeg er Taler, det, der har manglet, har været Anledningen, da jeg i Søndags talte om Abraham, følte jeg mig aldeles ikke greben.« Dersom samme Taler havde en lille Overflødighed af Forstand, der lod sig tabe, saa tænker jeg han tabte den, hvis Synderen roligt og værdigt svarede: det var jo, hvad Du selv prædikede om i Søndags.

SKS 4.125 Hvorledes skulde ogsaa Præsten kunne faae Sligt i sit Hoved, og dog var det jo saa, og Feilen kun den, at han ikke havde vidst, hvad han sagde. At der dog ikke er en Digter, der kunde beslutte sig til at foretrække saadanne Situationer for det Fias og Tant, hvormed man fylder Comedier og Romaner! Det Komiske og det Tragiske berøre her hinanden i absolut Uendelighed. Præstens Tale var maaskee i og for sig latterlig nok, men blev uendelig latterlig ved sin Virkning, og dog var denne ganske naturlig.

Eller hvis Synderen virkelig uden at gjøre nogen Indvending blev omvendt af Præstens Straffetale, hvis denne nidkjære Geistlige gik glad hjem, glad i Bevidstheden om, at han ikke blot virkede fra Prædikestolen, men fremfor Alt med uimodstaaelig Magt som Sjælesørger, idet han om Søndagen begeistrede

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highest and holiest. Yet anguish is a dangerous matter for the soft, so it is forgotten, and in spite of that people want to talk about Abraham. So they talk, and in the course of the talk the two expressions interchange, Isaac and the best, and everything goes splendidly.[6]

Suppose, however, that among the listeners there happened to be a man who suffered from sleeplessness—then the most terrible, the deepest, tragic and comic misunderstanding lies very close at hand. He went home, he wanted to do just as Abraham did; for the son is, after all, the best.

If that speaker got to hear of it, he would perhaps go to him, summon all his clerical dignity and shout: "Abominable man, dregs of society, what devil has so possessed you that you want to murder your son?" And the pastor, who had not noticed any warmth or perspiration while preaching about Abraham, would be astonished at himself, at the earnest wrath with which he thundered down on that poor man; he would be pleased with himself, for he had never spoken with such [125] force and unction; he would say to himself and to his wife: "I am an orator; what was lacking was the occasion. When I spoke about Abraham last Sunday, I did not feel moved at all." If that same speaker had a little surplus of understanding to spare, I think he would lose it if the sinner calmly and with dignity answered: "But that is what you yourself preached about last Sunday."

And how could the pastor ever get such a thing into his head? And yet it was so, and the only mistake was that he had not known what he was saying. Why is there no poet who could bring himself to prefer such situations to the frippery and trumpery with which comedies and novels are filled! The comic and the tragic touch each other here in absolute infinity. The pastor's speech was perhaps ridiculous enough in and of itself, but it became infinitely ridiculous through its effect, and yet that effect was entirely natural.

Or suppose the sinner, without making any objection, was actually converted by the pastor's reprimand; suppose this zealous cleric went home glad, glad in the awareness that he was effective not only from the pulpit but above all, with irresistible power, as a shepherd of souls, since on

6 The rich young man: Matthew 19:16–22. "Ethical" anticipates the key term *det Ethiske*, "the ethical."

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Menigheden, medens han om Mandagen som en Cherub med luende Glavind stillede sig for den, der ved sin Gjerning vilde gjøre hiint gamle Ord til Skamme, at det ikke gaaer til i Verden som Præsten prædiker*.

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Sunday he inspired the congregation, while on Monday, like a cherub with a flaming sword, he placed himself before the man who by his deed would put to shame that old saying that things in the world do not go as the pastor preaches*.[7]

8

Hvis Synderen derimod ikke blev overbeviist, saa er hans Situation tragisk nok. Han blev da formodentlig henrettet eller sendt i *[Sindssygeanstalten]*, kort, han blev ulykkelig i Forhold til den saakaldte Virkelighed, i en anden Forstand tænker jeg vel, at Abraham gjorde ham lykkelig; thi den, der arbeider, omkommer ikke.

If, on the other hand, the sinner was not convinced, his situation is tragic enough. He would presumably be executed or sent to an asylum; in short, he would become unhappy in relation to so-called reality. In another sense, I suppose, Abraham made him happy; for he who works does not perish.

Hvoraf forklarer man en saadan Modsigelse som hiin Talers? Er det fordi Abraham har faaet Hævd paa at være en stor Mand, saa at hvad han gjør, er stort, og naar en Anden gjør det Samme, er det Synd, himmelraabende Synd? I saa Fald da ønsker jeg ikke at deeltage i slig [126] tankeløs Lovprisen. Kan Troen ikke gjøre det til en hellig Handling at ville myrde sin Søn, saa lad den samme Dom gaae over Abraham som over enhver Anden. Mangler man maaskee Mod til at gjennemføre sin Tanke, at sige, at Abraham var en Morder, da er det vel bedre at erhverve dette Mod, end at spilde Tiden paa ufortjente Lovtaler.

How is one to explain a contradiction like that preacher's? Is it because Abraham has acquired a prescriptive right to be a great man, so that what he does is great, and when someone else does the same, it is sin, a sin crying to heaven? In that case I do not wish to take part in such [126] thoughtless praise. If faith cannot make it a holy act to be willing to murder one's son, then let the same judgment fall on Abraham as on anyone else. If people perhaps lack the courage to carry their thought through, to say that Abraham was a murderer, then it would be better to acquire that courage than to waste time on undeserved eulogies.

SKS 4.126 Det ethiske Udtryk for hvad Abraham gjorde er, at han vilde myrde Isaak, det religieuse er, at han vilde offre Isaak; men i denne Modsigelse ligger netop Angesten, der vel kan gjøre et Menneske søvnløst, og dog er Abraham ikke den, han er, uden denne Angst. Eller gjorde Abraham maaskee slet ikke, hvad der fortælles, var det maaskee paa Grund af hine Tiders Forhold noget ganske Andet, saa lad os glemme ham; thi hvad er det Umagen værd at erindre *det* Forbigangne, der ikke kan blive et Nærværende. Eller havde maaskee hiin Taler glemt Noget, der svarede til den ethiske Forglemmelse, at Isaak var Sønnen.

The ethical expression for what Abraham did is that he was willing to murder Isaac; the religious expression is that he was willing to sacrifice Isaac. But precisely in this contradiction lies the anguish that can indeed make a person sleepless—and yet Abraham is not who he is without this anguish. Or perhaps Abraham did not do at all what the story tells; perhaps, owing to the circumstances of those times, it was something quite different. Then let us forget him; for what is the point of remembering *that* past which cannot become a present? Or perhaps that preacher had forgotten something, an omission matching the ethical oversight of forgetting that Isaac was the son.

Naar Troen nemlig ved at blive til Nul og Nichts tages bort, saa bliver kun det raae Factum tilbage, at Abraham

For when faith is taken away by being reduced to nil and nothing, only the raw fact remains that Abraham was willing to murder Isaac—which is easy enough for anyone to imitate who does not have faith, that is, the faith that makes it hard for him.

7 The cherub with the flaming sword guarding Eden: Genesis 3:24.

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vilde myrde Isaak, hvilket er nemt nok at eftergjøre for Enhver, der ikke har Troen, det vil sige den Tro, der gjør ham det svært.

Jeg for mit Vedkommende mangler ikke Mod til at tænke en Tanke heel; hidtil har jeg ingen frygtet, skulde jeg støde paa en saadan, da vil jeg haabe, at jeg idetmindste har Oprigtighed til at sige, denne Tanke frygter jeg, den oprører noget Andet i mig og derfor vil jeg ikke tænke den, gjør jeg Uret dermed, saa vil Straffen vel ikke udeblive. Hvis jeg havde erkjendt det for Sandhedens Dom, at Abraham var en Morder, da veed jeg ikke, om jeg havde kunnet bringe min Pietet for ham til Taushed. Havde jeg imidlertid tænkt det, saa havde jeg formodentlig tiet dermed; thi i slige Tanker skal man ikke indvie Andre.

Men Abraham er intet Blendværk, han har ikke sovet sig til sin Navnkundighed, han skylder den ikke en Lune af Skjebnen.

Kan man da uforbeholdent tale om Abraham, uden at løbe Fare for, at en Enkelt gaaer hen i Forvildelse og gjør ligesaa? Tør jeg det ikke, saa vil jeg reent tie om Abraham, og fremfor Alt vil jeg ikke nedsætte ham saaledes, at han netop derved bliver en Snare for de Svage. Gjør man nemlig Troen til Alt ɔ: til det, den er, saa tænker jeg vel, man tør tale uden Fare derom i vor Tid, der neppe extravagerer i Troen, og det er kun ved Troen man faaer Lighed med Abraham, ikke ved Mordet. Gjør [127] man Kjærligheden til en flygtig Stemning, en vellystig Rørelse i et Menneske, saa lægger man kun Snarer for den Svage, naar man vil tale om Kjærlighedens Bedrifter.

SKS 4.127 En forbigaaende Bevægelse har vel Enhver, men hvis derfor Enhver vilde gjøre det Forfærdelige, som Kjærligheden har helliget som udødelig Bedrift, da er Alt tabt, baade Bedriften og den Forvildede.

Der lod sig da vel tale om Abraham; thi det Store kan aldrig skade, naar det opfattes i sin Storhed; det er som et

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For my part, I do not lack the courage to think a thought through to the end. So far I have feared none; should I come upon such a thought, I hope I would at least have the honesty to say: this thought I fear, it stirs up something else in me, and so I will not think it. If I do wrong in that, the punishment will surely not fail to come. Had I recognized it as the verdict of truth that Abraham was a murderer, I do not know whether I could have silenced my reverence for him. If I had thought it, though, I would probably have kept quiet about it; 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.

Can one, then, speak without reservation about Abraham without running the risk that some individual will go astray and do likewise? If I dare not, I will keep entirely silent about Abraham, and above all I will not belittle him in such a way that precisely by this he becomes a snare for the weak. For if one makes faith everything—that is, what it is—then I think one may speak of it without danger in our age, which hardly goes to extremes in faith; and it is only through faith that one comes to resemble Abraham, not through murder. If [127] one makes love a fleeting mood, a voluptuous stirring in a person, then one only lays snares for the weak when one sets out to speak of love's exploits.

Everyone, no doubt, has passing stirrings; but if on that account everyone wanted to do the terrible thing that love has hallowed as an immortal exploit, then all is lost, both the exploit and the one who has gone astray.

So one could, after all, speak about Abraham; for the great can never do harm when it is grasped in

8

* I gamle Dage sagde man: det er sørgeligt, at det ikke gaaer til i Verden som Præsten prædiker – maaskee kommer den Tid, især ved Philosophiens Hjelp, da man kan sige: heldigvis gaaer det ikke saaledes til som Præsten prædiker; thi i Livet er der dog lidt Mening, i hans Præken er der slet ingen.

* In the old days people used to say: it is sad that the world does not go the way the pastor preaches. Perhaps the time will come, especially with the help of philosophy, when people can say: fortunately the world does not go the way the pastor preaches; for in life there is at least a little meaning, and in his sermon there is none at all.

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tveægget Sværd, der dræber og frelser. Hvis Loddet faldt paa mig at tale derom, da vilde jeg begynde med at vise, hvilken from og gudfrygtig Mand Abraham var, værdig at kaldes Guds Udvalgte. Kun en Saadan paalægges en saadan Prøve; men hvo er en Saadan? Dernæst vilde jeg skildre, hvorledes Abraham elskede Isaak. Til den Ende vilde jeg bede alle gode Aander staae mig bi, at min Tale maatte blive glødende som Faderkjærligheden er det. Jeg haaber da at skulle skildre den saaledes, at der ikke blev mangen Fader i Kongens Riger og Lande, der turde paastaae, at han elskede saaledes.

Men elskede han ikke som Abraham, saa var jo enhver Tanke om at offre Isaak en Anfægtelse. Dette kunde man allerede tale adskillige Søndage om, man behøver jo ikke at forhaste sig. Følgen vilde da blive, hvis der blev talet retteligen, at en Deel Fædre slet ikke vilde forlange at høre mere, men indtil videre være glade ved, om det virkelig lykkedes dem at elske saaledes, som Abraham elskede. Var der da Een, som, efter at have hørt det Store, men ogsaa det Forfærdelige i Abrahams Daad, vovede at gaae frem ad Veien; da vilde jeg sadle min Hest og ride med ham.

Paa hver Station, indtil vi kom til Morija-Bjerget, vilde jeg forklare ham, at han endnu kunde vende om, kunde angre den Misforstaaelse, at han var kaldet til at forsøges i saadan Strid, kunde bekjende, at han manglede Mod, saa Gud selv maatte tage Isaak, hvis han vilde have ham. Det er min Overbevisning, at et saadant Menneske ikke er forskudt, at han kan blive salig med alle Andre, men i Tiden bliver han det ikke. Vilde man, selv i de mest troende Tider, ikke dømme saaledes om et saadant Menneske? jeg har kjendt et Menneske, der engang kunde have frelst mit Liv, hvis han havde været høimodig.

Han sagde ligefrem: »jeg seer nok, hvad jeg kunde gjøre; men jeg vover det ikke, jeg frygter, at jeg senere skal mangle Kraft, at jeg skal fortryde [128] det.« Han var ikke høimodig, men hvo vilde dog derfor ikke vedblive at elske ham?

SKS 4.128 Naar jeg da saaledes havde talt, havde bevæget Tilhørerne, saa de dog havde fornummet Troens dialectiske Kampe og dens gigantiske Lidenskab, da vilde jeg ikke forskylde en Vildfarelse fra de Tilhørendes Side,

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its greatness; it is like a two-edged sword that kills and saves. If it fell to my lot to speak about it, I would begin by showing what a pious and God-fearing man Abraham was, worthy to be called God's chosen one. Only such a man is put to such a test; but who is such a man? Next I would describe how Abraham loved Isaac. To that end I would ask all good spirits to stand by me, so that my speech might glow as a father's love glows. I would hope to describe it in such a way that there would not be many a father in the King's realms and lands who dared claim that he loved like that.[9]

But if he did not love as Abraham loved, then any thought of sacrificing Isaac would be a spiritual trial. On this alone one could preach for several Sundays; there is no need to hurry. The result, if it were spoken rightly, would be that a number of fathers would not ask to hear any more, but for the time being would be glad if they really succeeded in loving as Abraham loved. If there were then one who, having heard the greatness but also the terror of Abraham's deed, ventured to set out on the road, I would saddle my horse and ride with him.[10]

At every station until we reached Mount Moriah, I would explain to him that he could still turn back, could repent of the misunderstanding that he was called to be tested in such a struggle, could confess that he lacked the courage, so that God himself would have to take Isaac if he wanted him. It is my conviction that such a person is not rejected, that he can be saved along with everyone else—but not in time. Would not people, even in the most believing ages, have judged such a person this way? I have known a man who once could have saved my life if he had been magnanimous.[11]

He said straight out: "I see well enough what I could do; but I don't dare. I fear that later I will lack the strength, that I will regret [128] it." He was not magnanimous; but who would not go on loving him all the same?

When I had spoken in this way and moved my listeners, so that they had at least sensed the dialectical struggles of faith and its gigantic passion, I would not want to be to blame for an error on

9 "Two-edged sword" echoes Hebrews 4:12; "the King's realms and lands" is the formula for the Danish monarchy's territories.
10 "Spiritual trial" renders *Anfægtelse*: temptation that comes from within, as distinct from *Fristelse*, ordinary temptation.
11 The stations are the posting stations of coach travel, where horses were changed. "In time" means in this temporal life.

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at de skulde tænke: »han har nu Troen i saa høi en Grad, os er det allerede nok, at holde i Skjøderne paa ham.« Jeg vilde nemlig tilføie: »jeg har ingenlunde Troen. Jeg er af Naturen et kløgtigt Hoved og ethvert saadant har altid store Vanskeligheder ved at gjøre Troens Bevægelse, uden at jeg dog i og for sig vil tillægge *den Vanskelighed noget Værd, der bragte det kløgtige Hoved videre ved at overvinde den, end til det Punkt, hvor det simpleste og enfoldigste Menneske lettere kommer hen.*«

Kjærligheden har dog i Digterne sine Præster, og stundom hører man en Røst, der veed at holde den i Hævd; men om Troen høres der intet Ord, hvo taler til denne Lidenskabs Ære? Philosophien gaaer videre. Theologien sidder sminket ved Vinduet og beiler til dens Gunst, falbyder sin Deilighed til Philosophien. Det skal være vanskeligt at forstaae Hegel, men at forstaae Abraham, det er en smal Sag. At gaae ud over Hegel, det er et Underværk, men at komme ud over Abraham, det er det Letteste af Alt.

Jeg for mit Vedkommende har anvendt adskillig Tid paa at forstaae den hegelske Philosophi, troer ogsaa nogenlunde at have forstaaet den, er dumdristig nok til at mene, at, naar jeg, trods anvendt Umage, paa enkelte Steder ikke kan forstaae ham, saa har han nok ikke selv været ganske klar. Alt Dette gjør jeg let, naturligt, mit Hoved lider ikke derved. Naar jeg derimod skal til at tænke over Abraham, da er jeg som tilintetgjort. Jeg faaer i ethvert Moment Øie paa hiint uhyre Paradox, der er Indholdet af Abrahams Liv, i ethvert Moment bliver jeg stødt tilbage, og min Tanke kan, trods al sin Lidenskab, ikke trænge ind i det, ikke komme et Haarsbred videre.

Jeg anstrænger enhver Muskel for at faae Vuet, i samme Øieblik bliver jeg paralytisk.

Jeg er ikke ukjendt med hvad der i Verden er blevet beundret som stort og høimodigt, min Sjæl føler sit Slægtskab dermed, den er i al Ydmyghed forvisset om, at det ogsaa var min Sag, Helten stred, i Betragtningens Øieblik tilraaber jeg mig selv: jam tua res agitur. I Helten *tænker* jeg mig *ind,* i Abraham kan jeg ikke tænke mig ind, naar jeg har naaet Høiden, falder jeg ned, da det, der bydes mig, er et Paradox. Dog [129] derfor mener jeg ingenlunde, at Troen er noget Ringe, men tvertimod, at

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their part—that they should think: "He has faith to such a high degree that it is enough for us to hang on to his coattails." For I would add: "I by no means have faith. By nature I am a shrewd head, and every such head always has great difficulty making the movement of faith—though I do not in itself attach any value *to the difficulty which, when overcome, brought the shrewd head no further than the point that the simplest and plainest person reaches more easily.*"

Love, after all, has its priests in the poets, and now and then one hears a voice that knows how to uphold its honor; but about faith not a word is heard. Who speaks in honor of this passion? Philosophy goes further. Theology sits painted at the window and courts its favor, offering its charms for sale to philosophy. It is supposed to be difficult to understand Hegel, but to understand Abraham—that is a trifle. To go beyond Hegel is a miracle, but to get beyond Abraham is the easiest thing of all.[12]

For my part, I have spent considerable time trying to understand Hegel's philosophy, and I believe I have understood it reasonably well. I am rash enough to think that when, despite my efforts, I cannot understand him in certain passages, he was probably not entirely clear himself. All this I do easily, naturally; my head does not suffer from it. But when I set about thinking about Abraham, I am as if annihilated. At every moment I catch sight of that monstrous paradox which is the content of Abraham's life; at every moment I am thrust back, and my thought, for all its passion, cannot penetrate it, cannot get a hair's breadth further.

I strain every muscle to get a view—and in the same instant I am paralyzed.

I am not unacquainted with what has been admired in the world as great and magnanimous. My soul feels its kinship with it and is, in all humility, assured that it was my cause, too, that the hero fought for; in the moment of contemplation I call out to myself: jam tua res agitur [now it is your own affair that is at stake]. I can *think* myself *into* the hero; into Abraham I cannot think myself. When I reach the height, I fall down, since what is

12 G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831), the German philosopher whose system dominated Copenhagen intellectual life in the 1840s; "going further" was a catchphrase of his Danish followers. The painted woman at the window recalls Jezebel (2 Kings 9:30).

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den er det Høieste, samt at det er uredeligt af Philosophien at give noget Andet isteden og lade haant om Troen.

SKS 4.129 Philosophien kan og skal ikke give Troen, men den skal forstaae sig selv, og vide hvad den byder og Intet tage og allermindst franarre Menneskene Noget, som var det Intet. Jeg er ikke ukjendt med Livets Nød og Farer, jeg frygter dem ikke, og gaaer dem freidigt imøde. Jeg er ikke ufortrolig med det Forfærdelige, min Hukommelse er en trofast Viv og min Phantasi er, hvad jeg selv ikke er, en flittig lille Pige, der sidder hele Dagen stille ved sit Arbeide, og om Aftenen veed at snakke saa kjønt for mig, at jeg maa see derpaa, uagtet det just ikke altid er Landskaber eller Blomster, eller Schäfer-Historier, hun maler.

Jeg har seet det under Øinene, jeg flyer det ikke ræd, men jeg veed meget vel, at, om jeg end gaaer det modig imøde, mit Mod dog ikke er Troens Mod og Intet at sammenligne med dette. Jeg kan ikke gjøre Troens Bevægelse, jeg kan ikke lukke Øinene og styrte mig tillidsfuld i det Absurde, det er mig en Umulighed, men jeg roser mig ikke deraf. Jeg er overbevist om, at Gud er Kjærlighed; denne Tanke har for mig en oprindelig lyrisk Gyldighed. Naar den er mig nærværende, er jeg uudsigelig salig, naar den er fraværende, længes jeg efter den hæftigere, end den Elskende efter sin Gjenstand; men jeg troer ikke, dette Mod mangler mig.

Guds Kjærlighed er mig, baade i directe og omvendt Forstand, incommensurabel for hele Virkeligheden. Jeg er ikke feig nok til derfor at klynke og klage, men heller ei lumsk nok til at negte, at Troen er noget langt Høiere. Jeg kan godt udholde at leve paa min Viis, jeg er glad og tilfreds, men min Glæde er ikke Troens og er dog i Sammenligning med denne ulykkelig. Jeg besværer ikke Gud med mine Smaa-Sorger, det Enkelte bekymrer mig ikke, jeg stirrer kun paa min Kjærlighed, og holder dens jomfruelige Flamme reen og klar; Troen er overbevist om, at Gud bekymrer sig om det Mindste.

Jeg er fornøiet med i dette Liv at være viet til venstre Haand, Troen er ydmyg nok til at forlange den høire; thi

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offered me is a paradox. Yet [129] I by no means think that faith is something inferior; on the contrary, it is the highest, and it is dishonest of philosophy to offer something else in its place and to scoff at faith.[13]

Philosophy cannot and should not give faith, but it should understand itself and know what it has to offer, and take nothing away—least of all trick people out of something as if it were nothing. I am not unacquainted with the hardships and dangers of life; I do not fear them, and I go to meet them boldly. I am no stranger to the terrible; my memory is a faithful wife, and my imagination is—what I myself am not—a diligent little girl who sits quietly at her work all day and in the evening knows how to chatter to me so prettily that I have to look at it, even though it is not always landscapes or flowers or pastoral tales that she paints.

I have looked it in the eye; I do not flee from it in fear; but I know very well that, even if I go to meet it with courage, my courage is still not the courage of faith and is nothing to compare with it. I cannot make the movement of faith; I cannot shut my eyes and plunge confidently into the absurd—for me that is an impossibility—but I do not boast of it. I am convinced that God is love; this thought has for me a primal lyrical validity. When it is present to me I am unspeakably blissful; when it is absent I long for it more fiercely than the lover for the beloved. But I do not have faith; this courage I lack.[14]

God's love is for me, both in a direct and in an inverse sense, incommensurable with the whole of actuality. I am not cowardly enough to whimper and complain about that, but neither am I sly enough to deny that faith is something far higher. I can bear to live in my own way; I am glad and content; but my joy is not the joy of faith, and compared with that it is unhappy. I do not trouble God with my little sorrows; the particulars do not concern me; I gaze only at my love and keep its virgin flame pure and clear. Faith is convinced that God cares about the smallest things.

I am content in this life to be married with the left hand; faith is humble enough to ask for the right.

13 The Latin is from Horace, *Epistles* 1.18.84.
14 "The absurd" renders *det Absurde*; faith acts "by virtue of the absurd" (*i Kraft af det Absurde*).

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at det er Ydmyghed, det negter jeg ikke og skal aldrig negte.

Mon virkelig Enhver i min Samtid er istand til at gjøre Troens Bevægelser? Dersom jeg ikke har taget meget feil af den, da er den snarere tilbøielig til at være stolt af at gjøre hvad den vel end ikke troer mig istand til ɔ: det Ufuldkomne. Det er min Sjæl imod at gjøre, hvad der [130] saa ofte skeer, at tale umenneskeligt om det Store, som var nogle Aartusinder en uhyre Afstand; jeg taler helst menneskelig derom, som var det skeet igaar, og lader kun Storheden selv være Afstanden, der enten opløfter eller dømmer.

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For that this is humility I do not deny and never shall.[15]

Is everyone of my generation really able to make the movements of faith? Unless I am much mistaken about it, it is rather inclined to be proud of doing what it probably does not even believe me capable of—namely, the imperfect. It goes against my soul to do what [130] so often happens: to speak inhumanly of the great, as if a few thousand years were an immense distance. I prefer to speak of it humanly, as if it had happened yesterday, and to let only greatness itself be the distance, which either uplifts or judges.

IF I HAD BEEN ABRAHAM

Johannes could resign Isaac, but could not believe he would receive him back.

DANISH

SKS 4.130 Hvis jeg da (*i Qualitet af tragisk Helt;* thi høiere kan jeg ikke komme) var bleven tilsagt til en saadan extraordinair Kongereise som den til Morija-Bjerget, jeg veed vel, hvad jeg havde gjort. Jeg havde ikke været feig nok til at blive hjemme, havde heller ikke ligget og drevet paa Landeveien, havde heller ei glemt Kniven, at der kunde blive lidt Sinkeri, jeg er temmelig forvisset om, at jeg havde været paa Klokkeslettet, havt Alt i Orden – maaskee var jeg snarere kommen for tidlig, at det snart kunde være overstaaet. Men jeg veed tillige, hvad jeg fremdeles havde gjort.

Jeg havde i samme Øieblik, som jeg besteg Hesten, sagt til mig selv: nu er Alt tabt, Gud fordrer Isaak, jeg offrer ham, med ham al min Glæde – dog er Gud Kjærlighed og vedbliver at være det for mig; thi i Timeligheden kan Gud og jeg ikke tale sammen, vi have intet Sprog tilfælleds. Maaskee vil En eller Anden i vor Tid være taabelig nok, misundelig nok paa det Store, til at ville indbilde sig og mig, at hvis jeg virkelig havde gjort dette, da havde jeg gjort det endnu større, end hvad Abraham gjorde; thi min uhyre Resignation var langt mere ideal og poetisk end Abrahams Smaalighed. Og dog er dette den største Usandhed; thi min uhyre Resignation var Surrogatet for Troen.

ENGLISH

If I (*in the capacity of tragic hero;* for higher I cannot go) had been summoned on such an extraordinary royal journey as the one to Mount Moriah, I know well what I would have done. I would not have been cowardly enough to stay at home, nor would I have lain about and dawdled on the road, nor forgotten the knife so as to cause a little delay. I am fairly sure I would have been there on the stroke of the hour, with everything in order—perhaps I would even have arrived too early, so that it could soon be over. But I also know what else I would have done.[16]

The moment I mounted my horse I would have said to myself: now all is lost; God demands Isaac, I sacrifice him and with him all my joy—yet God is love and continues to be love for me; for in the temporal world God and I cannot talk together, we have no language in common. Perhaps someone or other in our age will be foolish enough, envious enough of the great, to want to persuade himself and me that if I had really done this, I would have done something even greater than what Abraham did; for my immense resignation would have been far more ideal and poetic than Abraham's smallmindedness. And yet this is the greatest untruth; for my immense resignation would have been the substitute for faith.[17]

15 A "left-handed" (morganatic) marriage joined a nobleman to a woman of lower rank, who did not share his rank or rights.
16 A "royal journey" (*Kongereise*) was one made on the king's summons or in his service.
17 "Resignation" renders *Resignation*: the "infinite movement" of renouncing everything finite.

DANISH

Jeg kunde da heller ikke gjøre mere end den uendelige Bevægelse for at finde mig selv og atter hvile i mig selv. Jeg havde da heller ikke elsket Isaak, saaledes som Abraham elskede. At jeg var resolut til at gjøre Bevægelsen, kunde bevise mit Mod menneskeligt talt, at jeg elskede ham af min ganske Sjæl er Forudsætningen, uden hvilken det Hele bliver en Misgjerning, men jeg elskede dog ikke som Abraham; thi da havde jeg holdt igjen selv i det sidste Minut, uden at jeg derfor var kommen for silde paa Morija-Bjerget. Jeg havde fremdeles ved min Adfærd fordærvet hele Historien; thi hvis jeg havde faaet Isaak igjen, da havde jeg været i Forlegenhed.

Det, der faldt Abraham lettest, vilde falde mig svært, det igjen at være glad ved Isaak! thi den, der med hele sin Sjæls Uendelighed, proprio motu et propriis auspiciis, har gjort den uendelige Bevægelse og ikke kan gjøre mere, han beholder kun Isaak i Smerten.

Men hvad gjorde Abraham? Han kom hverken for *tidlig* eller for [131] sildig. Han besteg Æslet, han reed langsom hen ad Veien. I al den Tid troede han; han troede, at Gud ikke vilde fordre Isaak af ham, medens han dog var villig til at offre ham, naar det forlangtes. Han troede i Kraft af det Absurde; thi menneskelig Beregning kunde der ikke være Tale om, og det var jo det Absurde, at Gud, som fordrede det af ham, i næste Øieblik skulde tilbagekalde Fordringen. Han besteg Bjerget, endnu i det Øieblik da Kniven blinkede, da troede han – at Gud ikke vilde fordre Isaak.

SKS 4.131 Han blev da vel overrasket ved Udfaldet, men han havde gjennem en Dobbelt-Bevægelse naaet hen til sin første Tilstand, og derfor modtog han Isaak gladere end den første Gang. Lad os gaae videre. Vi lade Isaak virkelig blive offret. Abraham troede. Han troede ikke, at han engang skulde blive salig hisset, men at han skulde blive lyksalig her i Verden. Gud kunde give ham en ny Isaak, kalde den offrede tillive. Han troede i Kraft af det Absurde; thi al menneskelig Beregning var jo forlængst ophørt.

At Sorg kan gjøre et Menneske sindssvagt, det seer man, og det er tungt nok; at der gives en Villie-Kraft, der kan knibe saa yderligt op mod Vinden, at den frelser Forstanden, om end Mennesket bliver lidt underligt, det

ENGLISH

Nor could I have done more than make the infinite movement, in order to find myself and rest in myself again. Nor would I have loved Isaac as Abraham loved him. That I was resolved to make the movement might prove my courage, humanly speaking; that I loved him with my whole soul is the presupposition without which the whole thing becomes a crime; yet I did not love as Abraham did, for then I would have held back even at the last minute—though without arriving at Mount Moriah too late on that account. Moreover, by my conduct I would have spoiled the whole story; for if I had gotten Isaac back, I would have been at a loss.

What came easiest to Abraham would have been hard for me: to be glad in Isaac again! For he who with all the infinity of his soul, proprio motu et propriis auspiciis [of his own accord and on his own authority], has made the infinite movement and can do no more, keeps Isaac only in pain.

But what did Abraham do? He came neither too *early* nor too [131] late. He mounted the donkey; he rode slowly along the road. All that time he had faith; he believed that God would not demand Isaac of him, while he was nonetheless willing to sacrifice him if it was required. He believed by virtue of the absurd; for there could be no question of human calculation, and it was indeed the absurd that God, who demanded it of him, should in the next moment revoke the demand. He climbed the mountain; even in the moment when the knife glinted, he believed—that God would not demand Isaac.

He was surprised by the outcome, to be sure, but through a double movement he had returned to his first condition, and therefore he received Isaac more gladly than the first time. Let us go further. We let Isaac actually be sacrificed. Abraham had faith. He did not believe that he would one day be blessed in the hereafter, but that he would be happy here in this world. God could give him a new Isaac, call the sacrificed one back to life. He believed by virtue of the absurd; for all human calculation had long since ceased.

That grief can unhinge a person, we see, and it is hard enough. That there is a willpower able to tack so hard into the wind that it saves the understanding, even if the person becomes a little strange—

DANISH

seer man ogsaa, jeg agter ikke at nedsætte det, men at kunne tabe sin Forstand og dermed hele den Endelighed, hvis Vexel-Mægler den er, og da i Kraft af det Absurde vinde netop den samme Endelighed, det forfærder min Sjæl, men derfor siger jeg ikke, at det er noget Ringe, da det tvertimod er det eneste Vidunder. Man mener i Almindelighed, at det, Troen frembringer, ikke er Kunstværk, at det er grovt og plumpt Arbeide, kun for de mere klodsede Naturer; dog er det langt anderledes.

Troens Dialektik er det Fineste og det Mærkværdigste af Alt, den har en Elevation, som jeg vel kan gjøre mig en Forestilling om, men heller ikke mere. Jeg kan gjøre det store Tramplin-Spring, hvorved jeg gaaer over i Uendeligheden, min Ryg er som en Liniedandsers, vreden i min Barndom, derfor falder det mig let, jeg kan een, to, tre gaae paa Hovedet i Tilværelsen, men det næste kan jeg ikke; thi det Vidunderlige kan jeg ikke gjøre; men kun forbauses ved.

Ja dersom Abraham i det Øieblik, han svingede sit Been over Æselets Ryg, har sagt til sig selv: nu er Isaak tabt, jeg kunde ligesaa gjerne offre ham her hjemme som reise den lange Vei til Morija – saa behøver jeg ikke Abraham, medens jeg nu bøier mig syv Gange for hans Navn og halvfjersindstive Gange for hans Gjerning. Dette har han nem [132] lig ikke gjort, hvad jeg kan bevise deraf, at han blev glad ved at modtage Isaak, ret inderlig glad, at han ingen Forberedelse behøvede, ingen Tid til at samle sig paa Endeligheden og dens Glæde.

SKS 4.132 Hvis det ikke stod sig saaledes med Abraham, da havde han maaskee elsket Gud, men ikke troet; thi den, der elsker Gud uden Tro, han reflekterer paa sig selv, den, der elsker Gud troende, han reflekterer paa Gud.

Paa denne Spidse staaer Abraham. Det sidste Stadium, han taber af Sigte, er den uendelige Resignation. Han gaaer virkelig videre og kommer til Troen; thi alle disse Vrængbilleder af Troen, den jammerlige lunkne Dorskhed, der tænker: det har vel ingen Nød, det er ikke værd at sørge før Tiden; det usle Haab, der siger: man kan ikke vide, hvad der vil skee, det var dog muligt – disse Vrængbilleder høre hjemme i Livets Elendighed, og dem har allerede den uendelige Resignation uendelig foragtet.

Abraham kan jeg ikke forstaae, jeg kan i en vis Forstand Intet lære af ham uden at forbauses. Naar man indbilder

ENGLISH

that too we see, and I do not mean to belittle it. But to be able to lose one's understanding, and with it the whole of finitude, whose broker it is, and then by virtue of the absurd to win precisely the same finitude back—that appalls my soul. Yet I do not say that it is something inferior; on the contrary, it is the one true marvel. People generally think that what faith produces is no work of art, that it is coarse and clumsy work, fit only for the clumsier natures; but it is quite otherwise.

The dialectic of faith is the finest and most extraordinary of all; it has an elevation of which I can well form a conception, but no more than that. I can make the great springboard leap by which I pass over into infinity; my back is like a tightrope dancer's, twisted in my childhood, so it comes easily to me. One, two, three—I can walk on my head in existence; but the next thing I cannot do; for the marvelous I cannot do, only be amazed at.

Indeed, if Abraham, in the moment he swung his leg over the donkey's back, had said to himself: now Isaac is lost, I might 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 to his deed. For this [132] he did not do, as I can prove from the fact that he was glad to receive Isaac, heartily glad, that he needed no preparation, no time to collect himself for finitude and its joy.[18]

If it had not been so with Abraham, then perhaps he would have loved God, but not had faith; for he who loves God without faith reflects upon himself, while he who loves God in faith reflects upon God.

On this pinnacle stands Abraham. The last stage he loses sight of is infinite resignation. He really does go further and arrives at faith. For all those caricatures of faith—the miserable, lukewarm sloth that thinks: there's surely no hurry, no point grieving before the time; the paltry hope that says: you never know what will happen, it might just be possible—these caricatures belong to the wretchedness of life, and infinite resignation has already infinitely despised them.

Abraham I cannot understand; in a certain sense I can learn nothing from him except to be amazed.

18 "Seven times … seventy times" echoes Matthew 18:22.

DANISH

sig, at man ved at betænke Udfaldet af hiin Historie, skulde lade sig bevæge til at troe, saa bedrager man sig selv, og vil bedrage Gud for Troens første Bevægelse; man vil suge Leve-Viisdom ud af Paradoxet. Maaskee lykkes det En og Anden; thi vor Tid bliver ikke staaende ved Troen, ikke ved dens Mirakel, at gjøre Vand til Viin, den gaaer videre, den gjør Viin til Vand.

Var det dog ikke bedst, at blive staaende ved Troen, og er det ikke oprørende, at Enhver vil gaae videre? Naar man i vor Tid, og det forkyndes jo paa forskjellig Maade, ikke vil blive staaende ved Kjærligheden, hvor kommer man da hen? Til jordisk Kløgt, smaalig Beregning, til Usselhed og Elendighed, til alt Det, der kan gjøre Menneskets guddommelige Herkomst tvivlsom. Var det ikke bedst, at man blev staaende ved Troen, og at den, der staaer, saae til, at han ikke faldt; thi Troens Bevægelse maa bestandig gjøres i Kraft af det Absurde, dog vel at mærke saaledes, at man ikke taber Endeligheden, men vinder den heel og holden. Jeg for mit Vedkommende kan vel beskrive Troens Bevægelser, men jeg kan ikke gjøre dem.

Naar man vil lære at gjøre Svømmebevægelserne, da kan man lade sig hænge i Seler under Loftet, man beskriver vel Bevægelserne, men man svømmer ikke; saaledes kan jeg beskrive Troens Bevægelser, men naar jeg bliver kastet ud i Vandet, da svømmer jeg vel (thi jeg hører ikke til Vaderne), men jeg gjør andre [133] Bevægelser, jeg gjør Uendelighedens Bevægelser, medens Troen gjør det Modsatte, gjør, efter at have gjort Uendelighedens Bevægelser, Endelighedens. Held den, der kan gjøre disse Bevægelser, han gjør det Vidunderlige, og jeg skal aldrig blive træt af at beundre ham, om det er Abraham eller det er Trællen i Abrahams Huus, om det er en Professor i Philosophi eller en stakkels Tjenestepige, er mig absolut ligegyldigt, jeg seer blot paa Bevægelserne.

ENGLISH

If one imagines that by pondering the outcome of that story one will be moved to faith, one deceives oneself and means to cheat God of faith's first movement; one wants to suck worldly wisdom out of the paradox. Perhaps someone or other will succeed; for our age does not stop at faith, at its miracle of turning water into wine—it goes further, it turns wine into water.[19]

Would it not be best to stop at faith, and is it not outrageous that everyone wants to go further? When in our age—and it is proclaimed in various ways—people will not stop at love, where do they end up? At worldly shrewdness, petty calculation, at meanness and wretchedness, at everything that can make humanity's divine origin doubtful. Would it not be best to stop at faith, and for him who stands to take heed that he does not fall? For the movement of faith must constantly be made by virtue of the absurd—yet, mark well, in such a way that one does not lose finitude but gains it whole and entire. For my part, I can well describe the movements of faith, but I cannot make them.[20]

If you want to learn the movements of swimming, you can have yourself hung from the ceiling in a harness; you go through the movements, but you are not swimming. In the same way I can describe the movements of faith; but when I am thrown into the water, I do swim, to be sure (for I am not one of the waders), but I make other [133] movements: I make the movements of infinity, whereas faith does the opposite—having made the movements of infinity, it makes those of finitude. Happy is he who can make these movements! He does the marvelous, and I shall never tire of admiring him. Whether it is Abraham or the slave in Abraham's house, whether it is a professor of philosophy or a poor servant girl, is absolutely indifferent to me; I look only at the movements.[21]

THE KNIGHT OF FAITH

Johannes imagines meeting a knight of faith, who looks just like a tax collector.

DANISH

SKS 4.133 Men dem seer jeg ogsaa paa, og lader mig ikke narre, hverken af mig selv eller af noget Menneske. Ridderne af

ENGLISH

But at those I do look, and I do not let myself be fooled, either by myself or by anyone else. The

19 The miracle at Cana, John 2:1–11.
20 "He who stands … fall" echoes 1 Corinthians 10:12.
21 "Waders" are wading birds, which keep to the shallows.

DANISH

den uendelige Resignation kjender man let, deres Gang er svævende, dristig. De derimod, der bære Troens Klenodie, skuffe let, fordi deres Ydre har en paafaldende Lighed med det, som saavel den uendelige Resignation som Troen dybt foragter – med Spidsborgerlighed.

Jeg tilstaaer oprigtigt, jeg har i min Praxis ikke fundet noget paalideligt Exemplar, uden at jeg derfor vil negte, at maaskee hvert andet Menneske er et saadant Exemplar. Imidlertid har jeg dog i flere Aar eftersporet det forgjeves. Man reiser i Almindelighed Verden rundt for at see Floder og Bjerge, nye Stjerner, spraglede Fugle, vanskabte Fiske, *[besynderlige Folkeslag]*, man hengiver sig til den dyriske Stupor, der gloer paa Tilværelsen, og man mener at have seet Noget. Dette beskæftiger mig ikke. Vidste jeg derimod, hvor der levede en saadan Troens Ridder, da vilde jeg paa min Fod vandre til ham; thi dette Vidunder beskæftiger mig absolut.

Jeg vilde intet Øieblik slippe ham, hvert Minut passe paa, hvorledes han bar sig ad med Bevægelserne; jeg vilde betragte mig selv som forsørget i Livet, og dele min Tid mellem at see paa ham og selv gjøre Øvelser, og saaledes anvende al min Tid paa at beundre ham. Som sagt jeg har ikke fundet nogen Saadan, imidlertid kan jeg vel tænke ham. Her er han. Bekjendtskabet stiftes, jeg bliver forestillet for ham. I det Moment, jeg først tager ham paa mine Øine, kaster jeg ham i samme Nu fra mig, gjør selv et Spring tilbage, slaaer Hænderne sammen og siger halv høit: »Herre Gud! er det Mennesket, er det virkeligt ham, han seer jo ud som en Rodemester.« Imidlertid er det dog ham.

Jeg slutter mig lidt nærmere til ham, passer paa den mindste Bevægelse, om der ikke skulde vise sig en lille uensartet Brøks-Telegraphering fra det Uendelige, et Blik, en Mine, en Gestus, et Vemod, et Smil, der forraadte det Uendelige i sin Uensartethed med det Endelige. Nei! Jeg examinerer hans Skikkelse fra Top til Taa, om der ikke [134] skulde være en Revne, igjennem hvilken det Uendelige tittede ud. Nei! Han er heelt igjennem solid. Hans Fodfæste? er kraftigt, tilhører ganske Endeligheden, ingen pyntet Borgermand, der Søndag-Eftermiddag gaaer ud paa Fresberg, træder grundigere paa Jorden, han tilhører ganske Verden, ingen Spidsborger kan tilhøre den mere. Intet er at opdage af dette fremmede og

ENGLISH

knights of infinite resignation are easily recognized: their gait is gliding, bold. Those, on the other hand, who carry the jewel of faith easily deceive, because their outward appearance bears a striking resemblance to what both infinite resignation and faith deeply despise—philistinism.[22]

I frankly confess that in my experience I have not found a single reliable specimen, though I will not therefore deny that perhaps every second person is such a specimen. Still, I have searched for one in vain for several years. People generally travel around the world to see rivers and mountains, new stars, gaudy birds, misshapen fish, outlandish peoples; they abandon themselves to the animal stupor that gapes at existence, and they think they have seen something. That does not occupy me. But if I knew where such a knight of faith lived, I would walk to him on foot; for this marvel occupies me absolutely.

I would not let him out of my sight for a moment; every minute I would watch how he managed the movements. I would consider myself provided for in life and divide my time between watching him and practicing myself, and so spend all my time admiring him. As I said, I have not found any such person; but I can well imagine him. Here he is. The acquaintance is made; I am introduced to him. The moment I first set eyes on him, I instantly push him away, jump back, clap my hands together and say half aloud: "Good Lord! Is this the man? Is it really him? Why, he looks just like a tax collector!" But it is him all the same.[23]

I draw a little closer to him and watch his slightest movement, to see whether some small, incongruous fragment of a signal from the infinite might show itself—a glance, a look, a gesture, a touch of melancholy, a smile—that betrayed the infinite in its incongruity with the finite. No! I examine his figure from head to toe, to see whether there [134] might be a crack through which the infinite peeked out. No! He is solid through and through. His footing? It is firm and belongs wholly to finitude; no townsman in his Sunday best, strolling out to Frederiksberg on a Sunday afternoon, treads the ground more solidly. He belongs wholly

22 "Knight of infinite resignation" renders *Ridder af den uendelige Resignation*; the counterpart is the knight of faith (*Troens Ridder*). "Philistinism" renders *Spidsborgerlighed*, narrow bourgeois respectability.
23 A *Rodemester* was a Copenhagen district official whose duties included collecting taxes.

DANISH

fornemme Væsen, hvorpaa man kjender Uendelighedens Ridder.

SKS 4.134 Han glæder sig ved Alt, deeltager i Alt, og hver Gang man seer ham deeltage i det Enkelte, skeer det med en Vedholdenhed, som betegner det jordiske Menneske, hvis Sjæl hænger fast ved Sligt. Han passer sin Gjerning. Naar man da seer ham, skulde man troe, han var en Skriverkarl, der havde fortabt sin Sjæl i det italienske Bogholderi, saa punktlig er han. Han ferierer om Søndagen. Han gaaer i Kirke. Intet himmelsk Blik eller noget Tegn paa det Incommensurable forraader ham; hvis man ikke kjendte ham, var det umuligt, at udsondre ham af den øvrige Mængde; thi hans sunde kraftige Psalmesang beviser i det Høieste, at han har et godt Bryst. Om Eftermiddagen gaaer han til Skoven.

Han fryder sig over Alt, hvad han seer, over Menneske-Vrimlen, de nye Omnibusser, Sundet, – naar man møder ham paa Strandveien skulde man troe, han var en Kræmmersjæl, der slog sig løs, netop saaledes glæder han sig; thi han er ikke Digter, og jeg har forgjeves søgt at aflure ham den poetiske Incommensurabilitet. Henad Aften gaaer han hjem, hans Gang er ufortrøden som et Postbuds. Underveis tænker han paa, at hans Kone vist har en apparte lille Ret varm Mad til ham, naar han kommer hjem, f. Ex. et stegt Lammehoved med Grønt til. Hvis han mødte en Ligesindet, da kunde han vedblive lige til Østerport at samtale med ham om denne Ret med en Lidenskab, der vilde passe for en Restaurateur.

Tilfældigvis eier han ikke 4 Sk., og dog troer han fuldt og fast, at hans Kone har hiin lækkre Ret til ham. Har hun den, da skal det være et misundelsesværdigt Syn for fornemme Folk, begeistrende for Menigmand at see ham spise; thi hans Appetit er stærkere end Esaus. Hans Kone har den ikke – besynderligt nok – han er aldeles den Samme. Paa Veien kommer han forbi en Byggeplads, han træffer en anden Mand. De tale et Øieblik sammen, han opfører i et Nu en Bygning, han disponerer over alle Kræfter dertil. Den Fremmede forlader ham med den Tanke, det var vist en Capitalist, medens min beundrede

ENGLISH

to the world; no philistine could belong to it more. There is nothing to detect of that alien and distinguished air by which one recognizes the knight of infinity.[24]

He takes delight in everything, takes part in everything, and every time one sees him take part in some particular thing, he does it with a persistence that marks the worldly person whose soul clings to such things. He tends to his work. Seeing him at it, you would think he was a clerk who had lost his soul in Italian double-entry bookkeeping, he is so punctilious. On Sunday he takes the day off. He goes to church. No heavenly gaze, no sign of the incommensurable gives him away; if one did not know him, it would be impossible to pick him out from the rest of the crowd, for his hearty, vigorous hymn-singing proves at most that he has good lungs. In the afternoon he walks out to the woods.[25]

He delights in everything he sees: the swarm of people, the new omnibuses, the Sound. Meeting him on Strandvejen, you would think he was a shopkeeper out for a spree—that is exactly how he enjoys himself; for he is no poet, and I have tried in vain to catch the poetic incommensurability in him. Toward evening he walks home, his step as tireless as a postman's. On the way he thinks that his wife is sure to have some special little hot dish ready for him when he gets home—say, roast lamb's head with vegetables. If he met a kindred spirit, he could go on all the way to Østerport talking with him about this dish with a passion worthy of a restaurateur.[26]

As it happens, he does not have four shillings to his name, and yet he firmly believes that his wife has that tasty dish waiting for him. If she has it, to see him eat would be an enviable sight for the upper classes and an inspiring one for the common people; for his appetite is heartier than Esau's. His wife does not have it—oddly enough, he is exactly the same. On the way he passes a building site and meets another man. They talk for a moment; in an instant he puts up a building, and he has all the resources for it at his disposal. The stranger leaves

24 Frederiksberg (colloquially "Fresberg"), with its park and gardens just outside Copenhagen, was a favorite Sunday outing.
25 Double-entry bookkeeping was known as the "Italian" method after its Renaissance Italian origins.
26 The Sound (Øresund) is the strait between Denmark and Sweden; Strandvejen is the coast road north of Copenhagen, and Østerport was the city's eastern gate. Horse-drawn omnibuses had only recently arrived in Copenhagen.

DANISH

Ridder tænker: jo kom det derpaa an, kunde jeg sagtens faae det.

Han [135] ligger i et aabent Vindue og betragter Pladsen, paa hvilken han boer, Alt hvad der foregaaer, at en Rotte smutter ned under et Rendesteensbræt, at Børnene lege, alt beskæftiger ham med en Ro i Tilværelsen, som var han en Pige paa 16 Aar. Og dog er han ikke Genie; thi Geniets Incommensurabilitet har jeg forgjeves søgt at udspionere hos ham. Han ryger sin Pibe i Aftenstunden; naar man seer ham, skulde man sværge paa, det var Spekhøkeren ligeoverfor, der vegeterer i Skumringen.

SKS 4.135 Han lader 5 være lige med en Sorgløshed, som var han en letsindig Døgenigt, og dog kjøber han hvert Øieblik, han lever, den beleilige Tid til den dyreste Priis; thi han gjør end ikke det Mindste uden i Kraft af det Absurde. Og dog, dog, ja jeg kunde blive rasende derover, om ikke af anden Grund saa af Misundelse, dog har dette Menneske gjort og gjør hvert Øieblik Uendelighedens Bevægelse.

Han tømmer i den uendelige Resignation Tilværelsens dybe Vemod, han kjender Uendelighedens Salighed, han har fornummet Smerten af at forsage Alt, det Kjæreste, man har i Verden, og dog smager Endeligheden ham fuldt saa godt som den, der aldrig kjendte noget Høiere, thi hans Forbliven i Endeligheden havde intet Spoer af en forknyt beængstet Dressur, og dog har han denne Tryghed til at fryde sig ved den, som var den det Visseste af Alt. Og dog, dog er hele den jordiske Skikkelse, han frembringer, en ny Skabning i Kraft af det Absurde. Han resignerede uendeligt paa Alt, og da greb han Alt igjen i Kraft af det Absurde.

Han gjør bestandig Uendelighedens Bevægelse, men han gjør det med en saadan Correcthed og Sikkerhed, at han bestandig faaer Endeligheden ud, og der er intet Secund, hvor man ahner noget Andet. Det skal være den vanskeligste Opgave for en Dandser, at springe sig ind i en bestemt Stilling, saaledes, at der intet Secund er, da han griber efter Stillingen, men i Springet selv staaer i Stillingen. Maaskee kan ingen Dandser gjøre det – dette gjør hiin Ridder. Mængden af Mennesker lever fortabt i verdslig Sorg og Glæde, disse ere Oversidderne, som ikke

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him thinking that he must surely be a capitalist, while my admired knight thinks: well, if it came to that, I could easily manage it.[27]

He [135] leans out of an open window and looks at the square where he lives, at everything that goes on—a rat slipping under a gutter plank, children playing—everything occupies him with a calm in existence as though he were a girl of sixteen. And yet he is no genius; for I have tried in vain to spy out in him the incommensurability of genius. In the evening he smokes his pipe; seeing him, you would swear it was the grocer across the street vegetating in the twilight.

He lets things slide with a carefreeness as if he were a feckless good-for-nothing, and yet every moment he lives, he buys up the opportune time at the dearest price; for he does not do even the least thing except by virtue of the absurd. And yet, and yet—yes, I could be enraged at it, if for no other reason than envy—and yet this man has made, and at every moment makes, the movement of infinity.[28]

In infinite resignation he drains the deep sorrow of existence; he knows the bliss of infinity; he has felt the pain of renouncing everything, the dearest thing one has in the world; and yet finitude tastes just as good to him as to one who never knew anything higher. For his remaining in finitude bore no trace of a cowed, anxious training, and yet he has this sureness in delighting in it, as if it were the most certain thing of all. And yet, and 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 constantly makes the movement of infinity, but he makes it with such precision and assurance that he constantly gets finitude out of it, and there is not a second in which one suspects anything else. It is said to be the hardest task for a dancer to leap into a particular position in such a way that there is not a second in which he is grasping for the position, but in the leap itself he stands in the position. Perhaps no dancer can do it—this that knight does. The mass of people live lost in worldly sorrow and joy; they are the wallflowers

27 The skilling was a small Danish coin. Esau sold his birthright for a meal of stew (Genesis 25:29–34).
28 "Lets things slide" renders the Danish idiom *lader 5 være lige* ("lets five be even"). "Buying up the time" echoes Ephesians 5:16.

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komme med i Dandsen. Uendelighedens Riddere ere Dandsere og have Elevation.

De gjøre Bevægelsen op efter og falde ned igjen, og ogsaa dette er en ikke usalig Tidsfordriv og ikke uskjønt at see paa. Men hver Gang de falde ned, kunne de ikke strax antage Stillingen, de vakle et Øieblik, og denne Vaklen viser, at de dog ere Fremmede i Verden. Den er mere eller mindre paafaldende, eftersom de have Kunst, men selv den kunstigste [136] af disse Riddere kan dog ikke skjule denne Vaklen. Man behøver ikke at se dem i Luften, man behøver blot at see dem i det Øieblik, de berøre og have berørt Jorden – og man kjender dem.

SKS 4.136 Men at kunne falde saaledes ned, at det i samme Secund seer ud som stod og gik man, at forvandle Springet i Livet til Gang, absolut at udtrykke det Sublime i det Pedestre – det kan kun hiin Ridder, – og dette er det eneste Vidunder.

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who do not join the dance. The knights of infinity are dancers and have elevation.[29]

They make the movement upward and come down again, and this too is no unhappy pastime, nor unlovely to watch. But every time they come down, they cannot immediately assume the position; they waver for a moment, and this wavering shows that they are, after all, strangers in the world. It is more or less noticeable depending on their skill, but even the most skillful [136] of these knights cannot hide this wavering. One need not see them in the air; one need only see them at the moment they touch and have touched the ground —and one recognizes them.

But to be able to come down in such a way that in the same second it looks as if one were standing and walking, to transform the leap of life into a walk, absolutely to express the sublime in the pedestrian—only that knight can do it, and this is the one and only marvel.

THE PRINCESS AND THE LAD

A young lad loves a princess, a love that can never be realized.

DANISH

Dog dette Vidunder kan saa let skuffe, jeg vil derfor beskrive Bevægelserne i et bestemt Tilfælde, der kan belyse disses Forhold til Virkeligheden; thi derom er det at Alt dreier sig. En Ungersvend forelsker sig i en Prindsesse, og hele hans Livs Indhold ligger i denne Kjærlighed, og dog er Forholdet et saadant, at den umulig lader sig realisere, umuligt lader sig oversætte fra Idealiteten til Realiteten*. Elendighedens Trælle, Frøerne i Livets Sump, skrige naturligvis: en saadan Kjærlighed er en Daarskab, og den rige Bryggerenke er et fuldkomment saa godt og solidt Parti. Lad dem uforstyrret qvække i Sumpen. Saaledes gjør Ridderen af den uendelige Resignation ikke, han opgiver ikke Kjærligheden, ikke for al Verdens Herlighed. Han er ingen Gjæk.

Han forvisser sig først om, at den virkelig er ham Livets Indhold, og hans Sjæl er for sund og for stolt til at ødsle det Mindste paa en Ruus. Han er ikke feig, han frygter ikke for at lade den snige sig ind i hans lønligste, hans mest afsides Tanker, at lade den snoe sig i utallige Slyngninger om ethvert Ligament i hans Bevidsthed – bliver Kjærligheden ulykkelig, da vil han aldrig kunne

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But this marvel can so easily deceive, so I will describe the movements in a particular case that can shed light on their relation to actuality; for that is what everything turns on. A young lad falls in love with a princess, and the whole content of his life lies in this love; and yet the situation is such that it cannot possibly be realized, cannot possibly be translated from ideality into reality*. The slaves of wretchedness, the frogs in life's swamp, naturally shriek: such a love is folly; the rich brewer's widow is every bit as good and solid a match. Let them croak undisturbed in the swamp. The knight of infinite resignation does not act this way; he does not give up the love, not for all the glory in the world. He is no fool.

First he makes sure that it really is the content of his life, and his soul is too healthy and too proud to squander the least thing on an infatuation. He is not cowardly; he is not afraid to let it steal into his most secret, his most remote thoughts, to let it wind itself in countless coils around every liga-

29 "Elevation" is the ballet term for a dancer's height and lightness in a leap.

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rive sig ud af den. Han føler en salig Vellyst ved at lade Kjærligheden gjennemgyse hver hans Nerve, og dog er hans Sjæl høitidelig som Dens, der har tømt Giftbægeret og føler, hvorledes Saften gjennemtrænger hver en Blodsdraabe, – thi dette Øieblik er Liv og Død.

Naar han da saaledes har indsuget hele Kjærligheden i sig og fordybet [137] sig i den, da mangler han ikke Mod til at forsøge og vove Alt. Han overskuer Livets Forhold, han sammenkalder de hurtige Tanker, der som slagvante Duer lyde hvert hans Vink, han svinger Staven over dem, og de styrte sig i alle Retninger. Men naar de nu alle vende tilbage, alle som Sorgens Bud og forklare ham, at det er en Umulighed, da bliver han stille, han takker dem af, han bliver ene og da foretager han sig Bevægelsen. Dersom hvad, jeg her siger, skal have nogen Betydning, da gjælder det om, at Bevægelsen skeer normalt*.

SKS 4.137 Ridderen vil da for det første have Kraft til at concentrere hele Livets Indhold og Virkelighedens Betydning i eet eneste Ønske. Mangler et Menneske denne Concentration, denne Sluttethed, er hans Sjæl fra Begyndelsen adsplittet i det Mangfoldige, da kommer han aldrig til at gjøre Bevægelsen, han vil i Livet handle klogt som de Pengemænd, der anbringe deres Capital i alle forskjellige Papirer, for at vinde paa det ene, naar de tabe paa det andet – kort, saa er han ikke Ridder. Dernæst vil Ridderen have Kraft til at concentrere hele Tanke-Operationens Resultat i een Bevidstheds-Akt.

Mangler han denne Sluttethed, er hans Sjæl fra Begyndelsen adsplittet i det Mangfoldige, da vil han aldrig faae Tid til at gjøre Bevægelsen, han vil bestandig løbe Ærinder i Livet, aldrig gaae ind i Evigheden; thi selv i det Øieblik, da han er nærmest derved, vil han pludselig opdage, at han har glemt Noget, hvorfor han maa tilbage. [138] I næste Øieblik, vil han tænke, er det muligt, og det er ogsaa ganske sandt; men ved slige Betragtninger kommer man aldrig til at gjøre Bevægelsen, men ved Hjelp af dem synker man dybere og dybere i Mudret.

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ment of his consciousness—if the love turns out unhappy, he will never be able to tear himself free of it. He feels a blissful rapture in letting love thrill through every nerve, and yet his soul is as solemn as that of one who has drained the cup of poison and feels how the juice penetrates every drop of blood—for this moment is life and death.[30]

When he has thus absorbed the whole of love and immersed [137] himself in it, he does not lack the courage to try and venture everything. He surveys the circumstances of his life; he summons the swift thoughts that, like seasoned doves, obey his every signal; he waves his staff over them, and they scatter in all directions. But when they all return, all as messengers of sorrow, and explain to him that it is an impossibility, then he grows quiet, dismisses them, becomes alone, and then he undertakes the movement. If what I am saying here is to have any meaning, everything depends on the movement's being made normally*.

In the first place, then, the knight will have the strength to concentrate the whole content of life and the meaning of actuality in one single wish. If a person lacks this concentration, this self-containment, if his soul is dispersed in the manifold from the start, then he will never get to make the movement; he will act shrewdly in life, like the financiers who invest their capital in all sorts of securities so as to gain on one when they lose on another—in short, he is no knight. In the second place, the knight will have the strength to concentrate the whole result of his thinking in one act of consciousness.

If he lacks this self-containment, if his soul is dispersed in the manifold from the start, he will never find time to make the movement; he will be forever running errands in life, never entering eternity; for even at the moment he is closest to it, he will suddenly discover that he has forgotten something and must go back. [138] In the next moment, he will think, it is possible—and that is quite true, too; but by such reflections one never gets around to making the movement; rather, with their help one sinks deeper and deeper into the mire.

30 The cup of poison recalls the death of Socrates, who drank hemlock in 399 BC.

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THE KNIGHT OF INFINITE RESIGNATION

The lover renounces the princess infinitely, keeps his love young, and finds peace in pain.

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SKS 4.138 Ridderen gjør da Bevægelsen, men hvilken? Vil han glemme det Hele; thi ogsaa deri ligger jo en Slags Concentration? Nei! thi Ridderen modsiger ikke sig selv, og det er en Modsigelse at forglemme hele sit Livs Indhold og dog blive den Samme. At blive en Anden, føler han ingen Drift til, og anseer det ingenlunde for det Store. Kun de lavere Naturer glemme sig selv og blive noget Nyt. Saaledes har Sommerfuglen aldeles glemt, at den var Kaalorm, maaskee kan den igjen glemme, at den var Sommerfugl saa aldeles, at den kan blive en Fisk. De dybere Naturer glemme aldrig sig selv og blive aldrig til Andet end hvad de vare.

The knight makes the movement, then—but which one? Will he forget the whole thing? For there is a kind of concentration in that too. No! For the knight does not contradict himself, and it is a contradiction to forget the whole content of one's life and yet remain the same. He feels no urge to become someone else, and by no means considers that the great thing. Only the lower natures forget themselves and become something new. Thus the butterfly has completely forgotten that it was a caterpillar; perhaps it can in turn forget so completely that it was a butterfly that it can become a fish. The deeper natures never forget themselves and never become anything other than what they were.

Ridderen vil da erindre Alt; men denne Erindren er netop Smerten, og dog er han i den uendelige Resignation forsonet med Tilværelsen. Kjærligheden til hiin Prindsesse blev for ham Udtrykket for en evig Kjærlighed, antog en religiøs Charakteer, forklarede sig i en Kjærlighed til det evige Væsen, der vel negtede Opfyldelsen, men dog atter forsonede ham i den evige

The knight, then, will remember everything; but this remembering is precisely the pain, and yet in infinite resignation he is reconciled with existence. His love for that princess became for him the expression of an eternal love, took on a religious character, was transfigured into a love for the eternal being, which did indeed deny the ful-

32 "Leap" renders *Spring*. "Mediation" renders *Mediationen*, Hegel's term for the reconciling of opposites in a higher unity. Socrates claimed to know only that he knew nothing.

31

* Det følger af sig selv, at hvilkensomhelst anden Interesse, i hvilken et Individ har hele Virkelighedens Realitet for sig concentreret, kan, naar den viser sig urealisabel, foranledige Resignationens Bevægelse. Jeg har imidlertid valgt en Forelskelse til at vise Bevægelserne paa, fordi denne Interesse vel lettere forstaaes, og saaledes fritager mig for alle foreløbige Overveielser, der i dybere Forstand kun kunne beskæftige ganske Enkelte.

* It goes without saying that any other interest in which an individual has concentrated the whole reality of actuality for himself can, when it proves unrealizable, prompt the movement of resignation. I have chosen being in love to show the movements, however, because this interest is presumably easier to understand and so spares me all preliminary considerations, which in a deeper sense could concern only a very few individuals.

33

* *Dertil hører der Lidenskab. Enhver Uendelighedens Bevægelse skeer ved Lidenskab, og ingen Reflexion kan tilveiebringe en Bevægelse. Dette er det idelige Spring i Tilværelsen, der forklarer Bevægelsen, medens Mediationen er en Chimaire, som hos Hegel skal forklare Alt, og som tillige er det Eneste, han aldrig har forsøgt at forklare.* Selv til at gjøre den bekjendte socratiske Distinction mellem hvad man forstaaer og hvad man ikke forstaaer, hører der Lidenskab, end mere naturligvis til at gjøre den egentlige socratiske Bevægelse, Uvidenhedens. Men det, Tiden mangler, er ikke Reflexion, men Lidenskab.

* *For this, passion is required. Every movement of infinity comes about 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 that in Hegel is supposed to explain everything and that is also the only thing he has never tried to explain.* Even to make the well-known Socratic distinction between what one understands and what one does not understand requires passion—and still more, of course, to make the real Socratic movement, that of ignorance. But what our age lacks is not reflection but passion.[32]

34

Derfor er Tiden egentlig i en vis Forstand for seiglivet til at døe; thi det at døe er et af de mærkeligste Spring, og et lille Vers af en Digter har altid tiltalt mig meget, fordi han, efter i en 5, 6 foregaaende Linier smukt og eenfoldigt at have ønsket sig gode Ting i Livet, ender saaledes: ein seliger Sprung in die Ewigkeit.

That is why our age is, in a certain sense, actually too tenacious of life to die; for dying is one of the most remarkable leaps. A little verse by a poet has always appealed to me greatly, because after five or six preceding lines in which he has beautifully and simply wished himself good things in life, he ends like this: ein seliger Sprung in die Ewigkeit [a blessed leap into eternity].

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Bevidsthed om dens Gyldighed i en Evigheds-Form, som ingen Virkelighed kan fratage ham. Daarer og unge Mennesker snakke om, at Alt er muligt for et Menneske. Det er imidlertid en stor Vildfarelse. Aandelig talt er Alt muligt, men i Endelighedens Verden er der Meget, der ikke er muligt.

Dette Umulige gjør imidlertid Ridderen muligt derved, at han udtrykker det aandeligt, men aandeligt udtrykker han det derved, at han giver Afkald derpaa. Ønsket, der vilde føre ham ud i Virkeligheden men strandede paa Umuligheden, bøies nu indefter, men er derfor ikke tabt, heller ikke glemt. Snart er det Ønskets dunkle Rørelser i ham, der vække Erindringen, snart vækker han den selv; thi han er for stolt til at ville, at det, der var hele hans Livs Indhold, skulde have været et flygtigt Moments Sag. Han holder denne Kjærlighed ung, og den tiltager med ham i Aar og i Skjønhed. Derimod behøver han ingen Endelighedens Anledning til dens Fremvæxt. Fra det Øieblik, han har gjort Bevægelsen, er Prindsessen tabt.

Han behøver ikke disse erotiske Nervezittringer ved at see den Elskede o. s. v., han behøver heller ikke i endelig Forstand bestandig at tage Afsked med hende, fordi han i evig Forstand erindrer hende, og han veed meget [139] godt, at de Elskende, der ere saa forhippede paa endnu engang til Afsked at see hinanden for sidste Gang, have Ret i at være forhippede, Ret i at mene, at det er sidste Gang; thi de glemme snarest hinanden. Han har fattet den dybe Hemmelighed, at ogsaa i at elske et andet Menneske bør man være sig selv nok. Han tager intet endeligt Hensyn mere til hvad Prindsessen gjør, og netop dette beviser, at han har gjort Bevægelsen uendeligt.

SKS 4.139 Her kan man faae Leilighed til at see, om Bevægelsen hos den Enkelte er sand eller tilløiet. Der var den, der ogsaa troede, at han havde gjort Bevægelsen, men see Tiden gik, Prindsessen gjorde noget Andet, hun giftede sig f. Ex. med en Prinds, da tabte hans Sjæl Resignationens Elasticitet. Han viste derved, at han ikke havde gjort Bevægelsen rigtigt; thi den, der har resigneret uendeligt, han er sig selv nok. Ridderen hæver ikke sin Resignation, han bevarer sin Kjærlighed ligesaa ung, som den var i det første Øieblik, han slipper den aldrig fra sig, netop fordi han har gjort Bevægelsen uendeligt.

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fillment but still reconciled him once more in the eternal consciousness of its validity in a form of eternity that no actuality can take from him. Fools and young people chatter that everything is possible for a human being. That, however, is a great error. Spiritually speaking, everything is possible; but in the world of finitude there is much that is not possible.

This impossible thing, however, the knight makes possible by expressing it spiritually; but he expresses it spiritually by renouncing it. The wish that would have led him out into actuality, but was wrecked on impossibility, is now bent inward; yet it is not lost on that account, nor forgotten. Sometimes it is the dim stirrings of the wish in him that awaken the memory; sometimes he awakens it himself; for he is too proud to want what was the whole content of his life to have been the affair of a fleeting moment. He keeps this love young, and it grows with him in years and in beauty. He needs no finite occasion, however, for its growth. From the moment he has made the movement, the princess is lost.

He does not need those erotic tremblings of the nerves at the sight of the beloved, and so on; nor does he need, in the finite sense, to be forever taking leave of her, because he remembers her in the eternal sense. And he knows very [139] well that lovers who are so eager to see each other once more, to say goodbye for the last time, are right to be eager, right to think it is the last time; for they forget each other soonest. He has grasped the deep secret that even in loving another person one ought to be sufficient unto oneself. He no longer pays any finite attention to 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 the individual is true or feigned. There was one who also believed he had made the movement; but look—time passed, the princess did something else, married a prince, for example, and then his soul lost the elasticity of resignation. He thereby showed that he had not made the movement properly; for he who has resigned infinitely is sufficient unto himself. The knight does not revoke his resignation; he keeps his love just as young as it was in the first moment; he never

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lets go of it, precisely because he has made the movement infinitely.

Hvad Prindsessen gjør kan ikke forstyrre ham, det er kun de lavere Naturer, der have Loven for deres Handlinger i et andet Menneske, Præmisserne til deres Handlinger udenfor sig selv. Er Prindsessen derimod en Ligesindet, da vil det Skjønne fremkomme. Hun vil da introducere sig selv i den Ridderorden, i hvilken man ikke optages ved Ballotation, men af hvilken Enhver er Medlem, der har Mod til at indføre sig selv, den Ridderorden, der derved beviser sin Udødelighed, at den ingen Forskjel gjør paa Mand og Qvinde. Ogsaa hun vil bevare sin Kjærlighed ung og sund, ogsaa hun vil have forvundet sin Qvide, om hun end ikke, som der staaer i Visen: hver Nat ligger ved sin Herres Side.

What the princess does cannot disturb him; it is only the lower natures that have the law for their actions in another person, the premises of their actions outside themselves. If, on the other hand, the princess is of like mind, then something beautiful will come about. She will then induct herself into that order of knighthood to which one is not admitted by ballot, but of which everyone is a member who has the courage to enroll himself—the order of knighthood that proves its immortality by making no distinction between man and woman. She too will keep her love young and healthy; she too will have overcome her grief, even though she does not, as the ballad says, "lie every night by her lord's side."[35]

Disse Tvende vil da i al Evighed passe for hinanden, med en saadan taktfast harmonia præstabilita, at hvis nogensinde Øieblikket kom, et Øieblik, der dog ikke endeligt beskæftiger dem, thi da ældes de, hvis nogensinde Øieblikket kom, der tillod at give Kjærligheden sit Udtryk i Tiden, da vilde de være istand til at begynde netop der, hvor de vilde have begyndt, hvis de oprindeligen havde været forenede. Den, der forstaaer dette, hvad enten han er en Mand eller en Qvinde, han kan aldrig blive bedragen, thi det er kun de lavere Naturer, der indbilde sig, at de ere bedragne. Ingen Pige, der ikke er saa stolt, forstaaer egentlig at elske, men er hun saa stolt, da kan Alverdens List og Kløgt ikke bedrage hende.

These two will then suit each other for all eternity, with such a rhythmic harmonia praestabilita [pre-established harmony] that if ever the moment came—a moment, however, that does not concern them finitely, for then they would grow old—if ever the moment came that allowed love to be given its expression in time, they would be able to begin exactly where they would have begun had they originally been united. He who understands this, whether man or woman, can never be deceived; for it is only the lower natures who imagine that they are deceived. No girl who is not that proud really knows how to love; but if she is that proud, then all the cunning and shrewdness in the world cannot deceive her.[36]

SKS 4.140 I den uendelige Resignation er der Fred og Hvile; ethvert Menneske, der vil det, der ikke har fornedret sig selv ved, hvad der er endnu forfærdeligere end at være for stolt – at lade haant om sig selv, kan optugte sig selv til at gjøre denne Bevægelse, der i sin Smerte forsoner med Tilværelsen. Den uendelige Resignation er hiin Skjorte, om hvilken der tales i et gammelt Folkesagn. Traaden er spunden under Taarer, bleget ved Taarer, Skjorten syet i Taarer, men da beskytter den ogsaa bedre end Jern og Staal. Det Ufuldkomne i Folkesagnet er, at en Tredie kan forarbeide dette Linned.

In infinite resignation there is peace and rest. Every human being who wills it—who has not debased himself by something still more dreadful than being too proud, namely by holding himself in contempt—can discipline himself to make this movement, which in its pain reconciles one with existence. Infinite resignation is that shirt spoken of in an old folk tale. The thread is spun under tears, bleached with tears, the shirt sewn in tears; but then it also protects better than iron and steel. The imperfection in the folk tale is that a third party can make this linen.[37]

35 The line comes from a Danish folk ballad.
36 "Pre-established harmony" is Leibniz's term for the God-ordained correspondence between substances that do not act on one another.
37 The folk tale is of a shirt spun and sewn in tears that shields its wearer.

DANISH

Hemmeligheden i Livet er, at Enhver maa sye sig den selv, og Mærkeligheden er, at en Mand kan sye den fuldt saa vel som en Qvinde. I den uendelige Resignation er der Fred og Hvile og Trøst i Smerten, det vil sige naar Bevægelsen er gjort normalt. Det var mig imidlertid ikke vanskeligt at skrive en heel Bog, naar jeg vilde gjennemgaae de forskjellige Misforstaaelser, de bagvendte Stillinger, de sjuskede Bevægelser, jeg har stødt paa blot i min lille Praxis.

Man troer meget lidt paa Aand, og dog gjelder det netop om Aand for at gjøre denne Bevægelse, det gjelder om, at den ikke er et eensidigt Resultat af en dira necessitas, og jo mere denne er tilstede, desto tvivlsommere bliver det altid, om Bevægelsen er normal. Naar man saaledes vil mene, at den kolde, ufrugtbare Nødvendighed nødvendigt maa være tilstede, saa siger man dermed, at Ingen kan opleve Døden, før han virkelig døer, hvilket forekommer mig en cras Materialisme. Dog i vor Tid bekymrer man sig mindre om at gjøre rene Bevægelser.

Dersom Een, der skulde lære at dandse, vilde sige: nu har i Aarhundreder den ene Slægt efter den anden lært Positioner, det er paa den høie Tid, at jeg drager mig dette til Fordeel og uden videre begynder paa Française, saa vilde man vel lee lidt ad ham; men i Aandens Verden finder man det yderst plausibelt. Hvad er da Dannelse? Jeg troede, det var det Cursus, den Enkelte gjennemløb for at indhente sig selv; og den, der ikke vil gjennemgaae dette Cursus, ham hjælper det saare lidet, om han blev født i den mest oplyste Tidsalder.

Den uendelige Resignation er det sidste Stadium, der gaaer forud for Troen, saaledes, at Enhver, der ikke har gjort denne Bevægelse, ikke har Troen; thi først i den uendelige Resignation bliver jeg mig selv klar i min evige Gyldighed, og først da kan der være Tale om i Kraft af Troen at gribe Tilværelsen.

ENGLISH

The secret in life is that each person must sew it for himself, and the remarkable thing is that a man can sew it just as well as a woman. In infinite resignation there is peace and rest and comfort in pain—that is, when the movement is made properly. Yet it would not be hard for me to write a whole book if I wanted to go through the various misunderstandings, the back-to-front positions, the sloppy movements I have come across in my own small practice.

People have very little belief in spirit, and yet it is precisely spirit that making this movement requires. What matters is that it not be the one-sided result of a dira necessitas [dire necessity], and the more that is present, the more doubtful it always becomes whether the movement is normal. So if one wants to hold that cold, barren necessity must necessarily be present, one is saying that no one can experience death before he actually dies—which strikes me as crude materialism. But in our age people worry less about making pure movements.[38]

If someone who was to learn to dance were to say, "For centuries now one generation after another has learned the positions; it is high time I took advantage of this and started straight in on the quadrilles," people would presumably laugh at him a little; but in the world of spirit this is found extremely plausible. What, then, is education? I thought it was the course the single individual runs through in order to catch up with himself; and whoever will not go through this course is helped very little by having been born in the most enlightened age.[39]

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 clear to myself in my eternal validity, and only then can there be any question of grasping existence by virtue of faith.

38 *Dira necessitas*, "dire necessity," echoes Horace, *Odes* 3.24.
39 "The single individual" renders *den Enkelte*. The Danish has *Française*, French set dances whose figures are built on the basic positions.

BY VIRTUE OF THE ABSURD

The knight of faith also renounces her, yet believes he will get her back.

DANISH

SKS 4.141 Vi ville nu lade Troens Ridder give Møde i det omtalte Tilfælde. Han gjør aldeles det samme, som den anden Ridder, han giver uendeligt Afkald paa den Kjærlighed, der er hans Livs Indhold, han er forsonet i Smerten; men da skeer Vidunderet, han gjør endnu en Bevægelse, forunderligere end Alt, thi han siger: jeg troer dog, at jeg faaer hende, i Kraft nemlig af det Absurde, i Kraft af, at for Gud er Alting muligt. Det Absurde hører ikke til de Differentser, der ligge indenfor Forstandens eget Omfang. Det er ikke identisk med det Usandsynlige, det Uventede, det Uformodede. I det Øieblik, Ridderen resignerede, da forvissede han sig om Umuligheden, menneskelig talt, dette var Forstandens Resultat, og han havde Energi nok til at tænke det.

I uendelig Forstand var det derimod muligt, det er ved at resignere derpaa, men denne Besidden er jo tillige en Opgiven, men dog er denne Besidden for Forstanden ingen Absurditet; thi Forstanden vedblev at beholde Ret i, at i den Elendighedens Verden, hvor den hersker, var og blev det en Umulighed. Denne Bevidsthed har Troens Ridder ligesaa klar; det Eneste, der altsaa kan frelse ham, er det Absurde, og dette griber han ved Troen.

Han erkjender altsaa Umuligheden og i samme Øieblik troer han det Absurde; thi vil han uden med al sin Sjæls Lidenskab og af sit ganske Hjerte at erkjende Umuligheden, indbilde sig at have Troen, da bedrager han sig selv, og hans Vidnesbyrd har intetsteds hjemme, da han end ikke er kommen til den uendelige Resignation.

Troen er derfor ingen æsthetisk Rørelse, men noget langt Høiere, netop fordi den har Resignationen forud for sig, den er ikke Hjertets umiddelbare Drift, men Tilværelsens Paradox. Naar saaledes en ung Pige tiltrods for alle Vanskeligheder dog holder sig forvisset om, at hendes Ønske vel bliver opfyldt, saa er denne Forvisning slet ikke Troens, og det uagtet hun er opdragen af christelige Forældre, og maaskee et heelt Aar har gaaet til Præsten.

ENGLISH

Let us now have the knight of faith appear in the case described. He does exactly the same as the other knight: he infinitely renounces the love that is the content of his life; he is reconciled in pain. But then the marvel happens. He makes one more movement, more wondrous than anything, for he says: "I nevertheless believe that I will get her—by virtue, that is, of the absurd, by virtue of the fact that for God all things are possible." The absurd does not belong among the distinctions that lie within the proper compass of the understanding. It is not identical with the improbable, the unexpected, the unforeseen. The moment the knight resigned, he assured himself of the impossibility, humanly speaking; that was the result of the understanding, and he had energy enough to think it.[40]

In an infinite sense, on the other hand, it was possible—namely, by resigning it. But this possessing is, of course, at the same time a giving up; and yet for the understanding this possessing is no absurdity, for the understanding went on being right that in the world of wretchedness where it rules, it was and remained an impossibility. The knight of faith is just as clearly conscious of this; the only thing that can save him, then, is the absurd, and this he grasps by faith.

He acknowledges the impossibility, then, and in the same moment believes the absurd; for if he imagines he has faith without acknowledging the impossibility with all the passion of his soul and with his whole heart, he deceives himself, and his testimony has no ground to stand on anywhere, since he has not even reached infinite resignation.

Faith is therefore no aesthetic emotion but something far higher, precisely because it has resignation before it; it is not the immediate impulse of the heart but the paradox of existence. So when a young girl, despite all difficulties, remains convinced that her wish will surely be fulfilled, this conviction is not at all that of faith—even though

40 "For God all things are possible" echoes Matthew 19:26.

DANISH

Hun er forvisset i al sin barnlige Naivetet og Uskyldighed, ogsaa denne Forvisning adler hendes Væsen, og giver hende en overnaturlig Størrelse, saa at hun som en Thaumaturg kan besværge Tilværelsens endelige Kræfter, og bringe Stene selv til at græde, medens hun paa den anden Side i sin Befippethed ligesaa godt kan løbe til Herodes som til Pilatus og røre al Verden med sine Bønner. Hendes Forvisning er saare elskelig, og man kan lære Meget af hende, men een Ting lærer man ikke af hende, man lærer ikke at gjøre [142] Bevægelser; thi hendes Forvisning tør ikke i Resignationens Smerte see Umuligheden under Øine.

SKS 4.142 Indsee kan jeg da, at der hører Kraft og Energi og Aandens Frihed til at gjøre Resignationens uendelige Bevægelse; jeg kan tillige indsee, at den lader sig gjøre. Det Næste forbauser mig, min Hjerne vender sig i mit Hoved; thi, efter at have gjort Resignationens Bevægelse, nu i Kraft af det Absurde at faae Alt, faae Ønsket, heelt, ubeskaarent, det er over menneskelige Kræfter, det er et Vidunder. Men det kan jeg indsee, at den unge Piges Forvisning kun er Letsindighed i Sammenligning med Troens Urokkelighed, uagtet den har indseet Umuligheden.

Hver Gang jeg vil gjøre denne Bevægelse, sortner det for mit Øie, i samme Øieblik beundrer jeg det absolut, og i samme Øieblik griber en uhyre Angst min Sjæl, thi hvad er da det at friste Gud? Og dog er denne Bevægelse Troens, og bliver ved at være det, om saa Philosophien end, for at forvirre Begreberne, vil bilde os ind, at den har Troen, om saa Theologien vil sælge den ud for godt Kjøb.

Til at resignere hører der ikke Tro, thi det, jeg i Resignation vinder, er min evige Bevidsthed, og dette er en reen philosophisk Bevægelse, som jeg trøster mig til at gjøre, naar forlanges, og som jeg kan tugte mig selv til at gjøre, thi hver Gang nogen Endelighed vil voxe mig overhovedet, da hungrer jeg mig selv ud, indtil jeg gjør Bevægelsen; thi min evige Bevidsthed er min Kjærlighed til Gud, og den er mig høiere end Alt. Til at resignere

ENGLISH

she was brought up by Christian parents and has perhaps spent a whole year going to the pastor.[41]

She is convinced in all her childlike naivety and innocence. This conviction, too, ennobles her being and gives her a supernatural stature, so that, like a thaumaturge, she can conjure the finite powers of existence and bring even the stones to weep, while on the other hand, in her flurry, she can just as well run to Herod as to Pilate and move the whole world with her pleas. Her conviction is most lovable, and one can learn much from her; but one thing one does not learn from her: one does not learn to make [142] movements, for her conviction does not dare, in the pain of resignation, to look the impossibility in the eye.[42]

I can understand, then, that it takes strength and energy and freedom of spirit to make the infinite movement of resignation; I can also understand that it can be done. The next thing astonishes me; my brain spins in my head. For after having made the movement of resignation, then by virtue of the absurd to get everything, to get the wish, whole and undiminished—that is beyond human powers; it is a marvel. But this I can understand: the young girl's conviction is mere light-mindedness compared with the unshakability of faith, even though faith has seen the impossibility.

Every time I want to make this movement, everything goes black before my eyes; in the same moment I admire it absolutely, and in the same moment a tremendous anguish grips my soul—for what, then, is it to tempt God? And yet this movement is the movement of faith, and remains so, even if philosophy, in order to confuse the concepts, would have us believe that it has faith, even if theology wants to sell it off cheap.

To resign does not require faith, for what I gain in resignation is my eternal consciousness, and this is a purely philosophical movement that I trust myself to make when it is required, and that I can discipline myself to make; for every time some finitude threatens to grow over my head, I starve myself out until I make the movement, because

41 "Immediate" renders *umiddelbar* (immediacy, *Umiddelbarhed*): unreflective, simply given. "Going to the pastor" means the year of confirmation classes in the Danish church.
42 A thaumaturge is a wonder-worker. Running "from Herod to Pilate" (after Luke 23) is a Danish idiom for rushing from one authority to another.

DANISH

hører der ikke Tro, men til at faae det allermindste mere end min evige Bevidsthed hører der Tro, thi dette er det Paradoxe. Man forvexler ofte Bevægelserne.

Man siger, at man behøver Troen for at give Afkald paa Alt, ja man hører det endnu Besynderligere, at et Menneske klager over, at han har tabt Troen, og naar man seer efter paa Scalaen, for at see, hvor han er, seer man besynderlig nok, at han kun er kommen til det Punkt, at han skal gjøre Resignationens uendelige Bevægelse. Ved Resignationen giver jeg Afkald paa Alt, denne Bevægelse gjør jeg ved mig selv, og naar jeg ikke gjør det, da er det fordi jeg er feig og blødagtig og uden Begeistring og ikke føler Betydningen af den høie Værdighed, ethvert Menneske er anviist, at være sin egen Censor, hvilket er meget fornemmere end at være General-Censor for hele den romerske Republik.

Denne Bevægelse gjør jeg ved mig selv, og det, jeg derfor vinder, er mig selv i min evige Bevidsthed, i salig Forstaaelse [143] med min Kjærlighed til det evige Væsen. Ved Troen giver jeg ikke Afkald paa Noget, tvertimod ved Troen faaer jeg Alt, netop i den Forstand, i hvilken det hedder, at den, som har Tro som et Sennepskorn, kan flytte Bjerge. Der hører et reent menneskeligt Mod til at give Afkald paa hele Timeligheden, for at vinde Evigheden, men denne vinder jeg, og kan i al Evighed ikke give Afkald paa, det er en Selvmodsigelse; men der hører et paradox og ydmygt Mod til nu at gribe hele Timeligheden i Kraft af det Absurde, og dette Mod er Troens.

SKS 4.143 Ved Troen gav Abraham ikke Afkald paa Isaak, men ved Troen fik Abraham Isaak. I Kraft af Resignationen skulde hiin rige Yngling have bortgivet Alt, men naar han da havde gjort det, da skulde Troens Ridder have sagt til ham: I Kraft af det Absurde skal Du faae hver en Hvid igjen, kan Du troe det. Og denne Tale skal ingenlunde være den forhen rige Yngling ligegyldig; thi dersom han bortgav sit Gods, fordi han er kjed deraf, da var det daarligt bevendt med hans Resignation.

ENGLISH

my eternal consciousness is my love for God, and that is higher to me than everything. To resign does not require faith, but to get the very least thing more than my eternal consciousness requires faith, for this is the paradoxical. People often confuse the movements.

People say one needs faith to renounce everything; indeed, one hears something stranger still: a person complains that he has lost faith, and when one checks the scale to see where he is, one sees, strangely enough, that he has only come to the point where he is to make the infinite movement of resignation. Through resignation I renounce everything. This movement I make by myself, and if I do not make it, it is because I am cowardly and soft and without enthusiasm and do not feel the significance of the high dignity assigned to every human being, that of being his own censor—which is far grander than being censor-general for the whole Roman Republic.[43]

This movement I make by myself, and what I gain by it is myself in my eternal consciousness, in blissful understanding [143] with my love for the eternal being. By faith I do not renounce anything; on the contrary, by faith I receive everything, precisely in the sense in which it is said that whoever has faith like a grain of mustard seed can move mountains. It takes a purely human courage to renounce the whole of the temporal in order to gain eternity; but eternity I do gain, and to all eternity I cannot renounce it—that would be a self-contradiction. But it takes a paradoxical and humble courage then to grasp the whole of the temporal by virtue of the absurd, and this courage is the courage of faith.[44]

By faith Abraham did not renounce Isaac; by faith Abraham received Isaac. By virtue of resignation that rich young man should have given away everything; but once he had done so, the knight of faith should have said to him: “By virtue of the absurd you will get every penny back—can you believe that?” And these words ought by no means to be a matter of indifference to the formerly rich young man; for if he gave away his possessions because he was tired of them, his resignation was in a sorry state.[45]

43 In republican Rome the censors kept the citizen rolls and oversaw public morals.
44 The mustard seed: Matthew 17:20.

DANISH

Timeligheden, Endeligheden er det, hvorom Alt dreier sig. Jeg kan ved egen Kraft resignere paa Alt, og da finde Fred og Hvile i Smerten, jeg kan finde mig i Alt, selv om hiin rædsomme Dæmon, forfærdeligere end Knokkelmanden, der forskrækker Menneskene, selv om Vanvidet holdt Narredragten op for mit Øie, og jeg forstod dens Mine, at det var mig, der skulde iføre mig den, jeg kan endnu frelse min Sjæl, dersom det ellers er mig mere om at gjøre, at min Kjærlighed til Gud seirer i mig, end min jordiske Lykke.

Et Menneske kan endnu i dette sidste Øieblik samle hele sin Sjæl i eet eneste Blik mod den Himmel, fra hvilken al god Gave kommer, og dette Blik skal være forstaaeligt for ham og for den, hvem det søger, at han dog blev sin Kjærlighed tro. Da skal han rolig iføre sig Dragten. Den, hvis Sjæl ikke har denne Romantik, har solgt sin Sjæl, hvad enten han nu fik et Kongerige for den, eller en ussel Sølvpenge. Men ved egen Kraft kan jeg ikke faae det Mindste af hvad der tilhører Endeligheden; thi jeg bruger bestandig min Kraft til at resignere paa Alt.

Ved egen Kraft kan jeg opgive Prindsessen, og jeg skal ikke blive nogen Suurmuler, men finde Glæde og Fred og Hvile i min Smerte, men ved egen Kraft kan jeg ikke faae hende igjen, thi jeg bruger netop min Kraft til at resignere. Men ved Troen, siger hiin vidunderlige Ridder, ved Troen skal Du faae hende i Kraft af det Absurde.

See denne Bevægelse kan jeg ikke gjøre. Saasnart jeg vil begynde [144] derpaa, vender Alt sig om, og jeg flygter tilbage i Resignationens Smerte. Jeg kan svømme i Livet, men til denne mystiske Svæven er jeg for tung. At existere saaledes, at min Modsætning til Existentsen i ethvert Øieblik udtrykker sig som den skjønneste og tryggeste Harmoni med den, det kan jeg ikke. Og dog maa det være herligt at faae Prindsessen, det siger jeg ethvert Øieblik, og den Resignationens Ridder, der ikke siger det, han er en Bedrager, han har ikke havt et eneste Ønske, og han har ikke holdt Ønsket ungt i sin Smerte.

SKS 4.144 Maaskee var der den, der fandt det beqvemt nok, at Ønsket ikke mere var levende, at Smertens Piil var sløvet; men en saadan er ingen Ridder. En fribaaren Sjæl, der

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Temporality, finitude—that is what everything turns on. By my own strength I can resign everything and then find peace and rest in pain. I can reconcile myself to everything—even if that dreadful demon, more terrible than the Grim Reaper who frightens people, even if madness held up the fool's costume before my eyes and I understood from its look that it was I who was to put it on—I can still save my soul, provided it matters more to me that my love for God triumph in me than my earthly happiness.

A person can still, in this last moment, gather his whole soul in a single glance toward the heaven from which every good gift comes, and this glance will be understood by him and by the one it seeks as meaning that he nevertheless remained true to his love. Then he will calmly put on the costume. Whoever does not have this romantic spirit in his soul has sold his soul, whether he got a kingdom for it or a paltry piece of silver. But by my own strength I cannot get the least thing that belongs to finitude, for I am constantly using my strength to resign everything.[46]

By my own strength I can give up the princess, and I will not turn sulky but will find joy and peace and rest in my pain; but by my own strength I cannot get her back, for I am using my strength precisely to resign. But by faith, says that marvelous knight, by faith you will get her, by virtue of the absurd.

Look—this movement I cannot make. As soon as I want to begin [144] it, everything turns upside down, and I flee back into the pain of resignation. I can swim in life, but for this mystical floating I am too heavy. To exist in such a way that my opposition to existence expresses itself at every moment as the most beautiful and secure harmony with it—that I cannot do. And yet it must be glorious to get the princess; I say so at every moment, and the knight of resignation who does not say it is a fraud: he has not had a single wish, and he has not kept the wish young in his pain.

Perhaps there was one who found it convenient enough that the wish was no longer alive, that the arrow of pain had been blunted; but such a one is

45 The rich young man whom Jesus told to sell all he had (Matthew 19:16–22).
46 "Every good gift": James 1:17.

DANISH

greb sig deri, han vilde foragte sig selv, og begynde forfra, og fremfor Alt ikke tillade sin Sjæl at være bedragen ved sig selv. Og dog maa det være herligt at faae Prindsessen, og dog er Troens Ridder den eneste Lykkelige, Endelighedens Stamherre, medens Resignationens Ridder er en Fremmed og Udlænding.

Saaledes at faae Prindsessen, at leve glad og lykkelig, Dag ud og Dag ind med hende, (thi ogsaa dette lod sig jo tænke, at Resignationens Ridder kunde faae Prindsessen, men hans Sjæl havde gjennemskuet Umuligheden af deres Fremtids Lykke), saaledes at leve glad og lykkelig hvert Øieblik i Kraft af det Absurde, hvert Øieblik see Sværdet svæve over den Elskedes Hoved, og dog ikke finde Hvile i Resignationens Smerte, men Glæde i Kraft af det Absurde – det er Vidunderligt. Den, der gjør det, han er stor, den eneste Store, Tanken derom bevæger min Sjæl, der aldrig var karrig i at beundre det Store.

Dersom nu virkelig Enhver i min Samtid, der ikke vil blive staaende ved Troen, er en Mand, der har fattet Livets Rædsel, der har forstaaet, hvad Daub mener, naar han siger, at en Soldat, der ene staaer paa Post med skarpladt Gevær, ved et Krudttaarn, i en Uveirs-Nat, faaer besynderlige Tanker; dersom nu virkelig Enhver, der ikke vil blive staaende ved Troen, er en Mand, der havde Sjæls Kraft til at fatte og derpaa gav sig Tid til at blive eensom med den Tanke, at Ønsket var en Umulighed;

dersom Enhver, der ikke vil blive staaende ved Troen, er en Mand, der i Smerten forsonedes og forsonedes ved Smerten, dersom Enhver, der ikke vil blive staaende ved Troen, er en Mand, der dernæst (og hvis han ikke har gjort alt det Foregaaende, saa skal han ikke uleilige sig, naar der er Tale om Troen) gjorde det Vidunderlige, greb hele [145] Tilværelsen i Kraft af det Absurde – saa er hvad jeg skriver den høieste Lovtale over Samtiden, af den Ringeste i den, der kun kunde gjøre Resignationens Bevægelse.

SKS 4.145 Men hvorfor vil man da ikke blive staaende ved den, hvorfor hører man stundom, at Folk undsee sig ved at bekjende, at de have Troen? Dette kan jeg ikke fatte. Dersom jeg nogensinde driver det til at kunne gjøre

ENGLISH

no knight. A freeborn soul who caught himself at this would despise himself and begin again, and above all would not let his soul be deceived by itself. And yet it must be glorious to get the princess, and yet the knight of faith is the only happy one, the lord and heir of finitude, while the knight of resignation is a stranger and a foreigner.[47]

To get the princess in that way, to live happily and joyfully with her day in and day out (for it was also conceivable that the knight of resignation might get the princess, but his soul had seen through the impossibility of their future happiness)—to live happily and joyfully in that way every moment by virtue of the absurd, every moment to see the sword hanging over the beloved's head and yet find not rest in the pain of resignation but joy by virtue of the absurd—that is marvelous. Whoever does it is great, the only great one; the thought of it moves my soul, which was never stingy in admiring greatness.

Now if everyone in my generation who will not stop at faith really is a man who has grasped the horror of life, who has understood what Daub means when he says that a soldier standing alone at his post with a loaded rifle, by a powder magazine, on a stormy night, has strange thoughts; if everyone who will not stop at faith really is a man who had the strength of soul to grasp the thought that the wish was an impossibility, and then took the time to be alone with it;[48]

if everyone who will not stop at faith is a man who was reconciled in pain and reconciled by pain; if everyone who will not stop at faith is a man who then (and if he has not done all the preceding, he need not trouble himself when faith is under discussion) did the marvelous thing, grasped the whole of [145] existence by virtue of the absurd—then what I write is the highest eulogy of my contemporaries, from the lowest among them, one who could make only the movement of resignation.

But why, then, will people not stop at faith? Why does one sometimes hear that people are ashamed to confess that they have faith? This I cannot comprehend. If I ever get so far as to be able to make

47 "Lord and heir" renders *Stamherre*, the holder of an entailed family estate.
48 Karl Daub (1765–1836), German theologian at Heidelberg, a leading Hegelian.

DANISH

denne Bevægelse, da vil jeg for Fremtiden kjøre med 4 Heste.

Er det virkelig saa, er al den Spidsborgerlighed, jeg seer i Livet, som jeg ikke lader mit Ord men min Gjerning dømme, er den virkelig ikke hvad den synes, er den Vidundret? Det lod sig jo tænke; thi hiin Troens Helt havde jo en paafaldende Lighed dermed; thi hiin Troens Helt var end ikke Ironiker og Humorist, men noget endnu Høiere. Der tales i vor Tid meget om Ironi og Humor især af Folk, som aldrig have formaaet at praktisere deri, men som desuagtet vide at forklare Alt. Jeg er ikke ganske ubekjendt med disse tvende Lidenskaber, jeg veed lidt mere om dem end hvad der staaer i tydske og tydsk-danske Compendier. Jeg veed derfor, at disse tvende Lidenskaber ere væsentlig forskjellige fra Troens Lidenskab.

Ironi og Humor reflektere ogsaa paa sig selv og høre derfor hjemme i den uendelige Resignations Sphære, de have deres Elasticitet i, at Individet er incommensurabelt for Virkeligheden.

Den sidste Bevægelse, Troens paradoxe Bevægelse, kan jeg ikke gjøre, det være nu Pligt eller hvad det er, uagtet jeg hellere end gjerne vilde det. Om et Menneske har Lov til at sige dette, det maa overlades til ham; det bliver en Sag mellem ham og det evige Væsen, der er Troens Gjenstand, om han i denne Henseende kan træffe en mindelig Overeenskomst. Hvad ethvert Menneske kan, det er, han kan gjøre den uendelige Resignations Bevægelse, og jeg for mit Vedkommende vilde ikke tage i Betænkning, at erklære Enhver den for feig, der vil indbilde sig, at han ikke kan det. Med Troen er det en anden Sag.

Men hvad ethvert Menneske ikke har Lov til, det er, at indbilde Andre, at Troen er noget Ringe eller at den er en let Sag, medens den er det Største og det Sværeste.

ENGLISH

this movement, I will ride in a coach-and-four from then on.

Is it really so? Is all the philistinism I see in life—which I condemn not by my word but by my deed—is it really not what it seems? Is it the marvel? That is conceivable, after all; for that hero of faith did bear a striking resemblance to it—for that hero of faith was not even an ironist and humorist, but something still higher. There is much talk in our age about irony and humor, especially by people who have never managed to practice them but who nevertheless know how to explain everything. I am not entirely unacquainted with these two passions; I know a little more about them than what is in German and German-Danish compendia. I therefore know that these two passions are essentially different from the passion of faith.

Irony and humor also reflect upon themselves and therefore belong in the sphere of infinite resignation; they have their elasticity in the fact that the individual is incommensurable with actuality.

The last movement, the paradoxical movement of faith, I cannot make, whether it is a duty or whatever it is, although I would more than gladly do so. Whether a person has the right to say this must be left to him; whether he can come to an amicable settlement in this respect is a matter between him and the eternal being who is the object of faith. What every person can do is make the movement of infinite resignation, and for my part I would not hesitate to declare anyone a coward who wants to fancy that he cannot. With faith it is another matter.

But what no one has the right to do is to make others believe that faith is something lowly, or that it is an easy matter, when it is the greatest and the hardest thing.

ONLY A TRIAL?

Johannes rejects the easy telling of Abraham's story and announces the problemata.

DANISH

Man opfatter Fortællingen om Abraham paa en anden Maade. Man lovpriser Guds Naade, at han skjænkede ham Isaak igjen, det Hele var kun en Prøvelse. En Prøvelse, dette Ord kan sige Meget og Lidet, og dog er det Hele saa

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People take the story of Abraham another way. They praise God's grace for giving him Isaac back—the whole thing was only a trial. A trial: this word can say much or little, and yet the whole

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hurtigt forbi som det er sagt. Man bestiger en [146] bevinget Hest, i samme Nu er man paa Morijabjerget, i samme Nu seer man Væderen; man glemmer, at Abraham kun reed paa et Æsel, der gaaer langsomt hen ad Veien, at han havde tre Dages Reise, at han behøvede nogen Tid for at kløve Brændet, binde Isaak, og for at hvæsse Kniven.

SKS 4.146 Og dog lovpriser man Abraham. Den, der skal tale, han kan godt sove indtil det sidste Qvarteer før han skal tale, Tilhøreren kan godt falde i Søvn under Talen; thi Alt gaaer nemt nok, uden Uleilighed fra nogen af Siderne. Hvis der var en Mand tilstede, som leed af Søvnløshed, da gik han maaskee hjem, satte sig hen i en Krog og tænkte: det er et Øiebliks Sag det Hele, blot Du venter en Minut, saa seer Du Væderen, og Prøvelsen er forbi.

Traf Taleren ham i denne Tilstand, da tænker jeg, han vilde træde frem for ham i al sin Værdighed og sige: »Elendige, at Du kan lade din Sjæl synke i slig Daarskab; der skeer intet Mirakel, og hele Livet er en Prøvelse.« Altsom Taleren foer frem i sin Udgydelse, kom han mere og mere i Affect, blev gladere og gladere over sig selv, og medens han ingen Blodcongestion havde bemærket, da han talede om Abraham, følte han nu, hvorledes Aaren svulmede i hans Pande. Maaskee vilde han tabe Næse og Mund, hvis Synderen roligt og værdigt svarede: det var jo derom Du prædikede sidste Søndag.

Lad os saa enten slaae en Streg over Abraham, eller lad os lære at forfærdes ved det uhyre Paradox, der er hans Livs Betydning, at vi maae forstaae, at vor Tid, ligesom enhver Tid, kan være glad, om den har Troen. Dersom Abraham ikke er en Nullitet, et Phantom, noget Stads, man bruger til Tidsfordriv, saa kan Feilen aldrig ligge i, at Synderen vilde gjøre ligesaa, men det gjælder om at see, hvor Stort det var, som Abraham gjorde, for at Manden kan dømme sig selv, om han har Kald og Mod til at forsøges i Sligt. Den comiske Modsigelse i Talerens Adfærd var, at han gjorde Abraham til en Ubetydelighed, og dog vilde formene den Anden at bære sig ad paa samme Maade.

Skulde man da ikke turde tale om Abraham? Det troer jeg dog nok. Hvis jeg skulde tale om ham, da vilde jeg først skildre Prøvelsens Smerte. Til den Ende vilde jeg som en Igle suge al Angst og Nød og Qval ud af en Faders Lidelse,

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thing is over as soon as it is said. One mounts a [146] winged horse, in the same instant one is on Mount Moriah, in the same instant one sees the ram; one forgets that Abraham rode only a donkey, which goes slowly along the road, that he had a three days' journey, that he needed some time to split the wood, bind Isaac, and sharpen the knife.

And yet people praise Abraham. The one who is to speak can easily sleep until the last quarter of an hour before he must speak; the listener can easily fall asleep during the speech; for everything goes smoothly enough, with no trouble on either side. If there was a man present who suffered from sleeplessness, he perhaps went home, sat down in a corner and thought: "The whole thing is a matter of a moment; just wait a minute and you'll see the ram, and the trial is over."

If the speaker came upon him in this state, I think he would step up to him in all his dignity and say: "Wretch, that you can let your soul sink into such foolishness! No miracle happens, and the whole of life is a trial." As the speaker went on with his outpouring, he grew more and more worked up, more and more pleased with himself, and whereas he had noticed no rush of blood while he spoke about Abraham, he now felt the vein swell in his forehead. Perhaps he would be struck speechless if the sinner calmly and with dignity answered: "But that is what you preached about last Sunday."

So let us either cross Abraham out, or let us learn to be horrified at the tremendous paradox that is the meaning of his life, so that we may understand that our age, like every age, can be glad if it has faith. If Abraham is not a nonentity, a phantom, a bit of finery one uses to pass the time, then the fault can never lie in the sinner's wanting to do likewise; what matters is to see how great a thing Abraham did, so that the man can judge for himself whether he has the calling and the courage to be tested in such things. The comic contradiction in the speaker's behavior was that he made Abraham into something insignificant and yet wanted to forbid the other to act in the same way.

Should one, then, not dare to speak about Abraham? I think one should. If I were to speak about him, I would first depict the pain of the trial. To that end I would, like a leech, suck all the anguish

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for at jeg kunde beskrive, hvad Abraham leed, medens han dog under alt dette troede. Jeg vilde minde om, at Reisen varede 3 Dage og et godt Stykke op paa den 4de, ja disse halvfjerde Dag [147] skulde blive uendelig meget længere end det Par tusind Aar, der adskiller mig fra Abraham.

SKS 4.147 Da vil jeg minde om, hvad der er min Mening, at ethvert Menneske tør endnu vende om, inden han begynder paa Sligt, og hvert Øieblik kan angrende vende tilbage. Gjør man dette, saa frygter jeg ingen Fare, ei heller frygter jeg for, at vække Lyst hos Folk til at forsøges i Lighed med Abraham. Men vil man afhænde en Godtkjøbs-Udgave af Abraham, og dog formene Enhver at gjøre ligesaa, da er det latterligt.

Det er da nu min Agt af Fortællingen om Abraham i Form af Problemata at uddrage det Dialektiske, der ligger i den, for at see, hvilket uhyre Paradox Troen er, et Paradox, der formaaer at gjøre et Mord til en hellig og gudvelbehagelig Handling, et Paradox, der giver Abraham Isaak igjen, hvilket ingen Tænkning kan bemægtige sig, fordi Troen netop begynder der, hvor Tænkningen hører op.

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and distress and torment out of a father's suffering, so that I could describe what Abraham suffered while through it all he nevertheless believed. I would remind people that the journey lasted three days and a good part of the fourth; indeed, these three and a half days [147] should become infinitely longer than the couple of thousand years that separate me from Abraham.

Then I would remind them of what I hold: that every person may still turn back before he begins on such a thing, and at every moment may return in repentance. If one does this, I fear no danger; nor am I afraid of arousing in people a desire to be tested as Abraham was. But if one wants to sell off a cut-price edition of Abraham and yet forbid everyone to do likewise, that is ridiculous.

It is now my intention to draw out, in the form of problemata, the dialectical element in the story of Abraham, in order to see what a tremendous paradox faith is—a paradox that can make a murder into a holy act well pleasing to God, a paradox that gives Abraham Isaac back, which no thinking can master, because faith begins precisely where thinking leaves off.[49]

49 *Problemata* (Greek plural of *problema*): questions set for debate; three follow.

Problema I

Is there a teleological suspension of the ethical?
The tragic hero stays within the ethical; Abraham oversteps it altogether.

GIVES DER EN TELEOLOGISK SUSPENSION AF DET ETHISKE?

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SKS 4.148 Det Ethiske er som saadant det Almene, og som det Almene Det, der er gjeldende for Enhver, hvilket fra en anden Side lader sig udtrykke saaledes, at det er gjeldende i ethvert Øieblik. Det hviler immanent i sig selv, har Intet uden for sig, der er dets τελος, men er selv τελος for Alt, hvad det har udenfor sig, og naar det Ethiske har optaget dette i sig, da kommer det ikke videre. Umiddelbar sandselig og sjælelig bestemmet er den Enkelte den Enkelte, der i det Almene har sit τελος, og dette er hans ethiske Opgave, bestandig at udtrykke sig selv i dette, at ophæve sin Enkelthed for at blive det Almene.

Saasnart den Enkelte vil gjøre sig gjeldende i sin Enkelthed ligeoverfor det Almene, da synder han, og kan kun ved at anerkjende dette atter forsone sig med det Almene. Hver Gang den Enkelte, efterat have været traadt ind i det Almene, føler en Tilskyndelse til at gjøre sig gjeldende som den Enkelte, da er han i Anfægtelse, af hvilken han kun arbeider sig ud, ved angrende at opgive sig selv som den Enkelte i det Almene.

Er dette det Høieste, der lader sig sige om Mennesket og om hans Tilværelse, saa har det Ethiske samme Beskaffenhed som et Menneskes evige Salighed, hvilken i al Evighed og i hvert Øieblik er hans τελος, da det vilde være en Modsigelse, at den skulde kunne opgives (ɔ: teleologisk suspenderes) da den, saasnart den suspenderes, forskjærtses, medens hvad der suspenderes ikke er forskjærtset, men netop bevaret i det Høiere, der er dets τελος.

Forholder det sig saaledes, da har Hegel Ret, naar han lader Mennesket i det Gode og Samvittigheden kun være bestemmet som den En [149] kelte, han har Ret i at betragte

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The ethical as such is the universal, and as the universal it is what applies to everyone, which from another side can be expressed by saying that it applies at every moment. It rests immanently in itself, has nothing outside itself that is its τελος [telos, end], but is itself the τελος of everything outside it, and when the ethical has taken this up into itself, it goes no further. Determined immediately as sensuous and psychical, the single individual is the individual who has his τελος in the universal, and this is his ethical task: constantly to express himself in it, to annul his singularity in order to become the universal.[1]

As soon as the single individual wants to assert himself in his singularity over against the universal, he sins, and only by acknowledging this can he again be reconciled with the universal. Every time the single individual, after having entered the universal, feels an urge to assert himself as the single individual, he is in spiritual trial, from which he can work his way out only by repentantly giving himself up as the single individual in the universal.

If this is the highest that can be said of a human being and of his existence, then the ethical is of the same nature as a person's eternal blessedness, which to all eternity and at every moment is his τελος, since it would be a contradiction that it could be given up (i.e., teleologically suspended); for as soon as it is suspended it is forfeited, whereas what is suspended is not forfeited but precisely preserved in the higher that is its τελος.

If that is how things stand, then Hegel is right when, in the good and in conscience, he determ-

1 "The universal" renders *det Almene*. A "teleological suspension" (*teleologisk Suspension*) sets something aside for the sake of a higher end (Greek *telos*).

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denne Bestemmethed som en »moralsk Form af det Onde« (cfr. især Retsphilosophien) hvilken skal ophæves i det Sædeliges Teleologi, saaledes at den Enkelte, der forbliver i hiint Stadium, enten synder eller ligger i Anfægtelse. Hvad Hegel derimod ikke har Ret i, er at tale om Troen, Uret i ikke høit og lydeligt at protestere mod, at Abraham nyder Hæder og Ære som en Troens Fader, medens han burde hjemvises og udvises som en Morder.

SKS 4.149 Troen er nemlig dette Paradox, at den Enkelte er høiere end det Almene, dog vel at mærke saaledes, at Bevægelsen gjentager sig, at han altsaa, efterat have været i det Almene, nu som den Enkelte isolerer sig som høiere end det Almene. Dersom dette ikke er Troen, saa er Abraham tabt, saa har Troen aldrig været til i Verden, netop fordi den altid har været til.

Thi hvis det Ethiske ɔ: det Sædelige er det Høieste, og der intet Incommensurabelt bliver tilbage i Mennesket paa anden Maade, end at dette Incommensurable er det Onde ɔ: det Enkelte, der skal udtrykkes i det Almene, saa behøver man ikke andre Kategorier end hvad den græske Philosophi havde, eller hvad der ved en consequent Tænkning lader sig uddrage af disse. Dette burde Hegel ikke have lagt Skjul paa; thi han har dog havt græske Studier.

Man hører ikke sjeldent Mænd, der, i Mangel af at fortabe sig i Studier, fordybe sig i Phraser, fortælle, at der over den christelige Verden skinner et Lys, medens der ruger et Mørke over Hedenskabet. Denne Tale har altid forekommet mig besynderlig, da endnu enhver grundigere Tænker, enhver alvorligere Kunstner forynger sig ved det græske Folks evige Ungdom. Et saadant Udsagn lader sig forklare af, at man ikke veed hvad man skal sige, men kun, at man skal sige Noget. Det er i sin Orden, at man siger, at Hedenskabet ikke havde Troen, men naar man derved skal have sagt Noget, da maa man være lidt mere paa det Rene om, hvad man forstaaer ved Troen, da man ellers synker tilbage i saadanne Phraser.

At forklare hele Tilværelsen, Troen med, uden at have en Forestilling om hvad Troen er, er let, og den calculerer

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ines the human being only as the single [149] individual; he is right to regard this determination as a "moral form of evil" (see especially the Philosophy of Right), which is to be annulled in the teleology of ethical life, so that the single individual who remains in that stage either sins or is in spiritual trial. Where Hegel is wrong, however, is in talking about faith; he is wrong not to protest loudly and clearly against Abraham's enjoying honor and glory as a father of faith, when he ought to be remanded and expelled as a murderer.[2]

For faith is this paradox: that the single individual is higher than the universal—yet, mark well, in such a way that the movement repeats itself, so that, after having been in the universal, he now 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.

For if the ethical—i.e., ethical life—is the highest, and nothing incommensurable remains in a human being except in the sense that this incommensurable is evil, i.e., the singular, which is to be expressed in the universal, then one needs no categories other than those Greek philosophy had, or those that can be drawn from them by consistent thinking. Hegel ought not to have concealed this; after all, he had studied the Greeks.

Not infrequently one hears men who, for want of losing themselves in study, immerse themselves in phrases, declare that a light shines over the Christian world while darkness broods over paganism. This talk has always struck me as strange, since every more thorough thinker, every more serious artist, still renews his youth in the eternal youth of the Greek people. Such a statement can be explained by the fact that one does not know what to say, only that one must say something. It is quite in order to say that paganism did not have faith; but if one is to have said something by that, one must be a little clearer about what one understands by faith, since otherwise one sinks back into such phrases.

To explain the whole of existence, faith included, without having any idea what faith is, is easy; and

2 "Ethical life" renders *det Sædelige*, Hegel's *Sittlichkeit*: morality embodied in family, society and state. Hegel treats the good and conscience in the *Philosophy of Right* (1821).

DANISH

ikke slettest i Livet, der regner paa Beundring, naar han har en saadan Forklaring; thi det er som Boileau siger: un sot trouve toujours un plus sot, qui l'admire.

Troen er netop dette Paradox, at den Enkelte som den Enkelte er høiere end det Almene, er berettiget ligeoverfor dette, ikke subordineret, men overordnet, dog vel at mærke saaledes, at det er den Enkelte, [150] der efter at have været som den Enkelte det Almene underordnet, nu gjennem det Almene bliver den Enkelte, der som den Enkelte er det overordnet; at den Enkelte som den Enkelte staaer i et absolut Forhold til det Absolute. Dette Standpunkt lader sig ikke mediere; thi al Mediation skeer netop i Kraft af det Almene; det er og bliver i al Evighed et Paradox, utilgængeligt for Tænkningen.

SKS 4.150 Og dog er Troen dette Paradox eller ogsaa (dette er de Conseqventser, som jeg vil bede Læseren have in mente paa ethvert Punkt, om det end vilde blive mig for vidtløftigt overalt at nedskrive dem) eller ogsaa har der aldrig været Tro til, netop fordi den altid har været, eller ogsaa er Abraham tabt.

At dette Paradox for den Enkelte let kan forvexles med en Anfægtelse, er vel sandt, men derfor bør man ikke skjule det. At Manges hele Bygning kan være saaledes, at det støder dem fra sig, er vel sandt; men derfor bør man ikke gjøre Troen til noget Andet, for ogsaa at kunne have den, men hellere tilstaae, at man ikke har den, medens de, der have Troen, burde være betænkte paa, at opstille nogle Kjendetegn, at man kunde adskille Paradoxet fra en Anfægtelse.

Fortællingen om Abraham indeholder nu en saadan teleologisk Suspension af det Ethiske. Det har ikke manglet paa skarpsindige Hoveder og grundige Forskere, der have fundet Analogier til den. Deres Viisdom løber ud paa den skjønne Sætning, at i Grunden er Alt det Samme. Naar man vil see lidt nærmere til, tvivler jeg meget paa, at man i den ganske Verden skal finde en eneste Analogi, undtagen en senere, hvilket Intet beviser, naar det staaer fast, at Abraham repræsenterer Troen, og at den normalt er udtrykt i ham, hvis Liv ikke blot er det mest Paradoxe,

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the one who counts on admiration when he has such an explanation is not the worst calculator in life; for, as Boileau says: un sot trouve toujours un plus sot, qui l'admire [a fool always finds a bigger fool to admire him].[3]

Faith is precisely this paradox: that the single individual as the single individual is higher than the universal, is justified over against it, not subordinate but superior—yet, mark well, in such a way that it is the single individual [150] who, after having been subordinate as the single individual to the universal, now through the universal becomes the single individual who as the single individual is superior to it; 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 precisely by virtue of the universal; it is and remains to all eternity a paradox, inaccessible to thought.

And yet faith is this paradox—or else (these are the consequences I would ask the reader to bear in mind at every point, even if it would be too long-winded for me to write them out everywhere)—or else there has never been faith, precisely because it has always existed, or else Abraham is lost.

That this paradox can easily be confused, for the single individual, with a spiritual trial is certainly true, but one should not hide it for that reason. That many people's whole makeup may be such that it repels them is certainly true; but for that reason one should not make faith into something else so as to be able to have it too, but should rather admit that one does not have it—while those who have faith ought to take care to set out some marks by which the paradox could be distinguished from a spiritual trial.

Now the story of Abraham contains such a teleological suspension of the ethical. There has been no lack of keen minds and thorough scholars who have found analogies to it. Their wisdom comes down to the fine proposition that at bottom everything is the same. If one looks a little more closely, I very much doubt that one will find in the whole world a single analogy—except a later one, which proves nothing—if it stands firm that Abra-

3 Nicolas Boileau (1636–1711), French poet and critic; the line ends the first canto of his *Art poétique* (1674).

DANISH

der lader sig tænke, men saa paradox, at det slet ikke lader sig tænke.

Han handler i Kraft af det Absurde; thi det er netop det Absurde, at han som den Enkelte er høiere end det Almene. Dette Paradox lader sig ikke mediere; thi saasnart han begynder derpaa, da maa han tilstaae, at han var i en Anfægtelse, og naar saa er, kommer han aldrig til at offre Isaak, eller hvis han har offret Isaak, da maa han angrende vende tilbage til det Almene. I Kraft af det Absurde faaer han Isaak igjen. Abraham er derfor i intet Øieblik en tragisk Helt, men noget ganske Andet, enten en Morder eller en Troende. Den Mellembestemmelse, der frelser den tragiske Helt, har Abraham ikke.

Derfor er det, at [151] jeg kan forstaae en tragisk Helt, men ikke forstaae Abraham, om jeg end i en vis afsindig Forstand beundrer ham mere end alle Andre.

SKS 4.151 Abrahams Forhold til Isaak er ethisk udtrykt ganske simpelt dette, at Faderen skal elske Sønnen høiere end sig selv. Dog det Ethiske har indenfor sit eget Omfang adskillige Gradationer; vi ville see, om der i denne Fortælling findes noget saadant høiere Udtryk for det Ethiske, der ethisk kan forklare hans Adfærd, ethisk berettige ham til at suspendere den ethiske Forpligtelse mod Sønnen, uden dog derfor at bevæge sig ud over det Ethiskes Teleologi.

ENGLISH

ham represents faith and that faith is normally expressed in him, whose life is not merely the most paradoxical that can be thought, but so paradoxical that it cannot be thought at all.

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 he begins to try, he must admit that he was in a spiritual trial, and if so, he never gets to the point of sacrificing Isaac, or, if he has sacrificed Isaac, he must return in repentance to the universal. By virtue of the absurd he gets Isaac back. Abraham is therefore at no moment a tragic hero, but something quite different: either a murderer or a believer. The middle term that saves the tragic hero, Abraham does not have.

That is why [151] I can understand a tragic hero but cannot understand Abraham, even though in a certain mad sense I admire him more than all others.

Abraham's relation to Isaac, ethically expressed, is quite simply this: the father shall love the son more than himself. Yet the ethical has within its own compass various gradations; we shall see whether this story contains any such higher expression for the ethical that could ethically explain his conduct, ethically justify him in suspending the ethical obligation toward the son, without thereby moving beyond the teleology of the ethical.

AGAMEMNON, JEPHTHAH, BRUTUS

Three tragic heroes sacrifice their children for the people, a vow, or the law, staying within the ethical.

DANISH

Naar et Foretagende, der er et heelt Folks Bekymring, forhindres, naar en saadan Bedrift standses ved Himlens Unaade, naar den vrede Guddom sender et Blikstille, der spotter alle Anstrængelser, naar Spaamanden fuldkommer sin tunge Gjerning og forkynder, at Guden fordrer en ung Pige som Offer – da skal Faderen heltemodigen bringe dette Offer. Høimodig skal han dølge sin Smerte, om han end kunde ønske, han var »den ringe Mand, der tør græde,« ikke Kongen, der maa handle kongeligt. Og trænger Smerten end eensomt ind i hans Bryst, har han kun 3 Medvidere i Folket, snart skal det hele Folk være Medvider i hans Smerte, men ogsaa

ENGLISH

When an undertaking that concerns a whole people is thwarted, when such an enterprise is halted by heaven's disfavor, when the angry deity sends a dead calm that mocks every effort, when the seer performs his heavy task and proclaims that the god demands a young girl as a sacrifice—then the father shall heroically make this sacrifice. Nobly he shall hide his pain, though he might wish he were "the lowly man who dares to weep," not the king who must act like a king. And though the pain enters his breast in solitude, though he has only three confidants among the people, soon the whole people shall be privy to his pain, but

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Medvider i hans Daad, at han for det Heles Vel vilde offre hende, Datteren, den unge deilige Pige.	also privy to his deed: that for the good of the whole he was willing to sacrifice her, his daughter, the lovely young girl.[4]
O Barm! o fagre Kinder, lysegule Haar (v. 687.). Og Datteren skal røre ham ved sine Taarer, og Faderen skal vende sit Ansigt bort, men Helten skal løfte Kniven. – Naar da Efterretningen derom naaer det fædrene Hjem, da skal Grækenlands skjønne Piger rødme af Begeistring, og hvis Datteren var Brud, da skal den Trolovede ikke vredes, men være stolt af at deeltage i Faderens Daad, fordi Pigen tilhørte ham ømmere end hun tilhørte Faderen.	O bosom! O fair cheeks, golden hair! (line 687). And the daughter shall move him with her tears, and the father shall turn his face away, but the hero shall raise the knife.—When the news of it reaches the ancestral home, the lovely maidens of Greece shall blush with enthusiasm, and if the daughter was a bride, her betrothed shall not be angry but proud to share in the father's deed, because the girl belonged to him more tenderly than she belonged to her father.
Naar den kjække Dommer, der frelste Israel i Nødens Stund, i eet Aandedrag binder Gud og sig selv ved det samme Løfte, da skal han heltemodigen forvandle den unge Piges Jubel, den elskede Datters Glæde til Sorg, og hele Israel skal sørge med hende over hendes jomfruelige Ungdom; men enhver fribaaren Mand skal forstaae, enhver behjertet Qvinde beundre Jephtah, og enhver Jomfru i Israel skal ønske at handle som hans Datter; thi hvad hjalp det, at Jephtah seirede ved sit Løfte, naar han ikke holdt det, skulde da Seiren ikke atter tages fra Folket?	When the bold judge who saved Israel in the hour of need binds God and himself in one breath by the same vow, then he shall heroically turn the young girl's jubilation, the beloved daughter's joy, to sorrow, and all Israel shall mourn with her over her virgin youth; but every freeborn man shall understand, every stouthearted woman admire Jephthah, and every virgin in Israel shall wish to act as his daughter did; for what good would it be that Jephthah was victorious by his vow if he did not keep it—would not the victory be taken from the people again?[5]
Naar en Søn forglemmer sin Pligt, naar Staten betroer Faderen Dommersværdet, naar Lovene kræve Straffen af Faderens Haand, da skal [152] Faderen heltemodigen glemme, at den Skyldige er hans Søn, han skal høimodigen skjule sin Smerte, men der skal ikke være en Eneste i Folket, end ikke Sønnen, uden at han beundrer Faderen, og hver Gang Roms Love blive fortolkede, skal det mindes, at Mangen fortolkede dem lærdere, men Ingen herligere end Brutus.	When a son forgets his duty, when the state entrusts the father with the sword of judgment, when the laws demand the punishment at the father's hand, then [152] the father shall heroically forget that the guilty one is his son; he shall nobly hide his pain, but there shall not be a single one among the people, not even the son, who does not admire the father, and every time Rome's laws are interpreted it shall be remembered that many interpreted them more learnedly, but none more gloriously than Brutus.[6]
SKS 4.152 Hvis derimod Agamemnon, medens en gunstig Vind fører Flaaden for fulde Segl til sit Maal, vilde have afsendt hiint Bud, der hentede Iphigenia, for at offre hende; hvis Jephtah, uden at være bunden ved noget Løfte, der afgjorde Folkets Skjebne, vilde have sagt til Datteren: sørg nu i to Maaneder over Din korte Ungdom, da vil jeg offre	If, on the other hand, Agamemnon, while a favorable wind was carrying the fleet under full sail to its goal, had sent that messenger to fetch Iphigenia in order to sacrifice her; if Jephthah, without being bound by any vow that decided the fate of the

4 Agamemnon, whose fleet lay becalmed at Aulis until he sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia; the quotation is from Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*.

5 Jephthah vowed to sacrifice whatever first came out of his house to meet him if he returned victorious; it was his daughter (Judges 11).

6 Lucius Junius Brutus, a founder of the Roman Republic, who as consul had his own sons executed for plotting to restore the monarchy (Livy 2.5).

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Dig; hvis Brutus havde havt en retfærdig Søn, og dog vilde have kaldt ad Lictorerne for at henrette ham – hvo skulde da have forstaaet dem? Hvis disse tre Mænd paa det Spørgsmaal, hvorfor de gjorde det, havde svaret: det er en Prøvelse, i hvilken vi forsøges, skulde man da have forstaaet dem bedre?

Naar Agamemnon, Jephtah, Brutus i det afgjørende Øieblik heltemodigen overvinder Smerten, heltemodigen har tabt det Elskede og blot skal fuldkomme Gjerningen i det Ydre, da skal der aldrig være en adelig Sjæl i Verden, uden at han har Medlidenhedens Taarer for deres Smerte, Beundringens for deres Daad. Hvis derimod disse tre Mænd i det afgjørende Øieblik til det Heltemod, med hvilket de bar Smerten, vilde føie det lille Ord: det skeer dog ikke – hvo skulde da forstaae dem? Hvis de som en Forklaring tilføiede: det troe vi i Kraft af det Absurde, hvo skulde da bedre forstaae dem, thi hvo skulde ikke let forstaae, at det var absurdt, men hvo skulde forstaae, at man saa kunde troe det?

Forskjellen mellem den tragiske Helt og Abraham er let iøinefaldende. Den tragiske Helt bliver endnu indenfor det Ethiske. Han lader et Udtryk af det Ethiske have sit τελος i et høiere Udtryk af det Ethiske, han nedsætter det ethiske Forhold mellem Fader og Søn eller Datter og Fader til en Følelse, der har sin Dialektik i sit Forhold til Sædelighedens Idee. Der kan da ikke her være Tale om en teleologisk Suspension af selve det Ethiske.

Med Abraham forholder det sig anderledes. Han overskred ved sin Gjerning hele det Ethiske, og havde et høiere τελος udenfor, i Forhold til hvilket han suspenderede dette. Thi jeg gad dog nok vide, hvorledes man vil bringe Abrahams Gjerning i Forhold til det Almene, om der [153] lader sig opdage nogensomhelst anden Berøring mellem det, Abraham gjorde, og det Almene end den, at Abraham overtraadte det. Det er ikke for at frelse et Folk, ikke for at hævde Statens Idee, at Abraham gjør det, ikke for at forsone vrede Guder. Kunde der være Tale om, at Guddommen var vred, da var han jo kun vred paa Abraham, og Abrahams hele Gjerning staaer i intet Forhold til det Almene, er et reent privat Foretagende.

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people, had said to his daughter, "Mourn now for two months over your short youth, then I will sacrifice you"; if Brutus had had a righteous son and yet had called the lictors to execute him—who would have understood them? If these three men, asked why they did it, had answered, "It is a trial in which we are being tested," would they have been better understood?[7]

When Agamemnon, Jephthah, Brutus at the decisive moment heroically overcome the pain, have heroically lost the beloved and have only to carry out the deed outwardly, there will never be a noble soul in the world who does not have tears of compassion for their pain, tears of admiration for their deed. If, on the other hand, these three men at the decisive moment were to add to the heroism with which they bore the pain the little words, "But it will not happen"—who then would understand them? If by way of explanation they added, "We believe it by virtue of the absurd," who then would understand them better? For who would not easily understand that it was absurd—but who would understand that one could then believe it?

The difference between the tragic hero and Abraham is easy to see. The tragic hero still remains within the ethical. He lets one expression of the ethical have its τελος in a higher expression of the ethical; he reduces 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 ethical life. Here, then, there can be no question of a teleological suspension of the ethical itself.

With Abraham it is different. By his act he overstepped the ethical altogether, and had a higher τελος outside it, in relation to which he suspended it. For I would very much like to know how one will bring Abraham's act into relation with the universal—whether [153] any point of contact whatever can be discovered between what Abraham did and the universal other than that Abraham transgressed it. It is not to save a people, not to uphold the idea of the state, that Abraham does it, not to appease angry gods. If there could be any question of the deity's being angry, he was angry only with Abraham, and Abraham's whole act

7 Lictors: attendants of Roman magistrates who carried out punishments.

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SKS 4.153 Medens derfor den tragiske Helt er stor ved sin sædelige Dyd, er Abraham stor ved en reen personlig Dyd. Der er intet høiere Udtryk for det Ethiske i Abrahams Liv, end dette, at Faderen skal elske Sønnen. Det Ethiske i Betydning af det Sædelige kan der slet ikke være Tale om. Forsaavidt det Almene var tilstede, var det jo krypt i Isaak, skjult saa at sige i Isaaks Lænd, og maatte da raabe med Isaaks Mund: Gjør det ikke, Du tilintetgjør Alt.

Hvorfor gjør Abraham det da? For Guds Skyld og aldeles identisk hermed for sin egen Skyld. For Guds Skyld gjør han det, fordi Gud fordrer dette Bevis paa hans Tro, for sin egen Skyld gjør han det, at han kan føre Beviset. Eenheden heraf er aldeles rigtigt udtrykt i det Ord, hvormed man altid har betegnet dette Forhold: det er en Prøvelse, en Fristelse. En Fristelse; men hvad vil dette sige? Det, der ellers frister et Menneske, er jo det, der vil holde ham tilbage fra at gjøre sin Pligt, men her er Fristelsen selve det Ethiske, der vil holde ham tilbage fra at gjøre Guds Villie. Men hvad er da Pligten? Pligten er jo netop Udtrykket for Guds Villie.

Her viser Nødvendigheden sig af en ny Kategori for at forstaae Abraham. Et saadant Forhold til Guddommen kjender Hedenskabet ikke. Den tragiske Helt træder ikke i noget privat Forhold til Guddommen, men det Ethiske er det Guddommelige, og derfor lader det Paradoxe deri sig mediere i det Almene.

Abraham kan ikke medieres, hvilket ogsaa kan udtrykkes saaledes: han kan ikke tale. Saasnart jeg taler, udtrykker jeg det Almene, og naar jeg ikke gjør det, saa kan Ingen forstaae mig. Saasnart da Abraham vil udtrykke sig i det Almene, saa maa han sige, at hans Situation er en Anfægtelse, thi han har intet høiere Udtryk af det Almene, der staaer over det Almene, han overtræder.

Medens derfor Abraham vækker min Beundring, forfærder han mig tillige. Den, der fornegter sig selv og opoffrer sig for Pligten, han op [154] giver det Endelige for at gribe det Uendelige, han er sikker nok; den tragiske Helt opgiver det Visse for det endnu Vissere, og Betragterens Øie hviler trygt paa ham. Men den, der

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stands in no relation to the universal; it is a purely private undertaking.

So while the tragic hero is great by the virtue of ethical life, Abraham is great by a purely personal virtue. There is no higher expression for the ethical in Abraham's life than this: that the father shall love the son. Of the ethical in the sense of ethical life there can be no question here at all. Insofar as the universal was present, it was concealed in Isaac, hidden, so to speak, in Isaac's loins, and would then have to cry out with Isaac's mouth: "Do not do it! You are destroying everything."

Why, then, does Abraham do it? For God's sake and —what is altogether identical with this—for his own sake. 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 give the proof. The unity of these is quite rightly expressed in the word that has always been used to describe this relationship: it is a trial, a temptation. A temptation—but what does that mean? What ordinarily tempts a person is what would 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, then, is duty? Duty is, after all, precisely the expression of God's will.

Here the need for a new category in order to understand Abraham becomes evident. Paganism does not know such a relation to the divine. The tragic hero does not enter into any private relation to the divine; rather, the ethical is the divine, and therefore the paradoxical in it can be mediated in the universal.

Abraham cannot be mediated, which can also be put this way: he cannot speak. As soon as I speak, I express the universal, and if I do not, no one can understand me. So as soon as Abraham wants to express himself in the universal, he must say that his situation is a spiritual trial, for he has no higher expression of the universal that ranks above the universal he transgresses.

So while Abraham arouses my admiration, he also appalls me. The one who denies himself and sacrifices himself for duty gives [154] up the finite in order to grasp the infinite; he is secure enough. The tragic hero gives up the certain for the still more certain, and the beholder's eye rests on him with

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opgiver det Almene for at gribe noget endnu Høiere, der ikke er det Almene, hvad gjør han? Er det muligt, at dette kan være andet end en Anfægtelse? Og hvis det er muligt, men den Enkelte da greb feil, hvad Frelse er der for ham?

SKS 4.154 Han lider den tragiske Helts hele Smerte, han tilintetgjør sin Glæde i Verden, han forsager Alt, og maaskee tilspærrer han sig i samme Øieblik den ophøiede Glæde, der var ham saa dyrebar, at han vilde kjøbe den for enhver Priis. Ham kan Betragteren slet ikke forstaae, ei heller trygt lade sit Øie hvile paa ham. Maaskee lader det sig slet ikke gjøre, hvad den Troende intenderer, da det jo er utænkeligt. Eller om det lod sig gjøre, hvis den Enkelte havde misforstaaet Guddommen, hvad Frelse var da for ham?

Den tragiske Helt han behøver Taarer og han fordrer Taarer, og hvor var det misundelige Øie, der var saa ufrugtbart, at det ikke kunde græde med Agamemnon, men hvor var den, hvis Sjæl var saa forvildet, at han formastede sig til at græde over Abraham. Den tragiske Helt fuldkommer sin Gjerning i et bestemt Tidsmoment, men i Tidernes Løb gjør han, hvad der ikke er Mindre, han besøger den, hvis Sjæl er omspændt af Sorg, hvis Bryst ikke kan faae Luft for qvalte Sukke, hvis Tanker hænge betyngede over ham, svangre med Taarer, han viser sig for ham, han hæver Sorgens Trolddom, han løsner Snørelivet, han aflokker Taaren, idet den Lidende glemmer sine Lidelser i hans. Abraham kan man ikke græde over.

Man nærmer sig ham med en horror religiosus, som Israel nærmede sig Sinai-Bjerget. – Hvis da den eensomme Mand, der bestiger Morijabjerget, der med sin Spidse rager himmelhøit over Aulis's Sletter, hvis han ikke er en Søvngænger, der gaaer trygt over Afgrunden, medens den, der staaer ved Bjergets Fod og seer derpaa, skjælver af Angst, af Ærbødighed og Forfærdelse ikke engang tør kalde paa ham, hvis han bliver forstyrret i sig selv, hvis han havde taget Feil! – Tak! atter Tak!

være en Mand, der rækker den, hvem Livets Sorger overfaldt og lode nøgen tilbage, rækker ham Udtrykket, Ordets Blad, hvormed han kan skjule sin Elendighed; Tak være Dig, store Shakespeare, Du som kan sige Alt, Alt, Alt netop som det er – og dog hvorfor udtalte Du aldrig

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confidence. But the one who gives up the universal in order to grasp something still 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 single individual made a mistake, what salvation is there for him?

He suffers all the pain of the tragic hero, he destroys his joy in the world, he renounces everything—and perhaps at the same moment he bars himself from the exalted joy that was so precious to him that he would buy it at any price. Him the beholder cannot understand at all, nor let his eye rest on him with confidence. Perhaps what the believer intends cannot be done at all, since it is, after all, unthinkable. Or if it could be done, but the single individual had misunderstood the deity, what salvation would there be for him?

The tragic hero needs tears and demands tears; and where was the envious eye so barren that it could not weep with Agamemnon? But where was the one whose soul was so astray that he presumed to weep over Abraham? The tragic hero accomplishes his deed at a definite moment in time, but in the course of time he does something no less: he visits the one whose soul is gripped by sorrow, whose breast cannot get air for stifled sighs, whose thoughts hang heavy over him, pregnant with tears; he appears to him, he breaks the spell of sorrow, loosens the corset, coaxes out the tear, as the sufferer forgets his own sufferings in the hero's. Over Abraham one cannot weep.

One approaches him with a horror religiosus [religious dread], as Israel approached Mount Sinai.—If, then, the solitary man who climbs Mount Moriah, whose peak towers sky-high over the plains of Aulis—if he is not a sleepwalker who walks safely over the abyss while the one who stands at the foot of the mountain and looks up trembles with anguish, and in reverence and dread does not even dare to call out to him—if he becomes confused within himself, if he had been mistaken!—Thanks! Thanks again[8]

to the man who offers the one whom life's sorrows have assailed and left naked—offers him the expression, the fig leaf of the word, with which he can hide his wretchedness. Thanks be to you, great Shakespeare, you who can say everything,

8 At Sinai the people were forbidden to approach the mountain on pain of death (Exodus 19).

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denne Qval? forbeholdt Du den maaskee for Dig selv? som den Elskede, hvis Navn man end ikke kan taale at Verden nævner; [155] thi en Digter kjøber denne Ordets Magt til at udsige alle Andres tunge Hemmeligheder for en lille Hemmelighed, han ikke kan udsige, og en Digter er ikke en Apostel, han uddriver kun Djævle ved Djævelens Magt.

SKS 4.155 Men naar nu det Ethiske saaledes teleologisk er suspenderet, hvorledes existerer da den Enkelte, i hvem det er suspenderet? Han existerer som den Enkelte i Modsætning til det Almene. Synder han da? thi dette er Syndens Form, seet i Ideen, saaledes, at om Barnet end ikke synder, fordi det ikke er sig sin Existents bevidst som saadan, saa er dets Existents dog seet i Ideen Synd, og det Ethiske kræver sig selv af det i ethvert Øieblik. Vil man negte, at denne Form lader sig gjentage saaledes, at den ikke er Synd, saa er Dommen fældet over Abraham. Hvorledes existerede da Abraham? Han troede.

Dette er det Paradox, ved hvilket han bliver paa Spidsen, hvilket han ikke kan gjøre tydeligt for nogen Anden, thi Paradoxet er, at han som den Enkelte sætter sig i et absolut Forhold til det Absolute. Er han berettiget? Hans Berettigelse er igjen det Paradoxe; thi dersom han er det, er han det ikke i Kraft af at være noget Almeent, men i Kraft af at være den Enkelte.

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everything, everything, just as it is—and yet why did you never give voice to this torment? Did you perhaps keep it for yourself, like the beloved whose name one cannot bear to hear the world so much as mention? [155] For a poet buys this power of the word to utter the heavy secrets of all others at the price of one little secret he cannot utter; and a poet is not an apostle: he casts out devils only by the power of the devil.[9]

But now, when the ethical is teleologically suspended in this way, how does the single individual in whom it is suspended exist? He exists as the single individual in contrast to the universal. Does he then sin? For this is the form of sin, seen in the idea: just as the child, even though it does not sin, because it is not conscious of its existence as such, nonetheless has an existence that, seen in the idea, is sin, and the ethical demands itself of it at every moment. If one denies that this form can be repeated in such a way that it is not sin, then judgment has been passed on Abraham. How, then, did Abraham exist? He had faith.

This is the paradox by which he stays at the summit, the paradox he cannot make clear 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? His justification is, once again, the paradoxical; for if he is justified, he is so not by virtue of being something universal but by virtue of being the single individual.

JUDGED BY THE OUTCOME

Johannes mocks those who judge great men by results, forgetting the anguish of Abraham and Mary.

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Hvorledes forvisser da den Enkelte sig om, at han er berettiget? Det er nemt nok at nivellere hele Tilværelsen paa Statens Idee eller paa en Samfunds Idee. Gjør man det, saa kan man ogsaa let nok mediere; thi da kommer man slet ikke til Paradoxet, at den Enkelte som den Enkelte er høiere end det Almene, hvilket jeg ogsaa betegnende kan udtrykke i en Sætning af Pythagoras, at det ulige Tal er fuldkomnere end det lige Tal. Forsaavidt man leilighedsviis i vor Tid hører et Svar i Retning af Paradoxet, da lyder det gjerne saaledes: det bedømmer man efter Udfaldet.

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How, then, does the single individual assure himself that he is justified? It is easy enough to level the whole of existence down to the idea of the state or the idea of a society. If one does that, one can easily enough mediate as well; for then one never arrives at the paradox at all—that the single individual as the single individual is higher than the universal—which I can also express pointedly in a proposition of Pythagoras: that the odd number is more perfect than the even. Insofar as one now and then hears, in our age, an answer that

9 The fig leaf recalls Genesis 3:7. Casting out devils by the devil echoes the charge against Jesus in Matthew 12:24.

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En Helt, der er bleven sin Samtids σκανδαλον, i Bevidsthed af, at han er et Paradox, der ikke kan gjøre sig forstaaelig, tilraaber trøstig Samtiden: Udfaldet skal vel bevise, at jeg var berettiget. I vor Tid hører man sjældnere dette Raab; thi som den ikke frembringer Helte, hvilket er dens Brøst, saa har den det Gode, at den ogsaa frembringer faa Karrikaturer. Naar man da i vor Tid hører disse Ord: det skal bedømmes efter Udfaldet, saa er man strax klar over, hvem man har den Ære at tale med. De, der tale saaledes, er et talrigt Folkefærd, som jeg med eet fælleds Navn vil kalde Docenterne.

De leve i deres Tanker betryggede i Tilværelsen, de have en *fast* Stilling og *sikkre* Udsigter i en velorganiseret Stat, de have Aarhundreder, eller vel endog Aartusinder [156] mellem sig og Tilværelsens Rystelser, de frygte ikke for, at Sligt kan gjentages, hvad vilde ogsaa Politiet og Bladene sige? Deres Gjerning i Livet er at bedømme de store Mænd, og bedømme dem efter Udfaldet. En saadan Adfærd mod det Store røber en besynderlig Blanding af Hovmod og Elendighed, Hovmod, fordi man mener sig kaldet til at bedømme, Elendighed, fordi man ikke føler sit Liv end ikke i fjerneste Maade beslægtet med de Stores.

SKS 4.156 Enhver, der er blot en Smule erectioris ingenii, han er dog ikke bleven et aldeles koldt og klamt Bløddyr, og idet han nærmer sig det Store, da kan det aldrig gaae ham af Sinde, at det siden Verdens Skabelse har været Skik og Brug, at Udfaldet kommer sidst, og at man, naar man i Sandhed skal lære noget af det Store, netop maa være opmærksom paa Begyndelsen. Dersom den, der skal handle, vil bedømme sig selv efter Udfaldet, saa kommer han aldrig til at begynde. Om da Udfaldet end kan glæde hele Verden, Helten kan det ikke hjælpe; thi Udfaldet fik han først at vide, da det Hele var forbi, og derved blev han ikke Helt, men han var det derved, at han begyndte.

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leans toward the paradox, it usually runs like this: that will be judged by the outcome.[10]

A hero who has become the σκανδαλον [skandalon: stumbling block, offense] of his age, conscious that he is a paradox who cannot make himself understood, cries out confidently to his contemporaries: "The outcome will surely prove that I was justified." In our age this cry is heard more rarely; for just as our age has the defect of producing no heroes, it has the merit of producing few caricatures too. So when in our age one hears the words "it will be judged by the outcome," one knows at once whom one has the honor of addressing. Those who talk like this are a numerous tribe, whom I shall call by a single common name: the lecturers.[11]

In their thoughts they live secure in existence; they have a *permanent* position and *secure* prospects in a well-organized state; they have centuries, or even millennia, [156] between themselves and the upheavals of existence; they have no fear that such things could happen again—and besides, what would the police and the newspapers say? Their business in life is to judge the great men, and to judge them by the outcome. Such conduct toward greatness betrays a strange mixture of arrogance and wretchedness: arrogance, because one thinks oneself called to judge; wretchedness, because one does not feel one's own life to be even remotely akin to those of the great.

Anyone who is even a little erectioris ingenii [of a loftier mind] has at least not turned into an utterly cold and clammy mollusk, and as he approaches greatness it can never slip his mind that ever since the creation of the world it has been the custom for the outcome to come last, and that if one is truly to learn something from greatness, it is precisely to the beginning that one must attend. If the one who is to act wants to judge himself by the outcome, he will never get started. Even if the outcome can gladden the whole world, it cannot help the hero; for he learned the outcome only when the whole thing was over, and it was not by that that he became a hero—he was one by having begun.

10 The Pythagoreans ranked the odd numbers, as limited, above the even.
11 *Docenterne*: university lecturers, often unsalaried, a favorite target of Kierkegaard's satire.

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Desuden er Udfaldet (forsaavidt det er Endelighedens Svar paa det uendelige Spørgsmaal) i sin Dialektik aldeles ueensartet med Heltens Existents. Eller skal det kunne bevise, at Abraham var berettiget til at forholde sig som den Enkelte til det Almene, at han ved et *Vidunder* fik Isaak? Hvis Abraham virkelig havde offret Isaak, skulde han derfor have været mindre berettiget?

Men Udfaldet er man nysgjerrig efter, som efter Udfaldet paa en Bog; Angsten, Nøden, Paradoxet vil man ikke vide Noget af. Udfaldet lefler man æsthetisk med; det kommer ligesaa uventet men ogsaa ligesaa let som en Gevinst i Lotteriet; og naar man har hørt Udfaldet, da har man opbygget sig. Og dog er ingen Tempelraner, der arbeider i Bolt og Jern, saa nedrig en Forbryder, som den, der saaledes plyndrer det Hellige, og dog er Judas, der solgte sin Herre for 30 Secler, ikke foragteligere end den, der saaledes sælger det Store.

Det er min Sjæl imod, at tale umenneskeligt om det Store, at lade det dæmre i en uhyre Afstand i ubestemt Skikkelse, at lade det være Stort, uden at dog det Menneskelige deri kommer frem, hvorved det da ophører at være Stort; thi ikke hvad der hænder mig, gjør mig stor, men hvad jeg gjør, og der er dog vel Ingen, der mener, at en Mand blev stor, fordi han vandt den store Gevinst i Lotteriet.

Om et Menneske blev født i ringe [157] Kaar, jeg fordrer dog af ham, at han ikke skal være saa umenneskelig mod sig selv, at han ikke skulde kunne tænke Kongens Borg uden paa Afstand og ubestemt drømme om dens Storhed, og paa eengang ville ophøie den og ophæve den derved, at han paa en nedrig Maade ophøiede den; jeg fordrer af ham, at han skal være Menneske nok til tillidsfuld og værdig at træde frem ogsaa der.

SKS 4.157 Han skal ikke være Umenneske nok til uforskammet at ville krænke Alt, ved lige fra Gaden at ville storme ind i Kongens Sale, derved taber han mere end Kongen; tvertimod han skal finde en Glæde i at iagttage ethvert Sømmelighedens Bud med glad og tillidsfuldt Sværmeri, som netop vil gjøre ham frimodig. Dette er kun et Billede; thi hiin Forskjel er kun et saare ufuldkomment Udtryk for Aandens Afstand. Jeg fordrer af ethvert Menneske, at han

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Besides, the outcome (insofar as it is finitude's answer to the infinite question) is in its dialectic entirely heterogeneous to the hero's existence. Or is the fact that Abraham received Isaac by a *miracle* supposed to prove that he was justified in relating himself as the single individual to the universal? If Abraham had actually sacrificed Isaac, would he therefore have been less justified?

But people are curious about the outcome, as about the ending of a book; the anguish, the distress, the paradox they want to know nothing about. They flirt aesthetically with the outcome; it comes just as unexpectedly, but also just as easily, as a lottery prize; and once they have heard the outcome, they have been edified. And yet no temple robber toiling in irons is so base a criminal as the one who plunders the holy in this way, and not even Judas, who sold his Master for thirty shekels, is more contemptible than the one who sells greatness in this way.[12]

It goes against my soul to speak inhumanly of greatness, to let it loom dimly at an immense distance in an indistinct shape, to let it be great without the human in it coming forward—whereupon it ceases to be great. For it is not what happens to me that makes me great, but what I do; and surely there is no one who thinks a man became great because he won the big prize in the lottery.

Even if a person was born in humble [157] circumstances, I still require of him that he not be so inhuman toward himself that he could think of the king's castle only from a distance, dreaming vaguely of its grandeur, at once wanting to exalt it and cancelling it by exalting it abjectly; I require of him that he be human enough to step forward with confidence and dignity there too.

He must not be inhuman enough to want to affront everything insolently by storming straight in from the street into the king's halls—by that he loses more than the king does; on the contrary, he should find joy in observing every rule of propriety with a glad and confident enthusiasm, which is exactly what will make him bold. This is only an image; for that difference is only a very imperfect

12 Judas: Matthew 26:15.

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ikke skal tænke umenneskeligt nok om sig selv, til at han ikke tør træde ind i hine Palladser, hvor ikke blot Mindet om de Udvalgte boer, men hvor de selv boe.

Han skal ikke uforskammet trænge sig frem og paadutte dem sit Slægtskab, han skal være salig for hver Gang han bøier sig for dem, men han skal være frimodig og tillidsfuld og altid være noget mere end en Gangkone; thi vil han ikke være mere, da kommer han aldrig derind. Og det, der skal hjælpe ham, er netop Angsten og Nøden, hvori de Store blive forsøgte, thi ellers vilde disse, hvis han har en Smule Marv i sig, blot vække hans retfærdige Misundelse. Og hvad der kun kan være stort paa Afstand, hvad man ved Hjælp af tomme og udhulede Phraser vil gjøre til noget Stort, det tilintetgjør man selv.

Hvo var stor i Verden som hiin benaadede Qvinde, Guds Moder, Jomfru Maria? Og dog hvorledes taler man derom? At hun var den Benaadede blandt Qvinder gjør hende ikke stor, og dersom det ikke traf sig saa besynderligt, at de, der høre, kunne tænke ligesaa umenneskeligt som de, der tale, saa maatte vel enhver ung Pige spørge, hvorfor blev ikke ogsaa jeg den Benaadede? og hvis jeg ikke havde Andet at sige, da skulde jeg slet ikke afvise et saadant Spørgsmaal som dumt; thi ligeoverfor en Begunstigelse, abstract seet, er ethvert Menneske lige berettiget. Man udelader Nøden, Angsten, Paradoxet.

Min Tanke er reen trods Nogens, og den, der kan tænke Sligt, hans Tanke bliver nok reen, og han har ogsaa det Rædsomme at vente, hvis det ikke er saa; thi den, der engang har faaet disse Billeder frem, han kan ikke blive af med dem igjen, og synder han mod dem, da hævne de sig forfærdeligt ved [158] stille Vrede, forfærdeligere end 10 glubende Recensenters Høirøstethed. Vel fødte Maria Barnet vidunderligt, men det gik hende dog paa Qvinders Viis, og denne Tid den er Angstens, Nødens og Paradoxets. Engelen var vel en tjenende Aand, men han var ikke en tjenstvillig Aand, der gik til de andre unge Piger i Israel og sagde: foragter ikke Maria, hende hændes det Overordentlige.

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expression of the distance of the spirit. I require of every human being that he not think so inhumanly of himself that he does not dare to enter those palaces where not only the memory of the chosen dwells, but where they themselves dwell.

He must not push himself forward shamelessly and force his kinship on them; he should be blissful each time he bows before them, but he should be frank and confident and always be something more than a charwoman; for if he will not be more, he will never get in. And what is to help him is precisely the anguish and the distress in which the great are tried; for otherwise, if he has a bit of backbone in him, they would only arouse his righteous envy. And whatever can be great only at a distance, whatever people try to make into something great with empty and hollow phrases—that they destroy themselves.

Who was as great in the world as that favored woman, the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary? And yet how do people speak of her? That she was the favored one among women does not make her great; and if it did not happen so strangely that those who listen can think just as inhumanly as those who speak, then surely every young girl would have to ask: "Why wasn't I the favored one too?" And if I had nothing else to say, I would by no means dismiss such a question as foolish; for with respect to a favor, seen abstractly, every human being is equally entitled. They leave out the distress, the anguish, the paradox.[13]

My thought is as pure as anyone's, and whoever can think such things, his thought will surely become pure; and if it does not, he has something dreadful to expect. For whoever has once called up these images cannot be rid of them again, and if he sins against them, they take a terrible revenge with [158] a quiet wrath, more terrible than the clamor of ten ravenous reviewers. Mary did indeed bear the child miraculously, but it went with her after the manner of women, and that time is one of anguish, distress, and paradox. The angel was indeed a ministering spirit, but he was not an obliging spirit who went round to the other young girls in Israel and said: "Do not despise Mary; the extraordinary is happening to her."[14]

13 The angel's greeting to Mary: Luke 1:28.
14 "Ministering spirit": Hebrews 1:14.

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SKS 4.158 Men Engelen kom kun til Maria, og Ingen kunde forstaae hende. Hvilken Qvinde blev dog krænket som Maria, og er det ikke ogsaa her sandt, at den, hvem Gud velsigner, forbander han i samme Aandedrag? Dette er Aandens Opfattelse af Maria, og hun er ingenlunde, hvad der oprører mig at sige, men endnu mere, at man tankeløst og leflende har opfattet hende saaledes, hun er ingenlunde en Dame, der sidder paa Stads og leger med et Gudebarn. Naar hun da desuagtet sagde: see jeg er en Herrens Tjenerinde, saa er hun stor, og jeg tænker, det skal ikke falde vanskeligt at forklare, hvorfor hun blev Guds Moder.

Hun behøver ingen verdslig Beundring, ligesaa lidet som Abraham behøver Taarer, thi hun var ikke Heltinde, og han ikke Helt, men begge bleve de ingenlunde større end disse, ved at være fritagne for Nøden og Qvalen og Paradoxet, men bleve det ved disse.

Det er stort, naar Digteren, idet han stiller sin tragiske Helt frem for Menneskenes Beundring, at han da tør sige: Græder over ham, thi han fortjener det; thi det er Stort at fortjene deres Taarer, der fortjene at udgyde Taarer; det er Stort, at Digteren tør holde Mængden i Ave, tør tugte Menneskene, at Enhver prøver sig selv, om han er værdig til at græde over Helten, thi Flæbernes Spildevand er en Nedværdigelse af det Hellige. – Dog større end Alt dette er det, at Troens Ridder tør sige endog til det ædle Menneske, der vil græde over ham: græd ikke over mig, men græd over Dig selv.

Man bliver rørt, man søger tilbage i hine skjønne Tider, søde kjelne Længsler føre Een til Ønskets Maal, at see Christus vandre om i det forjættede Land. Man glemmer Angesten, Nøden, Paradoxet. Var det saa let en Sag ikke at tage feil? Var det ikke Forfærdeligt, at dette Menneske, der gik mellem de Andre, at han var Gud, var det ikke forfærdeligt at sidde tilbords med ham? Var det saa let en Sag at blive en Apostel? Men Udfaldet, 18 Aarhundreder, det hjælper, det hjælper til dette lumpne Bedrag, hvormed man bedrager sig selv og Andre.

Jeg føler ikke Mod til at ønske at være Samtidig med saadanne Begiven [159] heder, men derfor dømmer jeg ikke

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But the angel came only to Mary, and no one could understand her. What woman was ever so humiliated as Mary? And is it not true here too that the one whom God blesses he curses in the same breath? This is the spirit's understanding of Mary, and she is by no means—it revolts me to say it, but it revolts me even more that people have thoughtlessly and frivolously conceived of her this way—she is by no means a lady sitting in her finery and playing with a divine child. When, in spite of all this, she said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord," then she is great, and I think it should not prove hard to explain why she became the Mother of God.[15]

She needs no worldly admiration, any more than Abraham needs tears; for she was no heroine and he was no hero, yet both of them became greater than these—not by being spared the distress and the torment and the paradox, but by means of them.

It is great when the poet, presenting his tragic hero for people's admiration, dares to say: "Weep for him, for he deserves it"; for it is great to deserve the tears of those who deserve to shed tears. It is great that the poet dares to hold the crowd in check, dares to discipline people, so that each examines himself whether he is worthy to weep over the hero—for the slop water of blubberers is a degradation of the holy. But greater than all this is that the knight of faith dares to say even to the noble person who wants to weep over him: "Do not weep over me, but weep over yourself."[16]

People are moved; they seek back to those beautiful times; sweet, tender longings lead them to the goal of their wish—to see Christ walking about in the promised land. They forget the anguish, the distress, the paradox. Was it so easy a matter not to be mistaken? Was it not terrifying that this man who walked among the others—that he was God? Was it not terrifying to sit at table with him? Was it so easy a matter to become an apostle? But the outcome, eighteen centuries—that helps; it helps along this shabby deception by which people deceive themselves and others.

I do not feel the courage to wish to be contemporary with such events, [159] but for that reason I do

15 Mary's answer to the angel: Luke 1:38.

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strængt om dem, der toge feil, ikke ringe om dem, der saae det Rette.

SKS 4.159 Dog jeg vender tilbage til Abraham. I den Tid før Udfaldet var Abraham enten i hvert Minut en Morder, eller vi staae ved det Paradox, der er høiere end alle Mediationer.

Abrahams Historie indeholder da en teleologisk Suspension af det Ethiske. Han er som den Enkelte bleven høiere end det Almene. Dette er Paradoxet, som ikke lader sig mediere. Det er ligesaa uforklarligt, hvorledes han kom ind i det, som det er uforklarligt, hvorledes han bliver i det. Forholder det sig ikke saaledes med Abraham, da er han end ikke en tragisk Helt, men en Morder. At ville vedblive at kalde ham Troens Fader, at tale derom til Mennesker, som ikke bekymre sig om Andet end om Ord, er tankeløst. En tragisk Helt kan et Menneske blive ved egne Kræfter, men Troens Ridder ikke.

Naar et Menneske tiltræder den tragiske Helts i en vis Forstand tunge Vei, da skal Mange kunne raade ham; den, der gaaer Troens trange Vei, ham kan Ingen raade, Ingen forstaae. Troen er et Vidunder, og dog er intet Menneske udelukket derfra; thi det, hvori alt Menneskeliv enes, er i Lidenskab*, og Troen er en Lidenskab.

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not judge harshly those who were mistaken, nor think little of those who saw what was right.

But I return to Abraham. In the time before the outcome, either Abraham was a murderer every minute, or we stand at the paradox that is higher than all mediations.

The story of Abraham, then, contains a teleological suspension of the ethical. As the single individual he has become higher than the universal. This is the paradox, which cannot be mediated. It is just as inexplicable how he entered into it as it is inexplicable how he remains in it. If this is not how things stand with Abraham, then he is not even a tragic hero but a murderer. To go on calling him the father of faith, to talk about it to people who care about nothing but words, is thoughtless. A person can become a tragic hero by his own powers—but not a knight of faith.

When a person sets out on the tragic hero's road, in a certain sense a hard one, many will be able to advise him; the one who walks the narrow road of faith no one can advise, no one can understand. Faith is a miracle, and yet no human being is excluded from it; for that in which all human life is united is passion*, and faith is a passion.[17]

16 The last words echo Jesus to the women of Jerusalem, Luke 23:28.
17 The "narrow road" recalls Matthew 7:14.
19

* Lessing har etsteds yttret noget Lignende fra et reent æsthetisk Standpunkt. Han vil egentlig paa det Sted vise, at Sorgen ogsaa kan give sig et vittigt Udtryk. Han anfører til den Ende en Replik i en bestemt Situation af den ulykkelige engelske Konge Edvard den Anden. I Modsætning dertil anfører han, efter Diderot, en Fortælling om en Bondekone og en Replik af hende. Nu vedbliver han: Auch das war Witz, und noch dazu Witz einer Bäuerin; aber die Umstände machten ihn unvermeidlich.

* Lessing somewhere made a similar remark from a purely aesthetic standpoint. In that passage he actually wants to show that grief too can find a witty expression. To that end he cites a line spoken in a particular situation by the unhappy English king Edward II. In contrast he cites, after Diderot, a story about a peasant woman and a remark of hers. He then continues: Auch das war Witz, und noch dazu Witz einer Bäuerin; aber die Umstände machten ihn unvermeidlich. [That too was wit, and a peasant woman's wit at that; but the circumstances made it unavoidable.][18]

18 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781), German critic and dramatist; the passage is from his *Hamburg Dramaturgy*. Denis Diderot (1713–1784), French philosopher and writer.

Problema II

Is there an absolute duty to God?
If faith is real, the single individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute, higher than the universal.

GIVES DER EN ABSOLUT PLIGT MOD GUD?

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SKS 4.160 Det Ethiske er det Almene, og som saadant igjen det Guddommelige. Man har derfor Ret i at sige, at enhver Pligt i Grunden er Pligt mod Gud; men kan man ikke sige mere, da siger man tillige, at jeg egentlig ingen Pligt har mod Gud. Pligten bliver Pligt ved at henføres til Gud, men i Pligten selv træder jeg ikke i Forhold til Gud. Det er saaledes Pligt at elske sin Næste. Det er Pligt derved, at det henføres til Gud, men i Pligten træder jeg ikke i Forhold til Gud, men til den Næste, jeg elsker.

Siger jeg da i denne Forbindelse, at det er min Pligt at elske Gud, da siger jeg egentlig kun en Tautologi, forsaavidt »Gud« her tages i en aldeles abstrakt Forstand som det Guddommelige ɔ: det Almene ɔ: Pligten. Menneskeslægtens hele Tilværelse afrunder sig da fuldkommen kugleformet i sig selv, og det Ethiske er paa eengang det Begrændsende og det Udfyldende. Gud bliver et usynligt, forsvindende Punkt, en afmægtig Tanke, hans Magt er kun i det Ethiske, der udfylder Tilværelsen.

Forsaavidt da Een skulde vilde falde paa at ville elske Gud i nogen anden end den her angivne Betydning, da er han overspændt, han elsker et Phantom, der, hvis det blot havde saa megen Kraft, at det kunde tale, vilde sige til ham: jeg forlanger ikke din Kjærlighed, bliv kun hvor Du hører hjemme. Forsaavidt Een skulde falde paa at ville

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The ethical is the universal, and as such, in turn, the divine. One is therefore right to say that every duty is at bottom duty to God; but if one can say no more than that, one is also saying that I really have no duty to God. Duty becomes duty by being referred to God, but in the duty itself I do not enter into relation with God. Thus it is a duty to love one's neighbor. It is a duty by being referred to God; but in the duty I enter into relation not with God but with the neighbor I love.

If, then, in this connection I say that it is my duty to love God, I am really saying only a tautology, insofar as "God" is taken here in an entirely abstract sense as the divine, i.e., the universal, i.e., duty. The whole existence of the human race then rounds itself off, perfectly spherical, within itself, and the ethical is at once what bounds it and what fills it. God becomes an invisible, vanishing point, a powerless thought; his power is only in the ethical, which fills existence.

If, then, someone should take it into his head to want to love God in any sense other than the one given here, he is overwrought; he loves a phantom which, if it only had strength enough to speak, would say to him: "I do not ask for your love; just

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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. Cfr. Sämtlich. W. 30. B. p. 223.

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. [And consequently one must not seek the excuse for witty expressions of pain and sorrow in the fact that the person who says them is distinguished, well bred, intelligent, and otherwise witty; *for the passions make all people equal again:* but in the fact that in all likelihood anyone at all, in the same circumstances, would say the same thing. The peasant woman's thought a queen could have had, and must have had; just as what the king says there a peasant could also have said, and no doubt would have said.] Cf. Sämtliche Werke, vol. 30, p. 223.

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elske Gud anderledes, da bliver denne Kjærlighed mistænkelig ligesom den Kjærlighed, hvilken Rousseau omtaler, hvormed et Menneske elsker *[de fjerne Folkeslag]* istedenfor at elske sin Næste.

Dersom nu det her Udviklede forholder sig rigtigt, dersom der intet [161] Incommensurabelt er i et Menneskeliv, men det Incommensurable der er, kun er det ved et Tilfælde, af hvilket Intet følger, forsaavidt Tilværelsen betragtes under Ideen, saa har Hegel Ret; men hvad han ikke har Ret i er, at tale om Troen eller at tillade, at Abraham ansees for dens Fader; thi ved det Andet har han afsagt Dommen baade over Abraham og over Troen. I den hegelske Philosophi er das Äußere (die Entäußerung) høiere end das Innere. Dette oplyses oftere ved et Exempel. Barnet er das Innere, Manden das Äußere; deraf kommer det, at Barnet netop er bestemmet ved det Ydre, og omvendt Manden som das Äußere netop er bestemt ved das Innere.

SKS 4.161 Troen derimod er dette Paradox, at Inderligheden er høiere end Yderligheden, eller for atter at erindre om et Udtryk i det Foregaaende, at det ulige Tal er høiere end det lige.

For den ethiske Betragtning af Livet er det da den Enkeltes Opgave, at afføre sig selv Inderlighedens Bestemmelse og udtrykke denne i et Ydre. Hver Gang den Enkelte krymper sig derved, hver Gang han vil holde sig tilbage i eller smutte ned igjen i Inderlighedens Bestemmelse af Følelse, Stemning o. s. v., da forsynder han sig, da ligger han i en Anfægtelse. Troens Paradox er dette, at der er en Inderlighed, der er incommensurabel for det Ydre, en Inderlighed, der vel at mærke ikke er identisk med hiin første, men en ny Inderlighed. Dette maa ikke oversees. Den nyere Philosophi har tilladt sig uden videre istedenfor »Tro« at substituere det Umiddelbare.

Naar man gjør det, da er det en Latterlighed at negte, at Troen har været til til alle Tider. Troen kommer nu paa den Maade i temmelig simpelt Compagni med Følelse, Stemning, Idiosynkrasi, vapeurs o. s. v. Forsaavidt kan Philosophien have Ret i, at man ikke bør blive staaende derved. Men der er Intet, der berettiger Philosophien til

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stay where you belong." If someone should take it into his head to want to love God otherwise, this love becomes suspect, like the love Rousseau speaks of, by which a person loves the peoples of faraway Africa instead of loving his neighbor.[1]

If what has been developed here is correct—if there is nothing [161] incommensurable in a human life, and whatever incommensurable there is exists only by an accident from which nothing follows, insofar as existence is viewed under the idea—then Hegel is right. But where he is not right is in speaking of faith, or in allowing Abraham to be regarded as its father; for by the latter he has passed judgment both on Abraham and on faith. In Hegelian philosophy das Äußere [the outer] (die Entäußerung [externalization]) is higher than das Innere [the inner]. This is often illustrated by an example. The child is das Innere, the man das Äußere; hence the child is determined precisely by the outer, and conversely the man, as das Äußere, is determined precisely by das Innere.

Faith, on the other hand, is this paradox: that inwardness is higher than outwardness—or, to recall once more an expression used earlier, that the odd number is higher than the even.

For the ethical view of life, then, it is the single individual's task to strip himself of the determination of inwardness and express it in something outward. Every time the individual shrinks from this, every time he wants to hold back in, or slip back down into, the inward determination of feeling, mood, etc., he sins; he is in a spiritual trial. The paradox of faith is this: that there is an inwardness that is incommensurable with the outward—an inwardness, be it noted, that is not identical with the first but is a new inwardness. This must not be overlooked. Recent philosophy has allowed itself, without further ado, to substitute the immediate for "faith."

If one does that, then it is ridiculous to deny that faith has existed in all ages. Faith then comes into rather common company, with feeling, mood, idiosyncrasy, vapeurs [the vapors], etc. To that extent philosophy may be right that one ought not to stop there. But nothing entitles philosophy to this

1 Rousseau, *Émile*, Book I, warns against the philosopher who loves distant peoples so as to be excused from loving his neighbors. Kierkegaard names a southern African people with a term now offensive; it is replaced here.

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denne Sprogbrug. Foran for Troen gaaer en Uendelighedens Bevægelse, først da indtræder, nec opinate, i Kraft af det Absurde Troen. Dette kan jeg vel forstaae, uden derfor at paastaae, at jeg har Troen. Naar Troen ikke er Andet end hvad Philosophien udgiver den for, saa er allerede Socrates gaaet videre, langt videre, istedenfor at det er omvendt, at han ikke er kommen til den.

Han har i intellectuel Henseende gjort Uendelighedens Bevægelse. Hans Uvidenhed er den uendelige Resignation. Denne Opgave er allerede en passende for menneskelige Kræfter, om man end i vor Tid forsmaaer den; men først naar [162] den er gjort, først naar den Enkelte har udtømt sig selv i det Uendelige, først da er det Punkt kommet, da Troen kan bryde frem.

SKS 4.162 Troens Paradox er da dette, at den Enkelte er høiere end det Almene, at den Enkelte, for at erindre om en nu sjeldnere dogmatisk Distinction, bestemmer sit Forhold til det Almene ved sit Forhold til det Absolute, ikke sit Forhold til det Absolute ved sit Forhold til det Almene. Paradoxet kan ogsaa udtrykkes saaledes, at der er en absolut Pligt mod Gud; thi i dette Pligtforhold forholder den Enkelte som den Enkelte sig absolut til det Absolute. Naar det da i denne Forbindelse hedder, at det er Pligt at elske Gud, saa siges dermed noget Andet end i det Foregaaende; thi er denne Pligt absolut, saa er det Ethiske nedsat til det Relative.

Heraf følger dog ikke, at dette skal tilintetgjøres, men det faaer et ganske andet Udtryk, det paradoxe Udtryk, saaledes at f. Ex. Kjærlighed til Gud kan bringe Troens Ridder til at give sin Kjærlighed til Næsten det modsatte Udtryk af hvad der ethisk talt er Pligt.

Forholder det sig ikke saaledes, da har Troen ikke sin Plads i Tilværelsen, saa er Troen en Anfægtelse, og Abraham er tabt, da han gav efter for den.

Dette Paradox lader sig ikke mediere; thi det beroer netop paa, at den Enkelte kun er den Enkelte. Saasnart denne Enkelte vil udtrykke sin absolute Pligt i det Almene, blive sig denne bevidst i dette, saa erkjender han sig selv at være i Anfægtelse, og kommer da, hvis han ellers gjør den Modstand, ikke til at opfylde den saa kaldte absolute Pligt, og hvis han ikke gjør det, da synder han, om hans Gjerning end realiter bliver det, der var hans absolute Pligt. Hvad skulde saaledes Abraham gjøre?

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use of language. Faith is preceded by a movement of infinity; only then does faith enter, nec opinate [unexpectedly], by virtue of the absurd. This I can well understand, without therefore claiming that I have faith. If faith is nothing more than what philosophy passes it off as, then Socrates already went further, much further—instead of its being the other way round, that he did not reach it.

In an intellectual respect he made the movement of infinity. His ignorance is the infinite resignation. This task is already one suited to human powers, even if our age disdains it; but only when [162] it has been done, only when the individual has emptied himself in the infinite, only then has the point come where faith can break forth.

The paradox of faith, then, is this: that the single individual is higher than the universal; that the single individual—to recall a dogmatic distinction now seldom heard—determines his relation to the universal by his relation to the absolute, not his relation to the absolute by his relation to the universal. The paradox can also be expressed this way: that there is an absolute duty to God; for in this relation of duty the single individual as the single individual relates himself absolutely to the absolute. When, then, it is said in this connection that it is a duty to love God, something different is being said from before; for if this duty is absolute, then the ethical is reduced to the relative.

It does not follow from this that the ethical is to be annihilated; but it receives an entirely different expression, the paradoxical expression—so that, for example, love for God can bring the knight of faith to give his love for his neighbor the opposite expression of what, ethically speaking, is duty.

If this is not how things stand, then faith has no place in existence; then faith is a spiritual trial, and Abraham is lost, since he gave in to it.

This paradox cannot be mediated; for it rests precisely on the single individual's being only the single individual. As soon as this single individual wants to express his absolute duty in the universal, to become conscious of it in the universal, he recognizes that he is in a spiritual trial; and then, if he does resist it, he does not come to fulfill the so-called absolute duty; and if he does not resist it, he sins, even if his deed realiter [in reality] turns

DANISH

Hvis han vilde sige til et andet Menneske: Isaak elsker jeg høiere end Alt i Verden, og derfor er det mig saa tungt at offre ham, saa skulde vel den Anden have rystet paa Hovedet og sagt: hvorfor vil Du saa offre ham; eller hvis den Anden havde været et fiffigt Hoved, da skulde han vel endog have gjennemskuet Abraham, at han bar Følelser til Skue, som stode i en himmelskrigende Modsigelse til hans Gjerning.

I Fortællingen om Abraham finde vi et saadant Paradox. Hans Forhold til Isaak er ethisk udtrykt dette, at Faderen skal elske Sønnen. Dette ethiske Forhold nedsættes til det Relative i Modsætning til det absolute Forhold til Gud. Paa Spørgsmaalet hvorfor, har Abraham intet andet Svar, end at det er en Prøvelse, en Fristelse, hvilket, som ovenfor [163] bemærket, er Eenheden af, at det er for Guds Skyld og for hans egen Skyld. Disse to Bestemmelser svare ogsaa til hinanden i Sprogbrug. Naar man saaledes seer et Menneske gjøre Noget, der ikke gaaer op i det Almene, saa siger man, det gjorde han nok neppe for Guds Skyld, og betegner derved, at han gjorde det for sin egen Skyld.

SKS 4.163 Troens Paradox har tabt det Mellemliggende ɔ: det Almene. Den har paa den ene Side Udtrykket for den høieste Egoisme (at gjøre det Forfærdelige, den gjør, for sin egen Skyld); paa den anden Side Udtrykket for den absoluteste Hengivenhed, at gjøre det for Guds Skyld. Troen selv kan ikke medieres ind i det Almene; thi derved hæves den. Troen er dette Paradox, og den Enkelte kan aldeles ikke gjøre sig forstaaelig for Nogen. Man indbilder sig vel, at den Enkelte kan gjøre sig forstaaelig for en anden Enkelt, der er i samme Casus. En saadan Betragtning var utænkelig, hvis man ikke paa saa mange Maader i vor Tid søgte at snige sig lumskelig ind i det Store.

Den ene Troens Ridder kan slet ikke hjælpe den anden. Enten bliver den Enkelte selv en Troens Ridder derved, at han tager Paradoxet paa sig, eller han bliver det aldrig. Compagniskab i disse Regioner er aldeles utænkeligt. Enhver nærmere Explication af hvad der skal forstaaes ved Isaak kan den Enkelte bestandig kun give sig selv.

Og hvis man endog nok saa nøie kunde bestemme, almindeligt talt, hvad der skulde forstaaes ved Isaak

ENGLISH

out to be what was his absolute duty. What, then, should Abraham have done?

If he had wanted to say to another person, "I love Isaac more than anything in the world, and that is why it is so hard for me to sacrifice him," the other would surely have shaken his head and said, "Then why do you want to sacrifice him?" Or, if the other had been a shrewd fellow, he might even have seen through Abraham: seen that he was putting on display feelings that stood in a contradiction crying to heaven with his deed.

In the story of Abraham we find just such a paradox. His relation to Isaac, expressed ethically, is this: the father shall love the son. This ethical relation is reduced to the relative in contrast to the absolute relation to God. To the question why, Abraham has no other answer than that it is a trial, a temptation—which, as [163] noted above, is the unity of its being for God's sake and for his own sake. These two determinations also correspond to each other in ordinary usage. Thus when one sees a person do something that does not fit into the universal, one says: he hardly did that for God's sake—meaning by this that he did it for his own sake.

The paradox of faith has lost the intermediate term, i.e., the universal. On the one side it has the expression of the most extreme egoism (doing the terrible thing it does for its own sake); on the other side, the expression of the most absolute devotion, doing it for God's sake. Faith itself cannot be mediated into the universal, for then it is annulled. Faith is this paradox, and the single individual simply cannot make himself understood by anyone. People fancy, to be sure, that the single individual can make himself understood by another single individual who is in the same case. Such a notion would be unthinkable if people in our age did not try in so many ways to sneak slyly into greatness.

One knight of faith cannot help another at all. Either the single individual himself becomes a knight of faith by taking the paradox upon himself, or he never becomes one. Partnership in these regions is utterly unthinkable. Any more precise explanation of what is to be understood by Isaac the individual can only ever give to himself.

And even if one could determine ever so precisely, in general terms, what is to be understood by

DANISH

(hvilket da forøvrigt vilde være den latterligste Selvmodsigelse, at bringe den Enkelte, der netop staaer udenfor det Almene, ind under almindelige Bestemmelser, idet han skal handle netop som den Enkelte, der er udenfor det Almene) saa vil den Enkelte dog aldrig kunne forvisse sig derom ved Andre, end ved sig selv som den Enkelte.

Om derfor end et Menneske var feigt og usselt nok til at ville blive en Troens Ridder paa fremmed An- og Tilsvar, han bliver det dog ikke; thi kun den Enkelte bliver det som den Enkelte, og dette er det Store, som jeg vel kan forstaae uden at komme ind deri, da jeg mangler Mod; men dette er ogsaa det Forfærdelige, hvilket jeg endnu bedre kan fatte.

ENGLISH

Isaac (which, incidentally, would be the most ridiculous self-contradiction—to bring the single individual, who stands precisely outside the universal, under universal determinations, when he is to act precisely as the single individual who is outside the universal), the individual will still never be able to assure himself of it through others, only through himself as the single individual.

So even if a person were cowardly and wretched enough to want to become a knight of faith on someone else's responsibility, he still would not become one; for only the single individual becomes one, as the single individual. And this is the greatness, which I can well understand without entering into it, since I lack courage; but this is also the terrible, which I can grasp even better.

HATING FATHER AND MOTHER

Luke 14:26 is read literally, as a teaching about the absolute duty to God.

DANISH

Der foredrages som bekjendt i Luc. XIV, 26 en mærkelig Lære om den absolute Pligt mod Gud: »dersom Nogen kommer til mig og ikke hader sin egen Fader, og sin Moder, og sin Hustrue, og sine Børn, og sine Brødre og sine Søstre, ja endog sin egen Sjæl, han kan ikke være min Discipel.« Dette er en haard Tale, hvo kan taale at høre paa den? Den [164] høres desaarsag ogsaa meget sjeldent. Dog denne Taushed er kun en Udflugt, som Intet hjælper.

SKS 4.164 Den theologiske Studerende han faaer imidlertid at vide, at disse Ord forekomme i det nye Testamente, og i et eller andet exegetisk Hjælpemiddel finder han den Oplysning, at μισειν paa dette og et Par andre Steder per μειωσιν betyder: minus diligo, posthabeo, non colo, nihili facio. Forbindelsen, hvori disse Ord forekomme, synes dog ikke at bestyrke denne smagfulde Forklaring. I det næstfølgende Vers nemlig findes en Fortælling om, hvorledes Een, der vil opføre et Taarn, først gjør Overslag, om han er istand dertil, at man ikke bag efter skal lee ad ham. Denne Fortællings nøie Forbindelse med det citerede Vers synes netop at tyde paa, at Ordene skulle tages saa forfærdelige som muligt, for at Enhver maa prøve sig selv, om han kan opføre Bygningen.

ENGLISH

As is well known, a remarkable teaching about the absolute duty to God is set forth in Luke 14:26: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father, and his mother, and his wife, and his children, and his brothers, and his sisters, yes, even his own soul, he cannot be my disciple." This is a hard saying; who can bear to hear it? For [164] that reason it is also heard very seldom. But this silence is only an evasion that does no good.[2]

The theology student, meanwhile, learns that these words occur in the New Testament, and in some exegetical aid or other he finds the information that μισειν [misein, to hate] in this and a couple of other passages per μειωσιν [by meiosis, understatement] means: minus diligo, posthabeo, non colo, nihili facio [I love less, I rank lower, I do not honor, I count as nothing]. The context in which these words occur, however, does not seem to bear out this tasteful explanation. For in the very next verse there is a story about how someone who wants to build a tower first works out whether he is able to do it, so that people will not laugh at him afterward. The close connection of this story with the verse quoted seems precisely to indicate that the words are to be taken as ter-

2 "This is a hard saying; who can bear to hear it?" echoes John 6:60.

DANISH

Dersom hiin fromme og kjelne Exeget, der ved saaledes at prutte mener at smugle Christendommen ind i Verden, havde Lykke til at overbevise et Menneske om, at dette baade gramaticalsk, linguistisk og κατ' αναλογιαν var Meningen af hiint Sted, saa vil han, forhaabentlig, ogsaa have Lykke til i samme Øieblik at overbevise det samme Menneske om, at Christendommen er noget af det Erbarmeligste i Verden.

Thi den Lære, der i et af sine mest lyriske Udbrud, hvor Bevidstheden om dens evige Gyldighed svulmer stærkest i den, ikke har andet at sige end et larmende Ord, der Intet betyder, men kun betegner, at man skal være mindre velvillig, mindre opmærksom, mere ligegyldig; den Lære, der i det Øieblik, da den gjør Mine til at ville sige det Forfærdelige, ender med at savle istedenfor at forfærde – den Lære er det vist ikke Umagen værd at reise sig for.

Ordene ere forfærdelige, dog troer jeg nok, man kan forstaae dem, uden at dog deraf følger, at den, der har forstaaet dem, derfor har Mod til at gjøre det. Saa redelig skal man dog være, at man vedgaaer hvad der staaer, at man tilstaaer, at det er det Store, om man end ikke selv har Mod dertil. Den, der bærer sig saaledes ad, han skal ikke udelukke sig selv fra Deelagtighed i den skjønne Fortælling, thi den indeholder jo dog paa en Maade Trøst for den, der ikke havde Mod til at begynde paa Taarnets Opførelse. Men ærlig maa han være, og ikke forklare denne Mangel paa Mod som Ydmyghed, da den tvertimod er Stolthed, medens Troens Mod er det eneste ydmyge Mod.

SKS 4.165 Man indseer nu let, at hvis der skal være Mening i Stedet, maa det forstaaes lige efter Ordene. Gud er den, der fordrer absolut Kjærlighed. Den, der nu, idet han fordrer et Menneskes Kjærlighed, vil mene, at denne tillige skal bevise sig derved, at han bliver lunken ved Alt, hvad ham ellers var kjært, han er ikke blot en Egoist, men han er tillige dum, og den, der vilde fordre en saadan Kjærlighed, han underskriver i samme Øieblik sin egen Dødsdom, forsaavidt han havde sit Liv i den attraaede Kjærlighed.

ENGLISH

ribly as possible, so that each may examine himself whether he can erect the building.[3]

If that pious and tender-minded exegete, who thinks that by haggling in this way he can smuggle Christianity into the world, succeeded in convincing someone that this was the meaning of that passage grammatically, linguistically, and κατ' αναλογιαν [kat' analogian, by analogy], then he will, one hopes, also succeed in the same moment in convincing that same person that Christianity is one of the most pitiful things in the world.

For the teaching that, in one of its most lyrical outbursts, where the consciousness of its eternal validity swells most strongly in it, has nothing more to say than a noisy word that means nothing but only indicates that one should be less kindly, less attentive, more indifferent; the teaching that, at the moment it makes as if to say something terrible, ends by drivelling instead of terrifying—that teaching is surely not worth getting to one's feet for.

The words are terrible, yet I do believe one can understand them, though it does not follow that whoever has understood them has the courage to act on them. One ought at least to be honest enough to acknowledge what is written, to admit that it is greatness, even if one does not have the courage for it oneself. Whoever behaves this way will not shut himself out from a share in that beautiful story; for it does, after all, in a way contain comfort for the one who did not have the courage to begin building the tower. But he must be honest, and not explain this lack of courage as humility, since on the contrary it is pride, whereas the courage of faith is the only humble courage.

One now easily sees that if the passage is to make sense, it must be understood literally. God is the one who demands absolute love. Now whoever, in demanding a person's love, would think that this love should also prove itself by the person's becoming lukewarm toward everything that was otherwise dear to him is not only an egoist but stupid as well; and whoever would demand such a love signs his own death warrant in the same mo-

3 The tower parable: Luke 14:28–30.

DANISH

En Mand fordrer saaledes, at hans Hustrue skal forlade Fader og Moder, men hvis han vilde ansee det for et Beviis paa hendes overordentlige Kjærlighed til ham, at hun for hans Skyld blev en lunken dvask Datter o. s. v., saa er han dummere end den Dummeste. Hvis han havde nogen Forestilling om, hvad Kjærlighed er, da vilde han ønske at opdage og deri see en Sikkerhed for, at hans Hustrue vilde elske ham som ingen Anden i Riget, hvis han opdagede, at hun som Datter og Søster var fuldkommen i Kjærlighed. Hvad man da hos et Menneske vilde ansee for et Tegn paa Egoisme og Dumhed, det skal man ved en Exegets Hjælp ansee for en værdig Forestilling om Guddommen.

Men hvorledes da hade dem? Jeg skal her ikke erindre om den menneskelige Distinction enten elske eller hade, ikke fordi jeg har saa meget imod den, thi den er dog lidenskabelig, men fordi den er egoistisk og passer ikke her. Betragter jeg derimod Opgaven som et Paradox, saa forstaaer jeg den ɔ: jeg forstaaer den saaledes, som man kan forstaae et Paradox. Den absolute Pligt kan da bringe til at gjøre, hvad Ethiken vilde forbyde, men den kan ingenlunde bringe Troens Ridder til at lade være at elske. Dette viser Abraham. I det Øieblik, han vil offre Isaak, da er det ethiske Udtryk for hvad han gjør dette: han hader Isaak.

Men dersom han virkelig hader Isaak, saa kan han være rolig for, at Gud ikke forlanger det af ham; thi Kain og Abraham ere ikke identiske. Isaak maa han elske af hele sin Sjæl; idet Gud fordrer ham, maa han elske ham, om mulig endnu høiere, og kun da kan han *offre* ham; thi denne Kjærlighed til Isaak er det jo, der ved sin paradoxe Modsætning til hans Kjærlighed til Gud gjør hans Gjerning til et Offer. Men dette er Nøden og Angesten i Paradoxet, at han, menneskeligt talt, aldeles ikke kan gjøre sig forstaaelig.

Kun i det Øieblik, da hans Gjerning er i absolut Modsigelse med hans Følelse, kun da offrer han Isaak, men hans Gjernings Realitet [166] er det, hvorved han tilhører det Almene, og der er og bliver han en Morder.

SKS 4.166 Stedet hos Lucas maa fremdeles forstaaes saaledes, at man indseer, at Troens Ridder ikke faaer nogetsomhelst

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ment, insofar as he had his life in the love he desired.

Thus a man requires that his wife leave father and mother; but if he would regard it as proof of her extraordinary love for him that for his sake she became a lukewarm, listless daughter, etc., then he is stupider than the stupidest. If he had any idea what love is, he would wish to discover that as daughter and sister she was perfect in love, and would see in this an assurance that his wife would love him as no one else in the realm. What one would regard in a human being as a sign of egoism and stupidity, one is supposed, with an exegete's help, to regard as a worthy conception of the Deity.[4]

But how, then, to hate them? I will not bring up here the human distinction "either love or hate"—not because I have so much against it, for it is at least passionate, but because it is egoistic and does not fit here. If, on the other hand, I regard the task as a paradox, then I understand it, i.e., I understand it in the way one can understand a paradox. The absolute duty can then lead one to do what ethics would forbid, but it can by no means lead the knight of faith to stop loving. Abraham shows this. At the moment he is about to sacrifice Isaac, the ethical expression for what he does is this: he hates Isaac.

But if he really hates Isaac, he can rest assured that God does not require this of him; for Cain and Abraham are not identical. Isaac he must love with his whole soul; when God demands Isaac, he must love him, if possible, even more, and only then can he *sacrifice* him; for it is precisely this love for Isaac that, by its paradoxical opposition to his love for God, makes his deed a sacrifice. But this is the distress and the anguish in the paradox: that, humanly speaking, he cannot make himself understood at all.

Only at the moment when his deed is in absolute contradiction to his feeling, only then does he sacrifice Isaac; but the reality of his deed [166] is that by which he belongs to the universal, and there he is and remains a murderer.

The passage in Luke must further be understood so that one sees that the knight of faith has no

4 "Leave father and mother": Genesis 2:24.

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høiere Udtryk af det Almene (som det Ethiske), hvori han kan frelse sig. Naar man saaledes lod Kirken kræve dette Offer af et Medlem i den, saa have vi kun en tragisk Helt. Kirkens Idee er nemlig ikke qvalitativ forskjellig fra Statens, saasnart den Enkelte ved en simpel Mediation kan komme ind i den, og saa snart den Enkelte er kommen ind i Paradoxet, kommer han ikke til Kirkens Idee; han kommer ikke ud af Paradoxet, men maa enten finde sin Salighed deri, eller sin Fortabelse.

En saadan kirkelig Helt udtrykker i sin Gjerning det Almene, og der skal Ingen være i Kirken, end ikke hans Fader og Moder o. s. v. uden at de forstaae ham. Troens Ridder er han derimod ikke, og har ogsaa et andet Svar end Abrahams; han siger ikke, at det er en Prøvelse eller en Fristelse, hvori han forsøges.

Man afholder sig i Almindelighed fra at anføre saadanne Steder som det i Lucas. Man frygter for at slaae Menneskene løs, man frygter, at det Værste skal skee, naar først den Enkelte behager at gerere sig som den Enkelte. Fremdeles mener man, at det at existere som den Enkelte er det Letteste af Alt, og derfor skal man netop tvinge Folk til at blive det Almene. Jeg kan hverken dele hiin Frygt eller denne Mening, og det af samme Grund.

Den, som har lært, at det at existere som den Enkelte er det Forfærdeligste af Alt, han skal ikke være bange for at sige, at det er det Største, men han skal ogsaa sige det saaledes, at hans Ord neppe bliver en Snare for en Forvildet, men snarere hjælper ham ind i det Almene, om hans Ord end skaffe lidt Plads for det Store.

Den, der ikke tør nævne slige Steder, han tør heller ikke nævne Abraham, og det at mene, at det at existere som den Enkelte er nemt nok, indeholder en meget betænkelig indirecte Concession med Hensyn til sig selv; thi den, der virkelig har Agtelse for sig selv og Bekymring for sin Sjæl, han er forvisset om, at den, der lever under sit eget Opsyn ene i den ganske Verden, han lever mere strængt og indgetogent end en Pige i sit Jomfrubuur.

At der kan være dem, der behøve Tvang, dem, der hvis de bleve satte paa fri Fod, vilde som ubændige Dyr tumle sig i selvisk Lyst, er vel sandt, men man skal netop vise, at

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higher expression of the universal (as the ethical) in which he can save himself. Thus if one had the Church demand this sacrifice of one of its members, we would have only a tragic hero. For the idea of the Church is not qualitatively different from that of the state, as long as the individual can enter it by a simple mediation; and as soon as the individual has entered the paradox, he does not arrive at the idea of the Church; he does not get out of the paradox, but must find in it either his salvation or his perdition.

Such an ecclesiastical hero expresses the universal in his deed, and there will be no one in the Church, not even his father and mother, etc., who does not understand him. But a knight of faith he is not, and he also has a different answer from Abraham's: he does not say that it is a trial or a temptation in which he is being tested.

People generally refrain from citing passages like the one in Luke. They are afraid of letting people loose; they fear that the worst will happen once the single individual takes it into his head to behave as the single individual. Furthermore, people think that existing as the single individual is the easiest thing of all, and that is exactly why people must be forced to become the universal. I can share neither that fear nor this opinion, and for the same reason.

Whoever has learned that existing as the single individual is the most terrible thing of all will not be afraid to say that it is the greatest; but he will also say it in such a way that his words will hardly become a snare for someone gone astray, but will rather help him into the universal—even if his words make a little room for greatness.

Whoever does not dare to mention such passages does not dare to mention Abraham either; and to think that existing as the single individual is easy enough contains a very dubious indirect admission about oneself. For whoever truly has respect for himself and concern for his soul is certain that a person who lives under his own supervision, alone in the whole world, lives more strictly and more chastely than a young girl in her maiden's chamber.

That there may be those who need constraint, those who, if set free, would wallow like unbridled beasts in selfish pleasure, is true enough; but one

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man ikke hører til dem, derved, at man veed at tale med Angst og Bævelse, og tale skal man af [167] Ærbødighed for det Store, at det ikke glemmes af Frygt for Skaden, der vel vil udeblive, naar der tales saaledes, at man veed, det er det Store, veed dets Rædsler, og uden dette veed man heller ei dets Storhed.

ENGLISH

should show precisely that one does not belong among them by knowing how to speak with fear and trembling. And one should speak [167] out of reverence for greatness, so that it is not forgotten for fear of harm—harm that will surely not come if one speaks in such a way that one knows it is greatness and knows its terrors; and without that, one does not know its greatness either.

THE LONELY PATH

The knight of faith gives up the universal, cannot be understood, and is kept sleepless.

DANISH

SKS 4.167 Lad os saa lidt nærmere overveie Nøden og Angesten i Troens Paradox. Den tragiske Helt resignerer paa sig selv for at udtrykke det Almene, Troens Ridder resignerer paa det Almene for at blive den Enkelte. Som sagt Alt beroer paa, hvorledes man er stillet. Den, som troer, at det er nemt nok at være den Enkelte, han kan altid være sikker paa, at han ikke er Troens Ridder; thi løse Fugle og landstrygende Genier de ere ikke Troens Mænd. Dennes Ridder derimod veed, at det er herligt at tilhøre det Almene.

Han veed, at det er skjønt og velgjørende, at være den Enkelte, der oversætter sig selv i det Almene, den, der saa at sige selv besørger en reen og ziirlig og saavidt mulig feilfri Udgave af sig selv, læselig for Alle; han veed, at det er vederqvægende, at blive sig selv forstaaelig i det Almene, saaledes, at han forstaaer dette, og at enhver Enkelt, der forstaaer ham, igjen i ham forstaaer det Almene, og begge glæde sig ved det Almenes Tryghed. Han veed, det er skjønt at fødes som den Enkelte, der i det Almene har sit Hjem, sit venlige Blivested, der strax modtager ham med aabne Arme, naar han vil blive i det.

Men han veed tillige, at der høiere end dette snoer sig en eensom Vei, trang og steil; han veed, det er forfærdeligt, at fødes eensomt ud af det Almene, at gaae uden at møde en eneste Vandrer. Han veed meget godt, hvor han er, og hvorledes han forholder sig til Menneskene. Menneskeligt talt er han afsindig og kan ikke gjøre sig forstaaelig for Nogen. Og dog er det at være afsindig det mildeste Udtryk. Betragtes han ikke saaledes, da er han en Hykler, og jo høiere han stiger ad Veien, desto rædsommere en Hykler.

ENGLISH

Let us, then, consider a little more closely the distress and anguish in the paradox of faith. The tragic hero renounces himself in order to express the universal; the knight of faith renounces the universal in order to become the single individual. As has been said, everything depends on where one is placed. Whoever believes it is easy enough to be the single individual can always be sure that he is not a knight of faith; for drifters and vagabond geniuses are not men of faith. The knight of faith, on the contrary, knows that it is glorious to belong to the universal.

He knows that it is beautiful and beneficial to be the single individual who translates himself into the universal, the one who, so to speak, himself prepares a clean, elegant, and as far as possible error-free edition of himself, legible to all; he knows that it is refreshing to become understandable to oneself in the universal, so that he understands it, and every individual who understands him understands the universal in him in turn, and both rejoice in the security of the universal. He knows it is beautiful to be born as the single individual who has his home in the universal, his friendly dwelling place, which at once receives him with open arms whenever he wants to remain in it.

But he also knows that higher up than this there winds a solitary path, narrow and steep; he knows it is terrible to be born in solitude outside the universal, to walk without meeting a single traveler. He knows very well where he is and how he stands in relation to people. Humanly speaking, he is mad and cannot make himself understood by anyone. And yet “mad” is the mildest expression. If he is not regarded that way, then he is a hypocrite,

DANISH

Troens Ridder veed, at det er begeistrende at opgive sig selv for det Almene, at der hører Mod dertil, men at der ogsaa er en Tryghed deri, netop fordi det er for det Almene; han veed, at det er herligt at blive forstaaet af enhver Ædel, og saaledes, at Betragteren selv forædles derved. Dette veed han, og han føler sig ligesom bunden, han kunde ønske, at det var denne Opgave, der var sat ham.

Saaledes kunde Abraham vel af og til have ønsket, at Opgaven var at elske Isaak som det sig en Fader hør og bør, forstaaelig for Alle, uforglemmelig i Tiderne; han kunde ønske, at det var Opgaven at offre Isaak for det Almene, at han kunde [168] begeistre Fædre til berømmelig Daad – og han forfærdedes næsten ved Tanken om, at saadanne Ønsker for ham kun ere Anfægtelser, og maae behandles som saadanne; thi han veed, det er en eensom Vei, han betræder, og at han Intet udretter for det Almene, men selv kun forsøges og prøves. Eller hvad udrettede Abraham for det Almene? Lad mig tale menneskeligt derom, ret menneskeligt! Han bruger 70 Aar for at faae en Alderdoms Søn.

SKS 4.168 Hvad Andre faae hurtigt nok og længe have Glæde af, det bruger han 70 Aar til; og hvorfor? fordi han prøves og fristes. Er det ikke Afsindighed! Men Abraham troede, og kun Sara vaklede og fik ham til at tage Hagar til Medhustrue; men derfor maatte han ogsaa jage hende bort. Han faaer Isaak – da skal han atter prøves. Han vidste, det er herligt at udtrykke det Almene, herligt at leve med Isaak. Men det er ikke Opgaven. Han vidste, det er kongeligt at offre en saadan Søn for det Almene, han selv skulde have fundet Hvile deri, og Alle skulde have hvilet berømmende i hans Daad, som Vokalen hviler i sit Hvilebogstav; men det er ikke Opgaven – han prøves.

Hiin romerske Feldtherre, der er berømt ved sit Tilnavn Cunctator, han standsede Fjenden ved sin Nølen – men hvad er dog Abraham ikke for en Nøler i Sammenligning med ham – men han frelser ikke Staten. Dette er Indholdet af 130 Aar. Hvo kan holde det ud, skulde ikke hans Samtid, hvis der kunde være Tale om en saadan,

ENGLISH

and the higher he climbs on the path, the more dreadful a hypocrite.

The knight of faith knows that it is inspiring to give oneself up for the universal, that it takes courage, but that there is also a security in it, precisely because it is for the universal; he knows that it is glorious to be understood by every noble mind, and in such a way that the one who beholds is himself ennobled by it. This he knows, and he feels as if bound; he could wish that this were the task that had been set him.

So Abraham might now and then have wished that the task were to love Isaac as befits a father, understandable to all, unforgettable through the ages; he could wish that the task were to sacrifice Isaac for the universal, so that he might [168] inspire fathers to glorious deeds—and he is almost horrified at the thought that for him such wishes are only spiritual trials and must be treated as such; for he knows that it is a solitary path he walks, and that he accomplishes nothing for the universal but is himself only tried and tested. Or what did Abraham accomplish for the universal? Let me speak humanly about it, really humanly! He spends seventy years getting a son in his old age.

What others get quickly enough and enjoy for a long time, he spends seventy years on; and why? Because he is being tested and tempted. Isn't that madness! But Abraham had faith, and only Sarah wavered and got him to take Hagar as a concubine; but for that very reason he also had to drive her away. He gets Isaac—then he is to be tested again. He knew that it is glorious to express the universal, glorious to live with Isaac. But that is not the task. He knew that it is kingly to sacrifice such a son for the universal; he himself would have found rest in that, and all would have rested, praising, in his deed, as the vowel rests in its quiescent letter; but that is not the task—he is being tested.[5]

That Roman general famous by the surname Cunctator [the Delayer] stopped the enemy by his delaying—but what a delayer Abraham is compared with him!—yet he does not save the state. This is the content of 130 years. Who can bear it? Would not his contemporaries, if there could be

5 Hagar: Genesis 16 and 21. In Hebrew grammar a "quiescent letter" is a silent consonant in which a vowel is said to rest.

DANISH

sige: »det er en evig Nølen med Abraham; endelig fik han en Søn, det varede længe nok, saa vil han offre ham – er han ikke sindssvag?

Og kunde han endda forklare, hvorfor han vil det, men altid er det en Prøvelse.« Mere kunde Abraham heller ikke forklare; thi hans Liv er som en Bog, der er lagt under guddommeligt Beslag, og som ikke bliver publici juris.

Dette er det Forfærdelige. Den, som ikke seer dette, han kan altid være sikker paa, at han ikke er nogen Troens Ridder, men den, som seer det, han skal ikke ville negte, at selv den mest forsøgte tragiske Helt han gaaer som i en Dands i Sammenligning med Troens Ridder, der kun kommer langsomt og krybende frem. Og naar han har indseet dette og forvisset sig om, at han ikke har Mod til at forstaae det, da skal han vel ane den vidunderlige Herlighed, som hiin Ridder opnaaer, at han bliver Guds Fortrolige, Herrens Ven, at jeg skal tale ret menneskeligt, at han siger Du til Gud i Himlene, medens selv den tragiske Helt kun tiltaler ham i 3die Person.

SKS 4.169 Den tragiske Helt er snart færdig, og har snart udstridt, han gjør den uendelige Bevægelse og er nu betrygget i det Almene. Troens Ridder derimod holdes søvnløs; thi han prøves bestandig, og i ethvert Øieblik er der en Mulighed af at kunne vende angrende tilbage til det Almene, og denne Mulighed kan ligesaa godt være en Anfægtelse som Sandhed. Oplysning derom kan han ikke hente hos noget Menneske; thi saa er han udenfor Paradoxet.

Troens Ridder har da først og fremmest Lidenskab til i et eneste Moment at concentrere hele det Ethiske, han bryder, at han kan give sig selv den Forvisning, at han virkelig elsker Isaak af sin ganske Sjæl*. Kan han ikke det, saa ligger han i Anfægtelse. Dernæst har han Lidenskab til i et Nu at tage hele denne Forvisning frem, og det saaledes, at den er ligesaa fuldgyldig som i det første Øieblik. Kan han ikke det, saa kommer han ikke af Stedet; thi saa maa han bestandig begynde forfra. Den tragiske Helt concentrerer ogsaa det Ethiske, han teleologisk gik ud over, i eet Moment, men han har i denne Henseende Tilhold i det Almene.

ENGLISH

any talk of such, say: "Abraham is forever dawdling; at last he got a son—it took long enough—and now he wants to sacrifice him; is he not out of his mind?[6]

And if only he could explain why he wants to—but it is always a trial." Nor could Abraham explain any more than that; for his life is like a book placed under divine seizure, which never becomes publici juris [public property].

This is the terrible. Whoever does not see it can always be sure that he is no knight of faith; but whoever does see it will not deny that even the most sorely tried tragic hero walks as if in a dance compared with the knight of faith, who advances only slowly, crawling. And when he has seen this and assured himself that he lacks the courage to understand it, he will surely have an inkling of the wondrous glory that knight attains: that he becomes God's confidant, the Lord's friend; that—to speak quite humanly—he says "you" to God in heaven, while even the tragic hero addresses him only in the third person.[7]

The tragic hero is soon finished and has soon fought his fight; he makes the infinite movement and is now secure in the universal. The knight of faith, on the other hand, is kept sleepless; for he is constantly being tested, and at every moment there is the possibility of turning back repentant to the universal, and this possibility may just as well be a spiritual trial as the truth. He cannot get light on this from any human being; for then he is outside the paradox.

The knight of faith, then, has first and foremost the passion to concentrate in one single moment the whole of the ethical that he violates, so that he can give himself the assurance that he really loves Isaac with his whole soul*. If he cannot do that, he is in spiritual trial. Next, he has the passion to call up this whole assurance in an instant, and in such a way that it is just as fully valid as in the first moment. If he cannot do that, he never gets off the spot; for then he must always start over from the beginning. The tragic hero also concentrates in one moment the ethical that he teleologically

6 Quintus Fabius Maximus "Cunctator" (d. 203 BC), who wore down Hannibal by avoiding pitched battle.
7 Abraham as God's friend: Isaiah 41:8, James 2:23. Danish, like German, distinguishes the intimate "du" from formal address; Kierkegaard means the intimate form.

DANISH

Troens Ridder har kun ene og alene sig selv, og deri ligger det Forfærdelige. De fleste Mennesker leve i en ethisk Forpligtelse saaledes, at de lade hver Dag have sin Sorg, men de komme da heller aldrig [170] til denne lidenskabelige Concentration, denne energiske Bevidsthed. Til at faae denne kan i en vis Forstand det Almene være den tragiske Helt behjælpeligt, men Troens Ridder er ene om Alt. Den tragiske Helt gjør det og finder Hvile i det Almene, Troens Ridder holdes bestandig i Spænding. Agamemnon opgiver Iphigenia og har derved fundet Hvile i det Almene, skrider nu til at offre hende.

SKS 4.170 Har Agamemnon ikke gjort Bevægelsen, har hans Sjæl i det afgjørende Øieblik, istedenfor lidenskabelig Concentration, været fortabt i almindeligt Pjat om, at han havde flere Døttre, og at der endnu vielleicht kunde skee das Außerordentliche – saa er han naturligviis ikke Helt, men Hospitalslem. Heltens Concentration har Abraham ogsaa, om den end i ham er langt vanskeligere, da han slet intet Tilhold har i det Almene, men han gjør endnu en Bevægelse, hvorved han samler sin Sjæl tilbage paa Vidunderet. Har Abraham ikke gjort det, saa er han kun en Agamemnon, forsaavidt man da ellers kan forklare, hvorledes det lader sig forsvare at ville offre Isaak, naar man dermed ikke gavner det Almene.

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went beyond, but in this respect he has a support in the universal.

The knight of faith has himself alone and only himself, and therein lies the terrible. Most people live in an ethical obligation in such a way that they let each day have its sorrow; but then they also never [170] arrive at this passionate concentration, this energetic consciousness. In a certain sense the universal can help the tragic hero to attain it, but the knight of faith is alone in everything. The tragic hero does it and finds rest in the universal; the knight of faith is kept in constant tension. Agamemnon gives up Iphigenia and has thereby found rest in the universal; now he proceeds to sacrifice her.[8]

If Agamemnon has not made the movement—if in the decisive moment his soul, instead of passionate concentration, has been lost in the usual twaddle about his having several daughters and how vielleicht [perhaps] das Außerordentliche [the extraordinary] might still happen—then of course he is not a hero but a case for the poorhouse. Abraham too has the hero's concentration, though in him it is far more difficult, since he has no support at all in the universal; but he makes one more movement, by which he gathers his soul back upon the miracle. If Abraham has not done that, he is only an Agamemnon—insofar, that is, as one can otherwise explain how it can be defended to want to sacrifice Isaac when doing so does not benefit the universal.

8 "Each day have its sorrow" echoes Matthew 6:34.

9

* Forskjellen mellem Collisionen, saaledes som denne er sat den tragiske Helt og Troens Ridder, vil jeg endnu engang belyse. Den tragiske Helt forvisser sig om, at den ethiske Forpligtelse er totalt tilstede i ham derved, at han forvandler den til et Ønske. Agamemnon kan saaledes sige: dette er mig Beviset for, at jeg ikke krænker min Faderpligt, at det, der er min Pligt, er mit eneste Ønske. Vi have altsaa her Ønske og Pligt ligeoverfor hinanden. Det Lykkelige i Livet er, at det falder sammen, at mit Ønske er min Pligt og omvendt, og de fleste Menneskers Opgave i Livet er netop at blive i deres Pligt, og at forvandle den ved deres Begeistring til deres Ønske.

* I will shed light once more on the difference between the collision as it is posed for the tragic hero and as it is posed for the knight of faith. The tragic hero assures himself that the ethical obligation is totally present in him by transforming it into a wish. Thus Agamemnon can say: "For me the proof that I am not violating my duty as a father is that what is my duty is my only wish." So here we have wish and duty facing each other. The happy thing in life is when the two coincide, when my wish is my duty and vice versa, and the task of most people in life is precisely to remain within their duty and, by their enthusiasm, to transform it into their wish.

10

Den tragiske Helt opgiver sit Ønske for at fuldkomme sin Pligt. For Troens Ridder er Ønske og Pligt ogsaa identiske, men der fordres, at han skal opgive begge Dele. Naar han da vil resignere ved at opgive sit Ønske, da finder han ikke Hvile; thi det er jo hans Pligt. Vil han blive i Pligten og i sit Ønske, da bliver han ikke Troens Ridder; thi den absolute Pligt fordrede netop, at han skulde opgive den. Den tragiske Helt fik et høiere Udtryk af Pligt, men ikke en absolut Pligt.

The tragic hero gives up his wish in order to fulfill his duty. For the knight of faith, too, wish and duty are identical, but he is required to give up both. So if he wants to resign himself by giving up his wish, he finds no rest; for it is, after all, his duty. If he wants to remain in his duty and in his wish, he does not become the knight of faith; for the absolute duty required precisely that he give it up. The tragic hero attained a higher expression of duty, but not an absolute duty.

TRUE AND FALSE KNIGHTS

Sectarians try to share the paradox; the true knight of faith is a witness, never a teacher.

DANISH

Om den Enkelte nu virkelig ligger i en Anfægtelse eller han er Troens Ridder, det kan kun den Enkelte selv afgjøre. Imidlertid lod der sig dog ud af Paradoxet construere nogle Kjendetegn, som ogsaa den kan forstaae, der ikke er deri. Den sande Troens Ridder er altid den absolute Isolation, den uægte er secterisk. Dette er et Forsøg paa at springe af fra Paradoxets trange Vei og blive en tragisk Helt for godt Kjøb. Den tragiske Helt han udtrykker det Almene og offrer sig for dette. Isteden derfor har den secteriske Mester Jackel et Privattheater, nogle gode Venner og Kammerater, der omtrent repræsentere det Almene ligesaa godt som Stokkemændene i Gulddaasen repræsentere Retfærdigheden.

Troens Ridder derimod han er Paradoxet, han er den Enkelte, absolut kun den Enkelte uden alle Connexioner og Vidtløftigheder. Dette er det Forfærdelige, som den secteriske Skrælling ikke kan udholde. Istedenfor nemlig deraf at lære, at han ikke er istand til at gjøre det Store, og da ligefrem at tilstaae dette, Noget jeg naturligviis ikke kan andet end billige, da det er, hvad jeg selv gjør, mener Stymperen, at han ved at forene sig med nogle andre Stympere skal kunne gjøre det. Men det gaaer aldeles ikke an; i Aandens Verden taales intet Snyderi.

Et Dusin Secterikere tage hinanden under Armen, de kjende slet Intet til de eensomme Anfægtelser, der vente Troens Ridder, og som han ikke [171] tør flye, netop fordi det var endnu forfærdeligere, om han formastelig trængte sig frem. Secterikerne overdøve hinanden ved Støi og Larm, holde Angesten borte ved deres Skrig, og et saadant hujende Dyrehaugsselskab mener at storme Himlen og mener at gaae ad samme Vei som Troens Ridder, der i Universets Eensomhed aldrig hører nogen menneskelig Røst, men gaaer ene med sit forfærdelige Ansvar.

SKS 4.171 Troens Ridder han er alene anviist sig selv, han føler Smerten af, at han ikke kan gjøre sig forstaaelig for

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Whether the single individual is really in spiritual trial or is a knight of faith, only the single individual himself can decide. Nevertheless, some distinguishing marks can be constructed from the paradox that even someone who is not in it can understand. The true knight of faith is always absolute isolation; the false one is sectarian. Sectarianism is an attempt to jump off the narrow path of the paradox and become a tragic hero on the cheap. The tragic hero expresses the universal and sacrifices himself for it. Instead of that, the sectarian Master Jackel has a private theater, a few good friends and comrades who represent the universal about as well as the jurymen in *The Gold Snuffbox* represent justice.[11]

The knight of faith, on the other hand, is the paradox; he is the single individual, absolutely nothing but the single individual, without any connections or complications. This is the terrible thing that the sectarian weakling cannot endure. For instead of learning from it that he is not capable of doing the great thing, and then plainly admitting it—something I naturally cannot but approve of, since it is what I do myself—the bungler thinks that by joining up with some other bunglers he will be able to do it. But that will not do at all; in the world of spirit no cheating is tolerated.

A dozen sectarians go arm in arm; they know nothing at all of the solitary spiritual trials that await the knight of faith and that he [171] dare not flee, precisely because it would be still more terrible if he presumptuously forced his way forward. The sectarians deafen one another with noise and din, keep anguish at bay with their shouting, and such a whooping Deer Park crowd thinks it is storming heaven, thinks it is going the same way as the knight of faith—who in the solitude of the universe never hears a human voice but walks alone with his terrible responsibility.[12]

The knight of faith is thrown back on himself alone; he feels the pain of not being able to make

11 Master Jackel is the clown of Danish puppet shows. *Stokkemænd* were lay jurymen; *Gulddaasen* is a stage comedy of the day.

DANISH

Andre, men han føler ingen forfængelig Lyst til at ville veilede Andre. Smerten er ham Forvisningen, den forfængelige Lyst kjender han ikke, dertil er hans Sjæl for alvorlig. Den uægte Ridder forraader sig let ved dette Mesterskab, han i et Øieblik har erhvervet. Han fatter slet ikke, hvorom Talen er, at forsaavidt en anden Enkelt skal gaae den samme Vei, maa han aldeles paa samme Maade blive den Enkelte og trænger da ikke til Nogens Veiledning, mindst til Een, der vil paanøde sig. Her springer man atter af, man kan ikke udholde Uforstaaelighedens Martyrium, og istedenfor dette vælger man da bequemt nok Mesterskabets verdslige Beundring.

Den sande Troens Ridder han er Vidne, aldrig Lærer, og deri ligger det dybe Humane, der er noget mere bevendt end denne pjankede Deeltagelse for andre Menneskers Vee og Vel, der hædres under Navn af Sympathi, medens den dog ikke er andet end Forfængelighed. Den der kun vil være Vidne, han bekjender derved, at intet Menneske, end ikke det ringeste, behøver et andet Menneskes Deeltagelse, eller skal nedværdiges derved, for at den Anden kan hæves.

Men som han selv ikke vandt, hvad han vandt, for godt Kjøb, saa sælger han det heller ikke ud for godt Kjøb, han er ikke ussel nok til at tage Menneskers Beundring og til Vederlag give dem sin tause Foragt, han veed, at hvad der i Sandhed er Stort, det er lige tilgængeligt for Alle.

Enten er der da en absolut Pligt mod Gud, og er der en saadan, da er den det beskrevne Paradox, at den Enkelte som den Enkelte er høiere end det Almene og som den Enkelte staaer i et absolut Forhold til det Absolute – eller ogsaa har der aldrig været Tro til, fordi den altid har været til, eller ogsaa er Abraham tabt, eller ogsaa maa man forklare Stedet i Luc. XIV saaledes som hiin smagfulde Exeget gjorde det, og paa samme Maade forklare de tilsvarende Steder, og de lignende.

ENGLISH

himself understood by others, but he feels no vain desire to guide others. The pain is his assurance; the vain desire he does not know—his soul is too earnest for that. The false knight readily gives himself away by the mastery he has acquired in an instant. He simply does not grasp what is at issue: that insofar as another individual is to walk the same path, he must become the single individual in exactly the same way, and then he needs no one's guidance, least of all from someone who wants to force himself on him. Here again people jump off; they cannot bear the martyrdom of not being understood, and instead they choose, conveniently enough, the worldly admiration that mastery earns.

The true knight of faith is a witness, never a teacher, and therein lies the deep humanity in him, which is worth a good deal more than that silly concern for other people's weal and woe that is honored under the name of sympathy, while it is really nothing but vanity. Whoever wants only to be a witness thereby confesses that no human being, not even the least, needs another human being's concern, or should be demeaned by it so that the other may be raised up.

But just as he did not win what he won on the cheap, neither does he sell it off on the cheap; he is not base enough to take people's admiration and give them his silent contempt in return; he knows that what is truly great is equally accessible to all.

Either there is an absolute duty to God—and if there is, it is the paradox described: that the single individual as the single individual is higher than the universal and as the single individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute—or else faith has never existed, because it has always existed; or else Abraham is lost; or else one must explain the passage in Luke 14 the way that tasteful exegete did, and explain the corresponding passages, and similar ones, in the same way.[13]

12 The Deer Park (Dyrehaven, with its fairground Dyrehavsbakken) north of Copenhagen was a popular place for rowdy outings.
13 Luke 14:26: whoever comes to Jesus and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, cannot be his disciple. The exegete was discussed earlier in Problema II.

Problema III

Was Abraham ethically defensible in keeping silent about his purpose before Sarah, before Eliezer, and before Isaac?
Hiddenness and disclosure, from aesthetic tales to Abraham's last word.

VAR DET ETHISK FORSVARLIGT AF ABRAHAM, AT HAN FORTIEDE SIT FOREHAVENDE FOR SARA, FOR ELIESER, FOR ISAAK?

DANISH

SKS 4.172 Det Ethiske er som saadant det Almene, som det Almene er det igjen det Aabenbare. Den Enkelte er som umiddelbar sandselig og sjælelig bestemmet den Skjulte. Hans ethiske Opgave er da den, at vikle sig ud af sin Skjulthed og blive aabenbar i det Almene. Hver Gang han da vil forblive i det Skjulte, da forsynder han sig og ligger i Anfægtelse, hvoraf han kun kommer ud ved at aabenbare sig.

Her staae vi atter ved det samme Punkt. Er der ikke en Skjulthed, som har sin Grund deri, at den Enkelte som den Enkelte er høiere end det Almene, saa lader Abrahams Adfærd sig ikke forsvare; thi han oversaae de ethiske Melleminstantser. Er der derimod en saadan Skjulthed, saa staae vi ved Paradoxet, der ikke lader sig mediere, da det netop beroer derpaa, at den Enkelte som den Enkelte er høiere end det Almene, men det Almene er netop Mediationen. Den hegelske Philosophi antager ingen berettiget Skjulthed, ingen berettiget Incommensurabilitet. Den er da i Conseqvents med sig selv, naar den fordrer Aabenbarelse, men den er ikke paa det Rene, naar den vil ansee Abraham for Troens Fader og tale om Troen.

Troen er nemlig ikke den første Umiddelbarhed, men en senere. Den første Umiddelbarhed er det Æsthetiske, og her kan den hegelske Philosophi vel have Ret. Men Troen er ikke det Æsthetiske eller ogsaa har Troen aldrig været til, fordi den altid har været til.

ENGLISH

The ethical as such is the universal; as the universal it is in turn the disclosed. The single individual, qualified immediately as a creature of senses and psyche, is the hidden. His ethical task, then, is to work himself free of his hiddenness and become disclosed in the universal. Whenever he wants to remain in hiddenness, he sins and is in spiritual trial, from which he can emerge only by disclosing himself.[1]

Here we stand again at the same point. If there is not a hiddenness that has its ground in the single individual's being, as the single individual, higher than the universal, then Abraham's conduct cannot be defended; for he disregarded the intermediate ethical authorities. If, on the other hand, there is such a hiddenness, then we stand before the paradox, which cannot be mediated, since it rests precisely on this: that the single individual as the single individual is higher than the universal—but the universal is precisely mediation. Hegelian philosophy assumes no justified hiddenness, no justified incommensurability. It is consistent with itself, then, when it demands disclosure; but it is not clear about itself when it wants to regard Abraham as the father of faith and to talk about faith.

For faith is not the first immediacy but a later one. The first immediacy is the aesthetic, and here Hegelian philosophy may well be right. But faith is not the aesthetic—or else faith has never existed, because it has always existed.

1 "The disclosed" and "the hidden" render *det Aabenbare* and *det Skjulte*; *Aabenbarelse* is "disclosure" and *Skjulthed* "hiddenness."

THE INTERESTING

Aesthetics rewards concealment and ethics demands disclosure, as examples from drama show.

DANISH

Det bliver det Bedste her at betragte hele Sagen reent æsthetisk og til [173] den Ende at gaae ind i en æsthetisk Overveielse, i hvilken jeg vil bede Læseren momentviis ganske at hengive sig, medens jeg, for at bidrage Mit dertil, vil modificere min Fremstilling i Forhold til Gjenstandene. Den Kategori, jeg lidt nærmere vil betragte, er: det *Interessante,* en Kategori, der fornemlig i vor Tid, netop fordi Tiden lever in discrimine rerum, har faaet stor Betydning; thi den er egentlig Vendepunktets Kategori.

SKS 4.173 Man skulde derfor ikke, som stundom skeer, efter selv pro virili at have elsket den, lade haant om den, fordi den voxede fra Een, men man skulde heller ikke være altfor graadig efter den; thi vist er det, at det, at blive interessant, eller at Eens Liv er interessant, ikke er en Opgave for Kunstflid, men et skjebnesvangert Privilegium, der som ethvert Privilegium i Aandens Verden kun kjøbes i dyb Smerte. Saaledes var Socrates det interessanteste Menneske, der har levet, hans Liv det interessanteste, der er blevet ført, men denne Existents var ham anviist af Guden, og forsaavidt han selv maatte erhverve den, da har han ogsaa ikke været ukjendt med Møie og Smerte.

At ville tage en saadan Existents forfængelig, sømmer sig ikke for Nogen, der tænker alvorligere over Livet, og dog er det ikke sjeldent i vor Tid, at man seer Exempler paa en saadan Stræben. Det Interessante er forøvrigt en Grændsekategori, et Confinium mellem Æsthetiken og Ethiken. Forsaavidt maa Overveielsen bestandig streife over paa Ethikens Gebeet, medens den for at kunne faae Betydning maa med æsthetisk Inderlighed og Concupiscents gribe Problemet. Sligt indlader i vor Tid Ethiken sig sjeldnere paa. Grunden skal være, at der ikke kan blive Plads dertil i Systemet.

Saa kunde man jo gjøre det i Monographier, og desuden, vil man ikke gjøre det vidtløftigt, saa kan man gjøre det kort, og dog opnaae det Samme, dersom man nemlig har Prædikatet i sin Magt; thi eet eller to Prædikater kan forraade en heel Verden. Skulde der i Systemet heller ikke være Plads til saadanne Smaaord?

ENGLISH

The best thing here will be to consider the whole matter purely aesthetically and, to [173] that end, to enter into an aesthetic deliberation, to which I would ask the reader to surrender himself entirely for the moment, while I, to contribute my share, will adjust my presentation to suit the subject matter. The category I want to consider a little more closely is the *interesting*, a category that has gained great importance especially in our time, precisely because the age lives in discrimine rerum [at a critical turning point]; for it is really the category of the turning point.

One should therefore not, as sometimes happens, after having loved it pro virili [with all one's might], scorn it because one has outgrown it; but neither should one be too greedy for it. For this much is certain: to become interesting, or to have one's life be interesting, is not a task for artful industry but a fateful privilege, which, like every privilege in the world of spirit, is bought only with deep pain. Thus Socrates was the most interesting man who ever lived, his life the most interesting ever led; but this existence was assigned to him by the god, and insofar as he himself had to acquire it, he was no stranger to toil and pain either.

To want to take on such an existence out of vanity befits no one who thinks more earnestly about life, and yet in our time one not infrequently sees examples of such striving. The interesting, moreover, is a border category, a confinium [borderland] between aesthetics and ethics. To that extent the deliberation must constantly stray over into the territory of ethics, while in order to be significant it must seize the problem with aesthetic inwardness and concupiscence. Ethics rarely involves itself in such things nowadays. The reason is supposed to be that there can be no room for it in the System.

Then one could do it in monographs; and besides, if one does not want to be long-winded, one can be brief and still achieve the same thing—provided, that is, one has the predicate in one's power; for one or two predicates can betray a whole world.

DANISH

Aristoteles siger i hans udødelige Poetik: δυο μεν ουν του μυθου μερη, περι ταυτ' εστι, περιπετεια και αναγνωρισις (cfr. cap. 11). Det er naturligt kun det andet Moment, der her beskæftiger mig: αναγνωρισις, Gjenkjendelsen. Overalt hvor der kan være Tale om en Gjenkjendelse, der er eo ipso Tale om en foregaaende Skjulthed. Som da Gjenkjendelsen bliver det Løsende, det Relaxerende, saaledes er Skjultheden det Spændende i det dramatiske Liv.

Hvad Aristoteles i det Foregaaende af [174] samme Capitel udvikler angaaende Tragediens forskjellige Værd alt i Forhold til som περιπετεια og αναγνωρισις carambolere, samt om den enkelte og den dobbelte Gjenkjendelse, kan jeg her ikke tage Hensyn til, om det end frister ved sin Inderlighed og sin stille Fortabelse især den, der længe nok blev trættet af Oversigtsmændenes overfladiske Alvidenhed. En almindeligere Bemærkning maa her finde sin Plads. I den græske Tragedie er Skjultheden (og som en Følge deraf Gjenkjendelsen) en episk Rest, der har sin Grund i et Fatum, i hvilket den dramatiske Handling forsvinder, hvorfra denne har sit dunkle gaadefulde Udspring. Deraf kommer det, at den Virkning, en græsk Tragedie frembringer, har en Lighed med Indtrykket af en Marmor-Statue, der mangler Øiets Magt.

SKS 4.174 Den græske Tragedie er blind. Derfor hører der en vis Abstraktion til for ret at lade sig paavirke af den. En Søn myrder sin Fader, men først bag efter faaer han at vide, at det er hans Fader. En Søster vil offre sin Broder, men i det afgjørende Øieblik faaer hun det at vide. Dette Tragiske kan mindre beskæftige vor *reflecterende* Tid. Det nyere Drama har opgivet Skjebnen, har dramatisk emanciperet sig, er seende, skuer ind i sig selv, optager Skjebnen i sin dramatiske Bevidsthed. Skjultheden og Aabenbarelsen er da Heltens fri Gjerning, for hvilken han er ansvarlig.

Ogsaa i det nyere Drama hører Gjenkjendelsen og Skjultheden med som et væsentligt Element. At anføre Exempler herpaa vilde være for vidtløftigt. Jeg er høflig nok til at antage, at Enhver i vor Tid, der er saa æsthetisk

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Might there not be room in the System for such little words either?

Aristotle says in his immortal Poetics: δυο μεν ουν του μυθου μερη, περι ταυτ' εστι, περιπετεια και αναγνωρισις [So two parts of the plot turn on these things: reversal and recognition] (cf. ch. 11). Naturally it is only the second element that concerns me here: αναγνωρισις, recognition. Wherever there can be talk of a recognition, there is eo ipso talk of a previous hiddenness. Just as recognition is the resolving, the releasing element, so hiddenness is the element of tension in dramatic life.

What Aristotle develops in the earlier part of [174] the same chapter about the differing value of tragedies according to how περιπετεια [reversal] and αναγνωρισις [recognition] carom off each other, and about single and double recognition, I cannot take into account here, however much it tempts by its inwardness and quiet absorption—especially someone who has long enough been wearied by the superficial omniscience of the purveyors of overviews. A more general remark must find its place here. In Greek tragedy, hiddenness (and consequently recognition) is an epic remnant, grounded in a fate in which the dramatic action disappears and from which it has its dark, enigmatic origin. That is why the effect a Greek tragedy produces resembles the impression of a marble statue that lacks the power of the eye.

Greek tragedy is blind. That is why a certain abstraction is needed to be properly affected by it. A son murders his father, but only afterward learns that it is his father. A sister is about to sacrifice her brother, but at the decisive moment she learns who he is. Tragedy of this kind can occupy our *reflective* age less. Modern drama has given up fate, has emancipated itself dramatically, is sighted, looks into itself, takes fate up into its dramatic consciousness. Hiddenness and disclosure are then the hero's free act, for which he is responsible.[2]

In modern drama, too, recognition and hiddenness belong as an essential element. Giving examples of this would take too long. I am polite enough to assume that everyone in our time—be-

2 Oedipus kills his father Laius unknowingly; in Euripides's *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, Iphigenia is about to sacrifice her brother Orestes when she recognizes him.

DANISH

vellystig, saa potent og opildnet, at den undfanger lige saa let som Agerhønen, der efter Aristoteles Udsagn har nok af at høre Hannens Røst eller dens Flugt over Hovedet paa den; jeg antager, at Enhver, blot han hører det Ord »Skjulthed«, let vil kunne ryste en halv Snees Romaner og Comedier ud af Ærmet. Jeg kan desaarsag fatte mig kort og saaledes strax blot antyde en almindeligere Bemærkning.

Dersom den, der leger Skjul og derved bringer den dramatiske Gjæring i Stykket, skjuler noget Nonsens, saa faae vi en Comedie, staaer han derimod i Forhold til Ideen, da kan han nærme sig til at blive en tragisk Helt. Her blot et Exempel paa det Komiske. En Mand sminker sig og gaaer med Paryk. Samme Mand vil gjerne gjøre Lykke hos det smukke Kjøn, han er sikker nok paa Seiren ved Hjælp af Sminken og Parykken, der ubetinget gjør ham uimodstaaelig. Han fanger en Pige og er paa Lykkens [175] Tinde.

SKS 4.175 Nu kommer Humlen; kan han tilstaae det, taber han ikke hele sin bedaarende Magt, naar han viser sig som en slet og ret ja endog en skaldet Mandsperson, taber han ikke derved igjen den Elskede. – Skjultheden er hans fri Handling, for hvilken ogsaa Æsthetiken gjør ham ansvarlig. Denne Videnskab er ingen Ven af skaldede Hyklere, den prisgiver ham for Latteren. Dette maa være nok for blot at antyde hvad jeg mener; det Comiske kan ikke være Gjenstand for denne Undersøgelses Interesse.

Veien, som jeg har at gaae, er at gjennemføre Skjultheden dialektisk gjennem Æsthetiken og Ethiken; thi det gjelder om, at den æsthetiske Skjulthed og Paradoxet vise sig i deres absolute Forskjellighed.

Et Par Exempler. En Pige er hemmelig forelsket i Een, uden at de dog definitivt have tilstaaet hinanden deres Kjærlighed. Forældrene tvinge hende til at ægte en Anden (der kan desuden være et Pietets-Hensyn, der bestemmer hende), hun adlyder Forældrene, hun skjuler sin Kjærlighed »for ikke at gjøre den Anden ulykkelig, og Ingen skal nogensinde faae at vide, hvad hun lider.« – En Ungersvend kan ved et eneste Ord komme i Besiddelse af Gjenstanden for sine Længsler og sine urolige Drømme. Dette lille Ord vil imidlertid compromittere, ja maaskee (hvo veed det?)

ENGLISH

ing so aesthetically voluptuous, so potent and aroused that they conceive as easily as the partridge, which according to Aristotle needs only to hear the cock's voice or feel him fly overhead—I assume that everyone, merely on hearing the word "hiddenness," can easily shake ten or so novels and comedies out of his sleeve. I can therefore be brief, and simply indicate a more general remark at once.[3]

If the one who plays at hiding, and thereby brings the dramatic ferment into the play, is hiding some nonsense, we get a comedy; if, on the other hand, he stands in relation to the idea, he may come close to being a tragic hero. Here just one example of the comic. A man puts on makeup and wears a wig. This same man would like to make a conquest of the fair sex; he is quite sure of victory with the help of the makeup and the wig, which make him absolutely irresistible. He captures a girl and is at the [175] pinnacle of happiness.

Now comes the rub: if he can confess it, will he not lose all his bewitching power? When he shows himself to be a plain, ordinary—indeed even a bald—man, will he not then lose his beloved again?—The hiddenness is his free act, for which aesthetics too holds him responsible. This science is no friend of bald hypocrites; it abandons him to laughter. This must suffice merely to indicate what I mean; the comic cannot be the object of this inquiry's interest.

The path I have to take is to carry hiddenness dialectically through aesthetics and ethics; for the point is that aesthetic hiddenness and the paradox should show themselves in their absolute difference.

A couple of examples. A girl is secretly in love with someone, though they have not definitively confessed their love to each other. Her parents force her to marry another (there may, besides, be a consideration of filial piety that decides her); she obeys her parents, she hides her love "so as not to make the other unhappy, and no one shall ever know what she suffers."—A young man could, with a single word, come into possession of the object of his longings and his restless dreams. This little

3 Aristotle, *History of Animals* 5.5 (541a), on partridges conceiving at the sound or flight of the male.

DANISH

ødelægge en heel Familie, han beslutter høimodigen at blive i sit Skjul »Pigen skal aldrig faae det at vide, at hun maaskee kan blive lykkelig ved en Andens Haand.« Skade at dette Par Mennesker, der begge to hver især ere skjulte for de respektive Elskede, ogsaa ere skjulte for hinanden, her lod sig ellers tilveiebringe en mærkværdig høiere Eenhed. – Deres Skjulthed er en fri Gjerning, for hvilken de ogsaa ere Æsthetiken ansvarlige. Æsthetiken er imidlertid en høflig og følsom Videnskab, der veed flere Udveie end nogen Assistentshusforvalter. Hvad gjør den da? Den gjør Alt muligt for de Elskende.

Ved Hjælp af et Tilfælde faae de respektive Makkere i det projecterede Ægteskab et Vink om den anden Parts høimodige Beslutning, det kommer til en Forklaring, de faae hinanden, og tillige Rang med virkelige Helte; thi uagtet de ikke engang have faaet Tid at sove paa deres heltemodige Beslutning, saa betragter Æsthetiken det dog som om de i mange Aar modigen havde gjennemkæmpet deres Forsæt. Æsthetiken bryder sig nemlig ikke stort om Tiden, hvad enten det er Spøg eller Alvor, den gaaer lige hurtig for den.

SKS 4.176 Men Ethiken kjender ikke noget hverken til hiint Tilfælde eller hiin Følsomhed, ikke heller har den saa hurtigt et Begreb om Tiden. Herved faaer Sagen et andet Udseende. Ethiken er ikke god at disputere med, thi den har rene Kategorier. Den beraaber sig ikke paa Erfaringen, der da ogsaa af alle latterlige Ting saa omtrent er den allerlatterligste, og saa langt fra at gjøre en Mand klog, at den snarere gjør ham gal, hvis han intet Høiere kjender end den.

Ethiken har intet Tilfælde, altsaa kommer det ikke til en Forklaring, den spøger ikke med Værdigheder, den lægger et uhyre Ansvar paa de spinkle Heltes Skuldre, den fordømmer det som noget formasteligt ved sin Gjerning at ville spille Forsynet, men den fordømmer ogsaa det ved sin Liden at ville gjøre det. Den byder at troe paa Virkeligheden og at have Mod til at kæmpe med alle Virkelighedens Trængsler fremfor med disse blodløse Lidelser, som man paa eget Ansvar har paataget sig, den advarer mod at troe Forstandens snilde Beregninger, der ere mere troløse end Oraklerne i Oldtiden. Den advarer mod enhver utidig Høimodighed, lad Virkeligheden tage

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word, however, would compromise—indeed perhaps (who knows?)

ruin a whole family; he magnanimously resolves to remain in hiding: "The girl shall never know that she might perhaps find happiness at another's hand." A pity that this pair, each of them hidden from their respective beloved, are also hidden from each other; otherwise a remarkable higher unity could be brought about here.—Their hiddenness is a free act, for which they too are responsible to aesthetics. Aesthetics, however, is a courteous and sentimental science that knows more ways out than any manager of the public pawnshop. So what does it do? It does everything possible for the lovers.[4]

By means of a coincidence the respective partners in the planned marriage get a hint of the other party's magnanimous resolve; it comes to an explanation, they get each other, and rank with real heroes into the bargain; for although they have not even had time to sleep on their heroic resolve, aesthetics nonetheless regards it as if they had courageously fought through their purpose for many years. For aesthetics does not care much about time; whether in jest or in earnest, time passes equally quickly for it.

But ethics knows nothing of that coincidence or that sentimentality, nor does it have so quick a concept of time. This gives the matter a different look. Ethics is not good to argue with, for it has pure categories. It does not appeal to experience—which of all ridiculous things is just about the most ridiculous, and which, far from making a man wise, rather makes him mad if he knows nothing higher than it.

Ethics has no coincidence, so it does not come to an explanation; it does not joke about dignities; it lays an enormous responsibility on the frail heroes' shoulders; it condemns as presumptuous the wish to play providence by one's action, but it also condemns wanting to do so by one's suffering. It bids us believe in actuality and have the courage to fight with all actuality's tribulations rather than with those bloodless sufferings one has taken on at one's own risk; it warns against trusting the clever calculations of the understanding, which

4 The Assistenshus was Copenhagen's public pawnshop and loan office.

DANISH

det, saa er det paa Tide at vise Mod, men saa tilbyder Ethiken selv al mulig Bistand.

Var det imidlertid noget Dybere, der rørte sig i disse Tvende, var der Alvor til at see Opgaven, Alvor til at fange an, saa vil der vel komme noget ud af dem, men Ethiken kan ikke hjelpe dem, den er fornærmet; thi de have en Hemmelighed for den, en Hemmelighed, som de have faaet paa eget An- og Tilsvar.

Æsthetiken fordrede altsaa Skjulthed og belønnede den, Ethiken fordrede Aabenbarelse og straffede Skjultheden.

ENGLISH

are more faithless than the oracles of antiquity. It warns against all untimely magnanimity: leave it to actuality—then it is time to show courage, but then ethics itself offers every possible assistance.

If, however, it was something deeper that stirred in these two, if there was earnestness to see the task, earnestness to take it on, then something will surely come of them; but ethics cannot help them. It is offended; for they have a secret from it, a secret they have taken on at their own risk and on their own account.

Aesthetics, then, demanded hiddenness and rewarded it; ethics demanded disclosure and punished hiddenness.

AGAMEMNON AND IPHIGENIA

The tragic hero must disclose his purpose and face his family's tears.

DANISH

Undertiden fordrer imidlertid Æsthetiken selv Aabenbarelse. Naar Helten hildet i den æsthetiske Illusion mener ved sin Taushed at frelse et andet Menneske, da fordrer den Taushed og belønner den. Naar derimod Helten ved sin Gjerning griber forstyrrende ind i et andet Menneskes Liv, da fordrer den Aabenbarelse. Jeg staaer her ved den tragiske Helt. Jeg vil et Øieblik betragte Euripides's Iphigenia i Aulis. Agamemnon skal offre Iphigenia. Æsthetiken fordrer nu forsaavidt Taushed af Agamemnon, som det vilde være Helten uværdigt at søge Trøst hos noget andet Menneske, ligesom han og af Omsorg for Qvinderne bør skjule det for dem saa længe som muligt.

Paa den anden Side maa Helten netop for at være Helt ogsaa forsøges i den forfærdelige [177] Anfægtelse, som Klytaimnestras og Iphigenias Taarer vil berede ham. Hvad gjør Æsthetiken? Den har en Udvei, den har en gammel Tjener i Beredskab, som aabenbarer Alt for Klytaimnestra. Nu er Alt i sin Orden.

SKS 4.177 Ethiken har imidlertid intet Tilfælde og ingen gammel Tjener ved Haanden. Den æsthetiske Idee modsiger sig selv, saasnart den skal udføres i Virkeligheden. Ethiken fordrer derfor Aabenbarelse. Den tragiske Helt viser netop sit ethiske Mod derved, at han, ikke hildet i nogen

ENGLISH

Sometimes, however, aesthetics itself demands disclosure. When the hero, caught in the aesthetic illusion, thinks that by his silence he will save another person, then it demands silence and rewards it. When, on the other hand, the hero by his action intervenes disruptively in another person's life, then it demands disclosure. Here I have reached the tragic hero. I want to consider Euripides's *Iphigenia in Aulis* for a moment. Agamemnon is to sacrifice Iphigenia. Now aesthetics demands silence of Agamemnon insofar as it would be unworthy of the hero to seek comfort from any other person, just as he also, out of consideration for the women, ought to hide it from them as long as possible.[5]

On the other hand, precisely in order to be a hero, the hero must also be tested in the terrible [177] spiritual trial that the tears of Clytemnestra and Iphigenia will prepare for him. What does aesthetics do? It has a way out: it has an old servant ready who discloses everything to Clytemnestra. Now everything is in order.

Ethics, however, has no coincidence and no old servant at hand. The aesthetic idea contradicts itself as soon as it has to be carried out in actuality. Ethics therefore demands disclosure. The tragic

5 In Euripides's play Agamemnon must sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia so that the Greek fleet can sail for Troy.

DANISH

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æsthetisk Illusion, selv er den, der forkynder Iphigenia sin Skjæbne. Gjør han dette, da er den tragiske Helt Ethikens elskelige Søn, i hvem den haver Velbehagelighed. Tier han, da kan det være fordi han derved troer at gjøre det lettere for Andre, men det kan ogsaa være, fordi han derved gjør det lettere for sig selv. Dog dette veed han sig fri for. Tier han, da paatager han sig som den Enkelte et Ansvar, forsaavidt han overseer et Argument, der kan komme udenfra.

hero shows his ethical courage precisely in this: that he, not caught in any aesthetic illusion, is himself the one who announces to Iphigenia her fate. If he does this, the tragic hero is ethics' beloved son, in whom it is well pleased. If he keeps silent, it may be because he thinks he makes it easier for others that way, but it may also be because he makes it easier for himself. But he knows himself free of that. If he keeps silent, he takes on a responsibility as the single individual, insofar as he disregards an argument that may come from outside.[6]

Dette kan han som tragisk Helt ikke gjøre; thi netop derfor elsker Ethiken ham, fordi han bestandig udtrykker det Almene. Hans Heltegjerning fordrer Mod, men til dette Mod hører ogsaa, at han ikke unddrager sig nogen Argumentation. Nu er det vist, at Taarer er et forfærdeligt argumentum ad hominem, og der var vel den, hvem Intet rørte, som dog Taarer bevægede. I Stykket faaer Iphigenia Lov at græde, i Virkeligheden bør der indrømmes hende som Jephtahs Datter 2 Maaneder til at græde ikke i Eensomhed, men ved Faderens Fødder, og bruge al sin Kunst, »der kun er Taarer,« og snoe sig selv istedenfor en Oliegreen omkring hans Knæe (cfr. v. 1224).

This he cannot do as a tragic hero; for ethics loves him precisely because he constantly expresses the universal. His heroic deed requires courage, but part of this courage is that he does not evade any argument. Now it is certain that tears are a terrible argumentum ad hominem, and there has surely been many a one whom nothing moved, yet whom tears moved. In the play Iphigenia is allowed to weep; in actuality she ought to be granted, like Jephthah's daughter, two months to weep —not in solitude but at her father's feet—and to use all her art, "which is only tears," and to twine herself instead of an olive branch around his knees (cf. line 1224).[7]

Æsthetiken fordrede Aabenbarelse, men hjalp sig med et Tilfælde, Ethiken fordrede Aabenbarelse, og fandt i den tragiske Helt sin Tilfredsstillelse.

Aesthetics demanded disclosure but helped itself out with a coincidence; ethics demanded disclosure and found its satisfaction in the tragic hero.

Tiltrods for den Strenghed, med hvilken Ethiken fordrer Aabenbarelse, lader det sig dog ikke negte, at Hemmelighed og Taushed egentlig gjør et Menneske til det Store, netop fordi de ere Inderlighedens Bestemmelser. Da Amor forlader Psyche siger han til hende: Du skal føde et Barn, der bliver et Gudebarn, hvis Du tier, men et Menneske, hvis Du forraader Hemmeligheden. Den tragiske Helt, der er Ethikens Yndling, han er det rene Menneske, ham kan jeg ogsaa forstaae, og alt hans Foretagende er ogsaa i det Aabenbare. Gaaer jeg videre, da støder jeg [178] bestandig an paa Paradoxet, det guddommelige og det dæmoniske; thi Taushed er begge Dele.

Despite the rigor with which ethics demands disclosure, it cannot be denied that secrecy and silence are what really make a person great, precisely because they are qualities of inwardness. When Amor leaves Psyche, he says to her: "You will bear a child who will be a divine child if you keep silent, but a human being if you betray the secret." The tragic hero, who is the favorite of ethics, is the purely human; him I can also understand, and all his undertakings are out in the open. If I go further, I [178] always run up against the paradox, the divine and the demonic; for silence is both.[8]

SKS 4.178

Silence is the demon's snare; and the more one keeps silent, the more terrible the demon be-

6 "Beloved son, in whom it is well pleased" echoes the voice from heaven at Jesus's baptism (Matthew 3:17).
7 Jephthah's daughter was granted two months to bewail her fate before he fulfilled his vow to sacrifice her (Judges 11:37–38). The quotation is from Iphigenia's plea in Euripides's play.

DANISH

Taushed er Dæmonens Besnærelse; og jo mere der ties, jo forfærdeligere bliver Dæmonen, men Taushed er ogsaa Guddommens Samviden med den Enkelte.

Inden jeg imidlertid gaaer over til Fortællingen om Abraham, vil jeg kalde et Par poetiske Individualiteter frem. Ved Dialektikens Magt holder jeg dem paa Spidsen, og idet jeg svinger Fortvivlelsens Disciplin over dem, skal jeg nok forhindre dem i at staae stille, at de om muligen i deres Angst kunne opdage Eet og Andet.*

ENGLISH

comes; but silence is also the deity's shared understanding with the single individual.

Before I go on to the story of Abraham, however, I will call forth a couple of poetic figures. By the power of dialectic I keep them spinning on their point, and by swinging the whip of despair over them I shall certainly keep them from standing still, so that in their anguish they may, if possible, discover one thing or another.*

101112

THE BRIDEGROOM AT DELPHI

A bridegroom warned by augurs abandons his bride; Johannes weighs whether he should speak.

DANISH

Aristoteles fortæller i hans Politik en Historie om en politisk Urolighed i Delphi, der havde sin Grund i et Giftermaals Anliggende. *Brudgommen, hvem Augurerne forudsige en Ulykke, der vil have sin Oprindelse af hans*

ENGLISH

Aristotle tells in his Politics a story of a political disturbance in Delphi that had its origin in a matter of marriage. *The bridegroom, to whom the augurs foretell a misfortune that will have its origin in his*

8 From the tale of Cupid (Amor) and Psyche in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* (*The Golden Ass*), book 5.

10

* Disse Bevægelser og Stillinger kunne vel endnu blive Gjenstand for æsthetisk Behandling, hvorvidt derimod Troens og hele Troeslivet kan blive det, lader jeg her uafgjort. Kun vil jeg, fordi det altid er mig en Glæde at takke hvem jeg skylder Noget, takke Lessing for de enkelte Vink om et christeligt Drama, der findes i hans hamburgische Dramaturgie. Han har imidlertid hæftet Blikket paa den reen guddommelige Side af dette Liv (den fuldendte Seier), derfor har han mistvivlet; maaskee vilde han have dømt anderledes, hvis han havde været mere opmærksom paa den reen menneskelige Side. (Theologia viatorum).

* These movements and positions might still become a subject for aesthetic treatment; whether faith and the whole life of faith can, I leave undecided here. Only, because it is always a joy to me to thank anyone to whom I owe something, I would thank Lessing for the occasional hints about a Christian drama found in his Hamburgische Dramaturgie [Hamburg Dramaturgy]. He, however, fixed his gaze on the purely divine side of this life (the consummated victory), and therefore he despaired of it; perhaps he would have judged otherwise had he paid more attention to the purely human side (Theologia viatorum [the theology of wayfarers]).[9]

9 In the *Hamburg Dramaturgy* (1767–69) Lessing doubted that a Christian martyr could be a fit subject for tragedy.

11

Det, han siger, er unegtelig meget kort, tildeels undvigende, men da jeg altid er saare glad, naar jeg kan faae Leilighed til at tage Lessing med tager jeg ham strax. Lessing var ikke blot et af de mest omfattende Hoveder, Tydskland har eiet; han var ikke blot i Besiddelse af en ganske sjelden Prompthed i sin Viden, der gjør, at man trygt kan stole paa ham og hans Autopsi uden at frygte for at blive narret ved løse Citater, som intetsteds have hjemme, halvforstaaede Phraser, der ere hentede fra upaalidelige Compendier, eller desorienteret ved en dum Udbasunen af Nyheder, som de Ældre have fremsat langt bedre – men han havde tillige en høist ualmindelig Gave til at forklare, hvad han selv har forstaaet.

What he says is admittedly very brief, partly evasive, but since I am always very glad when I get a chance to bring Lessing along, I take it at once. Lessing was not only one of the most comprehensive minds Germany has possessed; he not only had a quite rare precision in his knowledge, which means one can safely rely on him and on his firsthand inspection without fear of being fooled by loose quotations that belong nowhere, half-understood phrases fetched from unreliable compendiums, or of being thrown off by a stupid trumpeting of novelties that earlier writers presented far better—but he also had a most uncommon gift for explaining what he himself had understood.

12

Derved blev han staaende, i vor Tid gaaer man videre, og forklarer mere end man selv har forstaaet.

There he stopped; in our time people go further, and explain more than they themselves have understood.

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Giftermaal, forandrer pludselig sin Plan i det afgjørende Øieblik, da han kommer for at hente Bruden – han vil ikke holde Bryllup. Mere behøver [179] jeg ikke.* I Delphi gik denne Begivenhed neppe af uden Taarer; hvis en Digter vilde adoptere den, da turde han vel nok regne paa Deeltagelse. Er det ikke Forfærdeligt, at Kjærligheden, der ofte nok var landflygtig i Livet, nu ogsaa er berøvet Himlens Bistand? Er det gamle Ord, at Ægteskabet stiftes i Himlen, her ikke til Skamme?

SKS 4.179 Ellers er det alle Endelighedens Trængsler og Vanskeligheder, der som onde Aander ville adskille de Elskende, men Kjærligheden har Himlen paa sin Side, og derfor beseirer denne hellige Alliance alle Fjender. Her er det Himlen selv, der adskiller hvad Himlen selv jo dog har forenet. Hvo havde ogsaa ahnet dette? mindst vel den unge Brud. Endnu for et Øieblik siden sad hun paa sit Værelse i al sin Skjønhed, og de elskelige Piger havde samvittighedsfuldt smykket hende, saa de kunde forsvare det for al Verden, saa de ikke blot havde Glæde deraf men Misundelse, ja Glæde ved, at det var umuligt for dem at blive mere misundelige, fordi det var umuligt for hende at være skjønnere.

Hun sad ene paa sit Værelse og blev forvandlet fra Skjønhed til Skjønhed; thi Alt hvad qvindelig Kunst formaaede, det var benyttet til værdeligen at smykke den Værdige, men der manglede dog endnu Noget, som de unge Piger ikke havde drømt om: et Slør, finere, lettere og dog mere skjulende end det, i hvilket de unge Piger havde indhyllet hende; en Brudeklædning, som ingen ung Pige vidste Beskeed om, eller kunde være hende behjælpelig med, ja Bruden havde end ikke Forstand til at hjælpe sig selv.

Det var en usynlig, en venlig Magt, der har sin Glæde af at pynte en Brud, der indhyllede hende i den, uden at hun vidste Noget deraf; thi hun saae blot, hvorledes Brudgommen gik forbi og gik op til Templet. Hun saae [180] Døren lukke sig efter ham, og hun blev end roligere og saligere; thi hun vidste, at han nu tilhørte hende mere end nogensinde. Templets Dør gik op, han traadte ud, men hun slog jomfrueligt Øiet ned og derfor saae hun ikke, at hans Aasyn var forvirret, men han saae, at Himlen nok var misundelig paa Brudens Deilighed og paa hans Lykke.

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marriage, suddenly changes his plan at the decisive moment, when he comes to fetch the bride—he will not go through with the wedding. I need [179] no more.* In Delphi this event hardly passed off without tears; if a poet wanted to adopt it, he could surely count on sympathy. Is it not terrible that love, which was often enough an exile in life, is now also robbed of heaven's aid? Is not the old saying that marriages are made in heaven put to shame here?[13]

Otherwise it is all the tribulations and difficulties of finitude that, like evil spirits, want to part the lovers; but love has heaven on its side, and therefore this holy alliance conquers all enemies. Here it is heaven itself that separates what heaven itself has, after all, joined. And who could have foreseen this? Least of all, surely, the young bride. Only a moment ago she sat in her room in all her beauty, and the lovely girls had conscientiously adorned her, so that they could answer for it before all the world, so that they had not only joy of it but envy —yes, joy that it was impossible for them to be more envious, because it was impossible for her to be more beautiful.[14]

She sat alone in her room and was transformed from beauty to beauty; for everything that feminine art could do had been used to adorn the worthy one worthily. But something was still missing that the young girls had not dreamed of: a veil, finer, lighter, and yet more concealing than the one in which the young girls had wrapped her; a bridal gown that no young girl knew anything about or could help her with—indeed, the bride herself did not have the understanding to help herself.

It was an invisible, a kindly power, one that takes delight in adorning a bride, that wrapped her in it without her knowing anything of it; for she saw only how the bridegroom walked past and went up to the temple. She saw [180] the door close behind him, and she grew even calmer and more blissful; for she knew that he now belonged to her more than ever. The temple door opened, he stepped out, but she modestly lowered her eyes, and so she did not see that his face was troubled; but he saw

13 Aristotle, *Politics* 5.4 (1303b–1304a).
14 Echoes Matthew 19:6: "What God has joined together, let no one separate."

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that heaven must be envious of the bride's loveliness and of his happiness.

SKS 4.180 Templets Dør gik op, de unge Piger saae Brudgommen træde ud; men de saae ikke, at hans Aasyn var forvirret; thi de havde travlt med at hente Bruden. Da traadte hun frem i al sin jomfruelige Ydmyghed og dog som en Herskerinde, omgiven af sin Stab af unge Piger, der neiede sig for hende, som den unge Pige altid neier sig for en Brud. Saaledes stod hun i Spidsen af den skjønne Skare og ventede – det var kun et Øieblik; thi Templet var strax derved – og Brudgommen kom – men han gik hendes Dør forbi.

The temple door opened, the young girls saw the bridegroom step out; but they did not see that his face was troubled, for they were busy fetching the bride. Then she stepped forth in all her maidenly humility and yet like a queen, surrounded by her retinue of young girls, who curtsied to her as a young girl always curtsies to a bride. So she stood at the head of the lovely band and waited—it was only a moment, for the temple was close by—and the bridegroom came—but he walked past her door.

15

Dog jeg afbryder her; jeg er ikke Digter og gaaer blot dialektisk tilværks. For det første er at bemærke, at det er i det afgjørende Øieblik, at Helten faaer hiin Oplysning, han er da reen og angerløs, har ikke letsindig knyttet sig til den Elskede. Dernæst har han et guddommeligt Udsagn for sig eller rettere imod sig, han styres da ikke som hine spinkle Elskere og Elskerinder af Selvkløgt. Det følger fremdeles af sig selv, at hiint Udsagn gjør ham ligesaa ulykkelig som Bruden, ja lidt til, da han dog er Anledningen.

But I break off here; I am no poet and proceed only dialectically. First, it should be noted that it is at the decisive moment that the hero receives that information; he is thus pure and has nothing to reproach himself with, has not frivolously bound himself to the beloved. Second, he has a divine pronouncement for him, or rather against him; so he is not guided, like those frail lovers of both sexes, by his own cleverness. It further goes without saying that this pronouncement makes him just as unhappy as the bride, indeed a little more so, since he is after all the occasion of it.

Vel er det nemlig sandt, at Augurerne kun forudsagde *ham* en Ulykke, men Spørgsmaalet er, om denne Ulykke ikke er af den Beskaffenhed, at den ved at ramme ham tillige vil ramme deres ægteskabelige Lykke. Hvad skal han nu gjøre? 1) Skal han tie og holde Bryllup, og tænke, Ulykken kommer maaskee ikke strax, i ethvert Fald har jeg hævdet Kjærligheden og ikke frygtet for at gjøre mig selv ulykkelig; men tie maa jeg, thi ellers er selv det korte Øieblik forspildt. Dette synes plausibelt, men er det ingenlunde; thi i saa Fald har han fornærmet Pigen. Han har ved sin Taushed paa en Maade gjort Pigen skyldig; thi dersom hun havde vidst det, havde hun vel aldrig givet sit Samtykke til en saadan Forbindelse.

It is true, of course, that the augurs foretold a misfortune only to *him*, but the question is whether this misfortune is not of such a kind that in striking him it will also strike their married happiness. What is he to do now? 1) Should he keep silent and go through with the wedding, thinking: Perhaps the misfortune will not come at once; at any rate I have upheld love and have not been afraid to make myself unhappy; but I must keep silent, for otherwise even that brief moment is wasted? This seems plausible, but it is not at all; for in that case he has wronged the girl. By his silence he has in a way made the girl guilty; for if she had known, she

15

* Den historiske Katastrophe var efter Aristoteles følgende: for at hævne sig skaffer Familien et Tempel-Kar ind blandt hans Huusgeraad, og han bliver dømt som Tempelrøver. Dette er imidlertid ligegyldigt; thi Spørgsmaalet er ikke, om Familien er snild eller dum i at tage Hævn, Familien faaer kun ideal Betydning forsaavidt den drages ind i Heltens Dialektik. Forøvrigt er det skjæbnesvangert nok, at han, idet han vil undflye Faren ved ikke at gifte sig, styrter i den, samt at hans Liv paa en dobbelt Maade kommer i Berøring med det Guddommelige, først ved Augurens Udsagn, dernæst ved at blive dømt som Tempelrøver.

* According to Aristotle, the historical catastrophe was as follows: to take revenge, the family smuggles a temple vessel among his household goods, and he is condemned as a temple robber. This, however, does not matter; for the question is not whether the family is clever or stupid in taking revenge; the family has ideal significance only insofar as it is drawn into the hero's dialectic. Besides, it is fateful enough that in trying to escape the danger by not marrying he plunges into it, and that his life comes into contact with the divine in a double way: first through the augur's pronouncement, then by being condemned as a temple robber.

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Han vil da i Nødens Stund ikke blot have Ulykken at bære paa, men ogsaa det Ansvar, at han har tiet, hendes retfærdige Vrede at han har tiet. 2) Skal han tie og lade være at holde Bryllup? I saa Fald maa han gaae ind i en Mystification, hvorved han tilintetgjør sig selv i sit Forhold til hende. Dette vilde maaskee Æsthetiken billige. Katastrophen kunde da dannes i Lighed med den [181] virkelige, kun at det i det sidste Øieblik kom til en Forklaring, der dog var bag efter, da det, æsthetisk tænkt, bliver en Nødvendighed, at lade ham døe, med mindre denne Videnskab skulde see sig istand til at hæve hiin uheldsvangre Propheti.

SKS 4.181 Imidlertid indeholder denne Adfærd, hvor høimodig den end er, en Fornærmelse mod Pigen og Realiteten af hendes Kjærlighed. 3) Skal han tale? Man maa naturligviis ikke glemme, at vor Helt er lidt for poetisk til at det at give Afkald paa sin Kjærlighed for ham ikke skulde have anden Betydning end en mislykket Handelsspeculation. Taler han, saa bliver det Hele en ulykkelig Kjærlighedshistorie i samme Stiil som Axel og Valborg.* Det bliver et Par, som [182] Himlen selv adskiller. Dog bliver denne Adskillelse i nærværende Tilfælde at tænke noget anderledes, da den tillige resulterer af Individernes frie Gjerning. Det saare Difficile ved det Dialektiske i denne Sag er nemlig, at Ulykken kun skal ramme ham.

SKS 4.182 De faae da ikke som Axel og Valborg et fælleds Udtryk for deres Lidelse, medens Himlen ligemeget adskiller Axel og Valborg, fordi de ere hinanden lige nær. Var dette Tilfælde her, saa lod der sig tænke en Udvei. Da Himlen nemlig ikke bruger nogen synlig Magt for at adskille dem, men overlader det til dem selv, saa lod det sig jo tænke, at de besluttede i Forening at trodse Himlen med samt dens Ulykke.

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would surely never have consented to such a union.

Then in the hour of need he will have to bear not only the misfortune but also the responsibility of having kept silent, and her just anger that he kept silent. 2) Should he keep silent and call off the wedding? In that case he must enter into a mystification by which he annihilates himself in his relationship to her. Aesthetics would perhaps approve of this. The catastrophe could then be shaped along the lines of the [181] actual one, except that at the last moment there would be an explanation—though it would come too late, since, aesthetically considered, it becomes a necessity to let him die, unless that science should find itself able to cancel the ill-fated prophecy.

However magnanimous it may be, though, this conduct contains an affront to the girl and to the reality of her love. 3) Should he speak? One must of course not forget that our hero is a little too poetic for giving up his love to mean no more to him than a failed business speculation. If he speaks, the whole thing becomes an unhappy love story in the same style as Axel and Valborg.* They become a couple whom [182] heaven itself separates. In the present case, however, this separation must be thought of somewhat differently, since it also results from the individuals' free act. For the very difficult thing about the dialectic of this case is that the misfortune is to strike only him.[16]

So they do not, like Axel and Valborg, have a common expression for their suffering—whereas heaven separates Axel and Valborg alike, because they are equally close kin to each other. Were that the case here, a way out could be imagined. For since heaven uses no visible power to separate them but leaves it to them, it would be conceivable that they decided together to defy heaven, misfortune and all.

16 *Axel og Valborg* (1810), a tragedy by Adam Oehlenschläger, whose lovers are kept apart by a church ban on their marriage as kin.

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Ethiken vil imidlertid fordre af ham, at han skal tale. Hans Heltemod bliver da væsentlig at sætte deri, at han opgiver det æsthetiske Høimod, der dog in casu ikke let kunde tænkes at have nogen Tilsætning af den Forfængelighed, der ligger i at være skjult, da det jo maa være ham klart, at han dog gjør Pigen ulykkelig. Dette Heltemods Realitet beroer imidlertid paa, at det har havt og hævet sin Forudsætning; thi ellers kunde man især i vor Tid faae Helte nok, i vor Tid, der har drevet det til en mageløs Virtuositet i det Falskneri, der gjør det Høieste derved, at man springer det Mellemliggende over.

Men hvortil nu denne Skizze, da jeg dog ikke kommer videre end til den tragiske Helt? Fordi det dog var muligt, at den kunde kaste et Lys over Paradoxet. Alt beroer da paa, i hvilket Forhold han staaer til Augurernes Udsagn, der paa den ene eller anden Maade bliver afgjørende for hans Liv. Er dette Udsagn publici juris eller er det et Privatissimum? Scenen er i Grækenland; en Augurs Udsagn er forstaaeligt for Alle, jeg mener ikke blot, at den Enkelte lexicalsk kan forstaae Indholdet, men den Enkelte kan forstaae, at en Augur forkynder den Enkelte Himlens Beslutning. Augurens Udsagn er da ikke blot forstaaeligt for Helten, men for Alle, og der resulterer intet privat Forhold til Guddommen deraf.

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Ethics, however, will demand of him that he speak. His heroism, then, must essentially consist in giving up the aesthetic magnanimity—which in casu [in this case] could not easily be thought to have any admixture of the vanity that lies in being hidden, since it must be clear to him that he is making the girl unhappy anyway. The reality of this heroism depends, however, on its having had and annulled its presupposition; for otherwise one could get heroes enough, especially in our time—our time, which has carried to unparalleled virtuosity the forgery that achieves the highest by skipping over everything in between.

But what is the point of this sketch, since I get no further than the tragic hero? Because it was possible that it might throw some light on the paradox. Everything depends, then, on the relation in which he stands to the augurs' pronouncement, which in one way or another becomes decisive for his life. Is this pronouncement publici juris [public property], or is it a privatissimum [a private lecture for one]? The scene is Greece; an augur's pronouncement is intelligible to all—I mean not merely that the single individual can understand its content lexically, but that the single individual

17

* Forøvrigt kunde man fra dette Punkt komme ind i en anden Retning af dialektiske Bevægelser. Himlen forudsiger ham en Ulykke af hans Ægteskab, saa kunde han jo lade være at holde Bryllup, men derfor ikke opgive Pigen, men leve i en romantisk Forbindelse med hende, der for de Elskende var mere end betryggende. Dette indeholder dog en Fornærmelse mod Pigen, fordi han i sin Kjærlighed til hende ikke udtrykker det Almene. Imidlertid var det en Opgave baade for en Digter og for en Ethiker, der vil forsvare Ægteskabet. Overhovedet vilde Poesien, naar den bliver opmærksom paa det Religieuse og Individualitetens Inderlighed, faae langt betydningsfuldere Opgaver end de, med hvilke den nu sysler.

* From this point, incidentally, one could go off in another direction of dialectical movements. Heaven foretells a misfortune for him from his marriage; so he could, after all, forgo the wedding without therefore giving up the girl, and live with her in a romantic union that would be more than reassuring for the lovers. This, however, contains an affront to the girl, because in his love for her he does not express the universal. Still, it would be a task both for a poet and for an ethicist who wanted to defend marriage. In general, poetry, if it became attentive to the religious and to the inwardness of individuality, would find far more significant tasks than those it now busies itself with.

18

Atter og Atter hører man jo i Poesien denne Historie: en Mand er bunden til een Pige, som han engang har elsket, eller maaskee aldrig elsket rigtig, thi nu har han seet en anden Pige, som er Idealet. En Mand tager Feil i Livet, Gaden var rigtig, men det var i et forkeert Huus, thi ligeoverfor paa 2den Sal der boer Idealet – det mener man er en Opgave for Poesien. En Elsker har taget Feil, han har seet den Elskede ved Lys og troet hun havde mørke Haar, men see! ved nærmere Eftersyn havde hun blonde – men Søsteren det er Idealet. Det mener man er en Opgave for Poesien.

Again and again, after all, one hears this story in poetry: a man is bound to one girl, whom he once loved, or perhaps never really loved, for now he has seen another girl, who is the ideal. A man makes a mistake in life: the street was right, but it was the wrong house, for directly across the way, on the second floor, lives the ideal—this is thought to be a task for poetry. A lover has made a mistake: he saw his beloved by candlelight and thought she had dark hair, but look! on closer inspection she was blond—but her sister, she is the ideal. This is thought to be a task for poetry.

19 *Laban*, after the biblical Laban who tricked Jacob into marrying Leah (Genesis 29), was Danish slang for a lout.

20

Min Mening er, at enhver saadan Mand er en Laban, der kan være utaalelig nok i Livet, men som øieblikkelig burde pibes ud, naar han vil gjøre sig vigtig i Poesien. Kun Lidenskab mod Lidenskab giver en poetisk Collision, ikke denne Enkelthedernes Rumsteren indenfor den samme Lidenskab. Naar en Pige f. Ex. i Middelalderen efter at have forelsket sig, forvisser sig om, at jordisk Kjærlighed er en Synd, og foretrækker en himmelsk, saa er her en poetisk Collision, og Pigen er poetisk; thi hendes Liv er i Ideen.

My opinion is that every such man is a Laban, who may be unbearable enough in life but ought to be hissed off the stage at once when he wants to make himself important in poetry. Only passion against passion makes a poetic collision, not this rummaging about among particulars within the same passion. When, for example, a girl in the Middle Ages, having fallen in love, becomes convinced that earthly love is a sin and prefers a heavenly one, then here is a poetic collision, and the girl is poetic; for her life is in the idea.[19]

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Han kan gjøre hvad han vil, hvad der er forudsagt vil skee, og han kommer hverken ved at gjøre eller ved at lade i engere Forhold til Guddommen, bliver hverken Gjenstand for dens Naade eller for dens Vrede. Udfaldet vil enhver Enkelt ligesaa godt kunne forstaae som Helten, og der bliver ingen hemmelig Skrift, som kun er læselig for Helten. Forsaavidt han da vil tale, kan han ypperlig, thi han kan gjøre sig forstaaelig; forsaavidt han vil tie, er det, fordi han i Kraft af at være den [183] Enkelte vil være høiere end det Almene, vil foregøgle sig selv allehaande phantastiske Forestillinger om, hvorledes hun snart vil glemme denne Sag o. s. v.

SKS 4.183 Dersom derimod Himlens Villie ikke var bleven ham forkyndt ved en Augur, dersom den aldeles privat var kommen ham til Kundskab, dersom den havde sat sig i et aldeles privat Forhold til ham, saa ere vi ved Paradoxet, dersom det ellers er til (thi min Overveielse er dilemmatisk), da kunde han ikke tale, om han end nok saa gjerne vilde. Han nød da ikke sig selv i Tausheden, men han leed Smerten, men denne var ham netop Forvisningen om, at han var berettiget.

Hans Taushed havde da ikke sin Grund i, at han som den Enkelte vilde stille sig i et absolut Forhold til det *Almene,* men at han som den Enkelte var sat i et absolut Forhold til det *Absolute.* Han vilde da ogsaa kunne finde Hvile deri, efter hvad jeg kan forestille mig, medens hans høimodige Taushed bestandig vilde uroliges af det Ethiskes Fordringer. Det var overhovedet at ønske, om Æsthetiken engang vilde forsøge at begynde, hvor den i saa mange Aar har endt, ved den illusoriske Høimodighed. Saasnart den gjorde dette, vilde den arbeide lige i Haanden paa det Religieuse; thi denne Magt er den eneste, der kan frelse det Æsthetiske ud af sin Kamp med det Ethiske.

Dronning Elisabeth offrer Staten sin Kjærlighed til Essex ved at underskrive hans Dødsdom. Dette var en Heltedaad, om der end var lidt personlig Fornærmelse med i Spillet, at han ikke havde sendt hende Ringen. Som

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can understand that an augur is announcing heaven's decision to the single individual. The augur's pronouncement, then, is intelligible not only to the hero but to all, and no private relationship to the deity results from it.

He can do what he will: what has been foretold will happen, and neither by doing nor by refraining does he come into a closer relationship to the deity, or become the object either of its grace or of its wrath. Every single individual will be able to understand the outcome just as well as the hero, and there is no secret writing legible only to the hero. Insofar as he wants to speak, then, he can do so perfectly well, for he can make himself understood; insofar as he wants to keep silent, it is because, by virtue of being the [183] single individual, he wants to be higher than the universal, wants to delude himself with all sorts of fantastic notions about how she will soon forget this business, and so on.

If, on the other hand, heaven's will had not been announced to him by an augur, if it had come to his knowledge entirely privately, if it had placed itself in an entirely private relationship to him, then we are at the paradox, if there is such a thing (for my deliberation is dilemmatic)—then he could not speak, however much he might want to. He would not then be enjoying himself in his silence; he would be suffering the pain—but this very pain would be his assurance that he was justified.

His silence would then not have its ground in his wanting, as the single individual, to place himself in an absolute relation to the *universal*, but in his having been placed, as the single individual, in an absolute relation to the *absolute*. He would then also, as far as I can imagine, be able to find rest in it, whereas his magnanimous silence would constantly be disturbed by the demands of the ethical. It would be altogether desirable if aesthetics would for once try to begin where for so many years it has ended—with illusory magnanimity. As soon as it did so, it would be working hand in hand with the religious; for this power is the only one that can save the aesthetic out of its struggle with the ethical.

Queen Elizabeth sacrifices her love for Essex to the state by signing his death warrant. This was a heroic deed, even if a little personal affront was in play, in that he had not sent her the ring. As is well

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bekjendt havde han gjort det, men ved en Hofdames Ondskab var den bleven holdt tilbage. Elisabeth modtog, saa fortælles der ni fallor, Efterretningen derom, derpaa sad hun i 10 Dage med den ene Finger i Munden og beed i den uden at sige eet Ord, og derpaa døde hun. Dette var en Opgave for en Digter, der forstod at vriste Munden op, ellers er det i det Høieste brugeligt for en Balletmester, med hvem Digteren i vor Tid ofte nok forvexler sig selv.

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known, he had in fact sent it, but through the malice of a lady-in-waiting it had been held back. Elizabeth received, so it is told, ni fallor [if I am not mistaken], news of this; then she sat for ten days with one finger in her mouth, biting it without saying a word, and then she died. This would be a task for a poet who knew how to pry the mouth open; otherwise it is at most of use to a ballet master, with whom the poet in our time often enough confuses himself.[21]

AGNES AND THE MERMAN

The merman, disarmed by Agnes's innocence, must choose between demonic silence and disclosure.

DANISH

Nu vil jeg lade en Skizze følge i Retning af det Dæmoniske. Dertil kan jeg bruge Sagnet om *Agnete og Havmanden.* Havmanden er en Forfører, der skyder op fra Afgrundens Skjul, i vild Lyst griber og bryder den uskyldige Blomst, der i al sin Ynde stod ved Strandbreden og tankefuldt bøiede sit Hoved efter Havets Susen. Dette har hidtil været Digternes Mening. Lad os gjøre en Forandring. Havmanden var en Forfører. Han har kaldt paa Agnete, han har ved sin sledske Tale lokket det Skjulte frem i hende, hun har i Havmanden fundet, hvad hun søgte, [184] hvorefter hun stirrede ned paa Havsens Bund. Agnete vil følge ham.

SKS 4.184 Havmanden har sat hende paa sin Arm, Agnete slynger sig om hans Hals; hun hengiver sig tillidsfuld af sin ganske Sjæl til den Stærkere; han staaer allerede ved Strandbreden, han bøier sig ud over Havet for at styrte ned med sit Bytte – da seer Agnete endnu engang paa ham, ikke frygtsom, ikke tvivlende, ikke stolt af sin Lykke, ikke beruset i Lyst; men absolut troende, men absolut ydmygt som den ringe Blomst, hun tyktes sig selv at være, absolut tillidsfuldt betroer hun ham med dette Blik hele sin Skjebne. – Og see! Havet bruser ikke mere, dets vilde Røst forstummer, Naturens Lidenskab, der er Havmandens Styrke, lader ham i Stikken, det bliver et Blikstille – og endnu seer Agnete saaledes paa ham.

ENGLISH

Now I will follow with a sketch in the direction of the demonic. For this I can use the legend of *Agnes and the Merman*. The merman is a seducer who shoots up from the hiding places of the abyss, in wild lust seizes and breaks the innocent flower that stood in all her grace on the shore and pensively bowed her head to the sighing of the sea. This has so far been the poets' view. Let us make a change. The merman was a seducer. He has called to Agnes, with his smooth talk he has coaxed out what was hidden in her; she has found in the merman what she was seeking, [184] what she gazed down after at the bottom of the sea. Agnes wants to follow him.[22]

The merman has taken her in his arms, Agnes twines herself around his neck; trustingly, with her whole soul, she gives herself to the stronger one; he already stands on the shore, he leans out over the sea to plunge down with his prey—then Agnes looks at him once more, not fearfully, not doubtingly, not proud of her happiness, not drunk with desire, but absolutely believing, absolutely humble, like the lowly flower she thought herself to be; with this look she absolutely trustingly confides to him her whole fate.—And look! The sea roars no more, its wild voice falls silent, the passion of nature, which is the merman's strength, leaves him in the lurch, a dead calm sets in—and still Agnes looks at him in this way.

21 Elizabeth I had the Earl of Essex executed in 1601; the legend of the ring she had promised to honor, withheld by the Countess of Nottingham, was widely told.

22 "Agnes" renders the Danish *Agnete*. In the Danish folk ballad she follows a merman into the sea; it was retold by Baggesen, Oehlenschläger and others.

DANISH

Da synker Havmanden sammen, han kan ikke modstaae Uskyldens Magt, hans Element bliver ham utro, han kan ikke forføre Agnete. Han fører hende hjem igjen, han forklarer hende, at han blot vilde vise hende, hvor skjønt Havet var, naar det er stille, og Agnete troer ham. – Da vender han ene tilbage, og Havet stormer, men Fortvivlelsen i Havmanden stormer vildere. Han kan forføre Agnete, han kan forføre hundrede Agneter, han kan bedaare enhver Pige – men Agnete har seiret, og Havmanden har tabt hende. Kun som Bytte kan hun blive hans; trofast kan han ikke tilhøre nogen Pige; thi han er jo kun en Havmand.

Jeg har tilladt mig en lille Forandring* med Havmanden, [185] i Grunden har jeg ogsaa forandret Agnete lidt; thi i Sagnet er Agnete ikke aldeles uden Skyld, som det overhovedet er Nonsens og Lefleri og Fornærmelse mod Qvindekjønnet at tænke en Forførelse, hvor Pigen aldeles ingen, ingen, ingen Skyld har. Agnete er i Sagnet, at jeg skal modernisere mit Udtryk lidt, en Qvinde, der forlanger det Interessante, og enhver saadan kan altid være sikker paa, at der er en Havmand i Nærheden; thi sligt opdage Havmændene med et halvt Øie og det styre de efter som Haien efter sit Bytte.

SKS 4.185 Det er derfor meget dumt, eller ogsaa er det et Rygte, som en Havmand har ladet udsprede, at den saakaldte Dannelse sikkrer en Pige mod Forførelse. Nei Tilværelsen er mere retfærdig og ligelig, der er kun eet Middel, det er Uskyld.

232425

Vi ville nu give Havmanden en menneskelig Bevidsthed, og lade det, at han er en Havmand, betegne en

ENGLISH

Then the merman breaks down; he cannot withstand the power of innocence, his element becomes unfaithful to him, he cannot seduce Agnes. He leads her home again, he explains to her that he only wanted to show her how beautiful the sea was when it is calm, and Agnes believes him.—Then he returns alone, and the sea storms, but the despair in the merman storms more wildly. He can seduce Agnes, he can seduce a hundred Agneses, he can bewitch any girl—but Agnes has won, and the merman has lost her. Only as prey can she become his; he cannot faithfully belong to any girl, for he is, after all, only a merman.

I have allowed myself a small change* in the merman; [185] basically I have also changed Agnes a little; for in the legend Agnes is not entirely without guilt, just as it is in general nonsense and flattery and an insult to womankind to imagine a seduction in which the girl has no, no, no guilt at all. In the legend Agnes is—if I may modernize my expression a little—a woman who craves the interesting, and every such woman can always be sure there is a merman nearby; for mermen spot that sort of thing with half an eye and steer for it like the shark after its prey.

It is therefore very stupid—or else it is a rumor a merman has had spread—that so-called cultivation protects a girl against seduction. No, existence is more just and even-handed: there is only one means, and that is innocence.

Let us now give the merman a human consciousness, and let his being a merman signify a human

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* Ogsaa paa en anden Maade kunde man behandle hiint Sagn. Havmanden vil ikke forføre Agnete, om han end har forført Mange tidligere. Han er ingen Havmand mere, eller han er, om man saa vil, en stakkels Havmand, der allerede længe har siddet nede paa Havsens Bund og sørget. Dog veed han, som det jo læres i Sagnet, at han kan frelses ved en uskyldig Piges Kjærlighed. Men han har en ond Samvittighed med Hensyn til Pigerne, og tør ikke nærme sig dem. Da seer han Agnete. Mange Gange har han allerede, skjult i Sivet, seet hende vandre ved Strandbreden.

* That legend could also be treated in another way. The merman does not want to seduce Agnes, even though he has seduced many before. He is no longer a merman, or, if you like, he is a poor wretched merman who has long sat grieving on the bottom of the sea. Yet he knows, as the legend in fact teaches, that he can be saved by the love of an innocent girl. But he has a bad conscience where girls are concerned, and dares not approach them. Then he sees Agnes. Many times already, hidden in the reeds, he has watched her walking along the shore.

24

Hendes Skjønhed, hendes stille Syslen med sig selv fængsler ham til hende; men Alt er Veemod i hans Sjæl, ingen vild Lyst rører sig i den. Og naar da Havmanden blander sit Suk i Sivets Hvidsken, da vender hun sit Øre derhen, da staaer hun stille og synker hen i Drømme, deiligere end nogen Qvinde og dog skjøn som en frelsende Engel, der indgyder Havmanden Tillid. Havmanden fatter Mod, han nærmer sig Agnete, han vinder hendes Kjærlighed, han haaber sin Frelse. Men Agnete var ingen stille Pige, hun holdt meget af Havets Brusen, og det vemodige Suk ved Søen behagede hende kun, fordi det da brusede stærkere i hendes Indre.

Her beauty, her quiet absorption in herself, draw him to her; but all is melancholy in his soul, no wild desire stirs in it. And when the merman mingles his sigh with the whispering of the reeds, she turns her ear toward it, she stands still and sinks into dreams, lovelier than any woman and yet beautiful as a saving angel who inspires the merman with confidence. The merman takes courage, he approaches Agnes, he wins her love, he hopes for his salvation. But Agnes was no quiet girl; she was very fond of the roaring of the sea, and the melancholy sigh by the water pleased her only because it made the roaring within her stronger.

DANISH

menneskelig Præexistents, i hvis Conseqvents hans Liv var hildet. Der er Intet til Hinder for, at han kan blive en Helt; thi det Skridt, han nu gjør, er forsonende. Han er frelst ved Agnete, Forføreren er knust, han har bøiet sig under Uskyldens Magt, han kan aldrig mere forføre. Men i samme Nu stride to Magter om ham: Angeren, og Agnete og Angeren. Tager Angeren ham alene, da er han skjult, tager Agnete og Angeren ham, da er han aabenbar.

Forsaavidt nu Angeren griber Havmanden og han forbliver skjult, da har han vel gjort Agnete ulykkelig; thi Agnete elskede ham i al sin [186] Uskyld, hun troede, at det var Sandhed, at han i hiint Øieblik, da han forekom endog hende forandret, hvor godt han end skjulte det, blot vilde vise hende Havets skjønne Stilhed. Imidlertid bliver Havmanden selv i Retning af Lidenskab endnu mere ulykkelig; thi han elskede Agnete med en Mangfoldighed af Lidenskaber og havde desuden en ny Skyld at bære paa. Det Dæmoniske i Angeren vil nu vel forklare ham, at dette er netop hans Straf, og jo mere den martrer ham, jo bedre.

SKS 4.186 Hengiver han sig til dette Dæmoniske, da gjør han maaskee endnu et Forsøg paa at frelse Agnete, saaledes som man i en vis Forstand kan frelse et Menneske ved Hjælp af det Onde. Han veed, at Agnete elsker ham. Kunde han fravriste Agnete denne Kjærlighed, da er hun paa en Maade frelst. Men hvorledes? At regne paa, at en aabenhjertet Tilstaaelse skulde vække hendes Afsky, det er Havmanden for forstandig til. Han vil da maaskee see, at hidse alle mørke Lidenskaber i hende, haane hende, spotte hende, gjøre hendes Kjærlighed til en Latterlighed, om muligt ægge hendes Stolthed.

Han vil ikke skaane sig selv for nogen Qval; thi dette er den dybe Modsigelse i det Dæmoniske, og der boer i en vis Forstand uendeligt meget mere godt i en Dæmonisk end i de trivielle Mennesker. Jo mere selvisk Agnete er, desto lettere vil hun blive bedraget; (thi det er kun meget

ENGLISH

preexistence in whose consequences his life was entangled. Nothing prevents him from becoming a hero; for the step he now takes is reconciling. He is saved by Agnes, the seducer is crushed, he has bowed before the power of innocence, he can never seduce again. But at that same instant two powers contend for him: repentance; and Agnes together with repentance. If repentance alone takes him, then he is hidden; if Agnes and repentance take him, then he is disclosed.[26]

Now insofar as repentance seizes the merman and he remains hidden, he has certainly made Agnes unhappy; for Agnes loved him in all her [186] innocence, and she believed it was the truth that at that moment, when even to her he seemed changed, however well he hid it, he only wanted to show her the beautiful stillness of the sea. Meanwhile, in terms of passion, the merman himself becomes still more unhappy; for he loved Agnes with a multitude of passions, and had besides a new guilt to bear. The demonic in repentance will now no doubt explain to him that this is precisely his punishment, and that the more it tortures him, the better.

If he gives himself over to this demonic element, he may perhaps make one more attempt to save Agnes, in the way that, in a certain sense, one can save a person with the help of evil. He knows that Agnes loves him. If he could wrest this love from Agnes, she would in a way be saved. But how? The merman is too sensible to count on a frank confession arousing her disgust. So he will perhaps try to stir up all the dark passions in her, to scorn her, mock her, make her love ridiculous, and if possible goad her pride.

He will not spare himself any torment; for this is the deep contradiction in the demonic, and in a certain sense there dwells infinitely more good in a demonic person than in trivial people. The more selfish Agnes is, the more easily she will be de-

25

Hun vil afsted, afsted, storme vildt vil hun ud i det Uendelige med Havmanden, som hun elsker – da hidser hun Havmanden. Hun forsmaaede hans Ydmyghed, nu vaagner Stoltheden. Og Havets bruser, og Bølgen fraader, og Havmanden omfavner Agnete og styrter sig i Afgrunden med hende. Aldrig havde han været saa vild, aldrig saa attraaende; thi ved denne Pige havde han haabet sin Frelse. Snart blev han træt af Agnete, dog fandt man aldrig hendes Liig; thi hun blev en Havfrue, der fristede Mændene med sine Sange.

She wants to be off, off, to storm wildly out into the infinite with the merman she loves—and so she inflames the merman. She scorned his humility; now his pride awakens. And the sea roars, and the wave foams, and the merman embraces Agnes and plunges into the abyss with her. Never had he been so wild, never so full of desire; for in this girl he had hoped for his salvation. He soon grew tired of Agnes, yet her body was never found; for she became a mermaid who tempted men with her songs.

26 "Repentance" renders *Anger*.

DANISH

uerfarne Folk, der mene, at det er let at bedrage Uskyldigheden, Tilværelsen er saare dybsindig, og det er det letteste for den Kloge at narre de Kloge) men desto forfærdeligere ville Havmandens Lidelser blive.

Jo snildere hans Bedrag er anlagt, desto mindre vil Agnete blufærdigt skjule sin Lidelse for ham; hun vil bruge ethvert Middel, der da heller ikke vil blive uden Virkning, det vil sige, ikke til at rokke ham, men til at martre ham.

Ved Hjælp af det Dæmoniske vilde altsaa Havmanden være den Enkelte, der som den Enkelte var høiere end det Almene. Det Dæmoniske har den samme Egenskab som det Guddommelige, at den Enkelte kan træde i et absolut Forhold dertil. Dette er Analogien, Modstykket til hiint Paradox, om hvilket vi tale. Det har derfor en vis Lighed, som kan skuffe. Saaledes har Havmanden tilsyneladende det Beviis for, at hans Taushed er berettiget, at han i den lider hele sin Smerte. Imidlertid er der ingen Tvivl om, at han kan tale. En tragisk Helt kan han da blive, i mine Tanker en grandios tragisk Helt, hvis han taler. Faa ville maaskee [187] kun fatte, hvori det Grandiose ligger*.

SKS 4.187 Han vil da have Mod til at fravriste sig selv ethvert Selvbedrag om, at han kan gjøre Agnete lykkelig ved sin Kunst, han vil have Mod til menneskeligt talt at knuse Agnete. Forøvrigt vil jeg blot her gjøre en psychologisk Bemærkning. Jo mere Agnete har været selvisk udviklet, desto mere blændende vil Selvbedraget være, ja det er ikke utænkeligt, at det kunde forekomme i Virkeligheden, at en Havmand ved sin dæmoniske Kløgt menneskelig talt ikke blot havde frelst, men bragt noget Overordentligt ud af en Agnete; thi en Dæmon veed at pine Kræfter ud af selv det svageste Menneske, og han kan paa sin Viis mene det meget godt med et Menneske.

2728

ENGLISH

ceived (for only very inexperienced people think it is easy to deceive innocence; existence is exceedingly profound, and the easiest thing is for the clever to fool the clever)—but the more terrible the merman's sufferings will be.

The more cunningly his deception is laid, the less will Agnes modestly hide her suffering from him; she will use every means, and these will not be without effect either—that is, not in shaking him, but in tormenting him.

With the help of the demonic, then, the merman would be the single individual who as the single individual was higher than the universal. The demonic has the same property as the divine: that the single individual can enter into an absolute relation to it. This is the analogy, the counterpart, to that paradox of which we are speaking. It therefore has a certain resemblance that can deceive. Thus the merman apparently has proof that his silence is justified, in that he suffers all his pain in it. Nevertheless there is no doubt that he can speak. So he can become a tragic hero—in my view a grandiose tragic hero—if he speaks. Perhaps only a few [187] will grasp what the grandeur consists in*.

He will then have the courage to wrest from himself every self-deception that he can make Agnes happy by his art; he will have the courage, humanly speaking, to crush Agnes. Incidentally, I will just make a psychological observation here. The more selfishly Agnes has developed, the more dazzling the self-deception will be; indeed, it is not unthinkable that it could happen in reality that a merman, by his demonic cunning, had, humanly speaking, not only saved an Agnes but brought something extraordinary out of her; for a demon knows how to torture strength out of even the weakest person, and in his way he can mean very well by a person.

27

* Æsthetiken behandler stundom noget Lignende med sin sædvanlige Leflen. Havmanden bliver frelst ved Agnete, og det Hele ender med et lykkeligt Ægteskab. Et lykkeligt Ægteskab! det er nemt nok. Skal derimod Ethiken holde Talen ved Brudevielsen, saa tænker jeg, det bliver en anden Ting. Æsthetiken kaster Kjærlighedens Kaabe over Havmanden, saa er Alt glemt. Den er tillige skjødesløs nok til at mene, at det gaaer til ved et Ægteskab som paa en Auction, hvor Alt sælges i den Stand, i hvilken det ved Hammerslaget befindes. Den sørger blot for, at de Elskende faae hinanden, Resten bryder den sig ikke om.

* Aesthetics sometimes treats something similar with its usual flirtatiousness. The merman is saved by Agnes, and the whole thing ends in a happy marriage. A happy marriage! That's easy enough. But if ethics is to give the address at the wedding, then I think it will be another matter. Aesthetics throws the cloak of love over the merman, and then all is forgotten. It is also careless enough to think that things go at a marriage as at an auction, where everything is sold in the condition in which it is found when the hammer falls. It only makes sure that the lovers get each other; the rest it does not care about.

DANISH

Havmanden staaer paa en dialektisk Spidse. Hvis han frelses ud af det Dæmoniske i Angeren, da er der to Veie mulige. Han kan holde sig tilbage, blive i det Skjulte, men ikke stole paa sin Kløgt. Han kommer da som den Enkelte ikke i et absolut Forhold til det Dæmoniske, men finder Hvile i Modparadoxet, at Guddommen vil frelse Agnete. (Saaledes vilde vel Middelalderen gjøre Bevægelsen; thi Havmanden er aabenbart ifølge dens Begreb hjemfalden til Klosteret). Eller han kan frelses ved Agnete.

Dette maa nu ikke forstaaes saaledes, som om han ved Agnetes Kjærlighed skulde frelses fra fremtidig at blive en Forfører (dette er et æsthetisk Redningsforsøg, som altid gaaer uden om Hoved [188] sagen, nemlig Continuiteten i Havmandens Liv); thi i denne Henseende er han frelst; han frelses forsaavidt han bliver aabenbar. Han ægter da Agnete. Imidlertid maa han tye til Paradoxet. Naar nemlig den Enkelte er ved sin Skyld kommen udenfor det Almene, da kan han kun vende tilbage dertil i Kraft af, som den Enkelte at være kommen i et absolut Forhold til det Absolute. Her vil jeg nu gjøre en Bemærkning, hvorved jeg siger mere end der er sagt paa noget Punkt i det Foregaaende*.

SKS 4.188 Synden er ikke den første Umiddelbarhed, Synden er en senere Umiddelbarhed. I Synden er den Enkelte allerede i Retning af det dæmoniske Paradox høiere end det Almene, fordi det er en Modsigelse af det Almene at ville fordre sig selv af den, der mangler conditio sine qua non. Dersom Philosophien blandt Andet ogsaa tænkte paa, at det kunde falde et Menneske ind at ville handle efter dens Lære, saa vilde man faae en besynderlig Comedie ud deraf. En Ethik, der ignorerer Synden, er en aldeles ørkesløs Videnskab, men gjør den Synden gjeldende, saa er den eo ipso ude over sig selv. Philosophien lærer, at det Umiddelbare skal ophæves.

Dette er sandt nok; men, hvad der ikke er sandt, er, at Synden er uden videre det Umiddelbare, ligesaa lidet som Troen uden videre er det Umiddelbare.

ENGLISH

The merman stands on a dialectical point. If he is saved out of the demonic in repentance, two ways are possible. He can hold himself back, remain in hiddenness, but not rely on his cunning. Then, as the single individual, he does not enter into an absolute relation to the demonic, but finds rest in the counter-paradox that the deity will save Agnes. (This is presumably how the Middle Ages would make the movement; for by its conception the merman obviously belongs in the monastery.) Or he can be saved by Agnes.

This must not be understood as if by Agnes's love he would be saved from becoming a seducer in the future (that is an aesthetic rescue attempt, which always evades the main [188] point, namely the continuity in the merman's life); for in that respect he is saved; he is saved insofar as he becomes disclosed. He then marries Agnes. Nevertheless he must have recourse to the paradox. For when the single individual has through his guilt come outside the universal, he can return to it only by virtue of having come, as the single individual, into an absolute relation to the absolute. Here I will now make a remark by which I say more than has been said at any point in the preceding*.

Sin is not the first immediacy; sin is a later immediacy. In sin the single individual is already, in the direction of the demonic paradox, higher than the universal, because it is a contradiction on the part of the universal to want to demand itself of one who lacks the conditio sine qua non [indispensable condition]. If philosophy, among other things, also considered that it might occur to someone to want to act according to its teaching, a strange comedy would come of it. An ethics that ignores sin is an altogether idle science; but if it acknowledges sin, it is eo ipso [by that very fact] beyond itself. Philosophy teaches that the immediate must be annulled.[29]

That is true enough; but what is not true is that sin is simply the immediate, any more than faith is simply the immediate.

28

Den skulde bare see, hvad der skeer bag efter; men dertil har den ikke Tid, den er strax i fuld Gang med at klappe et nyt elskende Par sammen. Æsthetiken er den troløseste af alle Videnskaber. Enhver, der ret har elsket den, bliver i en vis Forstand ulykkelig; men den, der aldrig har elsket den, han er og bliver et pecus.

If only it would see what happens afterward! But it has no time for that; it is at once in full swing pairing off a new couple of lovers. Aesthetics is the most faithless of all the sciences. Anyone who has truly loved it becomes in a certain sense unhappy; but whoever has never loved it is and remains a pecus [brute beast].

29 "Annulled" renders *ophæves*, the Danish for Hegel's *aufheben*, to cancel and at the same time preserve.

DANISH

30

Saasnart jeg bevæger mig i disse Sphærer, da gaaer Alt let, men hvad her er sagt, forklarer heller ikke Abraham; thi Abraham var ikke ved Synden bleven den Enkelte, han var tvertimod den retfærdige Mand, der er Guds Udvalgte. Analogien til Abraham vil da først vise sig, efterat den Enkelte er bragt istand til at kunne gjøre det Almene, og nu Paradoxet gjentager sig.

Havmandens Bevægelser kan jeg derfor forstaae, medens jeg ikke kan forstaae Abraham; thi Havmanden kommer netop ved Paradoxet til at ville realisere det Almene. Forbliver han nemlig skjult og indvier [189] sig til alle Angerens Qvaler, da vorder han en Dæmon, og er som saadan tilintetgjort. Forbliver han skjult, men mener ikke kløgtigt ved selv at martres i Angerens Trældom at kunne arbeide Agnete løs, saa faaer han vel Fred, men han er tabt for denne Verden.

SKS 4.189 Bliver han aabenbar, lader han sig frelse ved Agnete, da er han det største Menneske, jeg kan forestille mig; thi det er kun Æsthetiken, der letsindig mener at prise Kjærlighedens Magt ved at lade den Fortabte elskes af en uskyldig Pige og derved frelses; det er kun Æsthetiken, der seer feil, og troer, at Pigen er Heltinden, istedenfor at Havmanden er det. Havmanden kan da ikke tilhøre Agnete uden at han, efterat have gjort Angerens uendelige Bevægelse, endnu gjør een Bevægelse, Bevægelsen i Kraft af det Absurde. Ved egen Kraft kan han gjøre Angerens Bevægelse, men han bruger ogsaa absolut hele sin Kraft dertil, og derfor kan han umulig igjen ved egen Kraft komme tilbage og gribe Virkeligheden.

Naar man ikke har Lidenskab nok til hverken at gjøre den ene eller den anden Bevægelse, naar man sjudsker sig gjennem Livet, angrer lidt og mener, saa gaaer nok Resten, da har man engang for alle Gange renonceret paa

ENGLISH

As long as I move in these spheres, everything goes easily; but nothing said here explains Abraham either; for Abraham did not become the single individual through sin—on the contrary, he was the righteous man, God's chosen one. So the analogy to Abraham will appear only after the single individual has been brought to the point of being able to realize the universal, and now the paradox repeats itself.

I can therefore understand the merman's movements, while I cannot understand Abraham; for it is precisely through the paradox that the merman comes to want to realize the universal. For if he remains hidden and dedicates [189] himself to all the torments of repentance, he becomes a demon, and as such is annihilated. If he remains hidden, but does not cleverly suppose that by being tortured himself in the bondage of repentance he can work Agnes free, then he may well find peace, but he is lost to this world.

If he becomes disclosed, if he lets himself be saved by Agnes, then he is the greatest human being I can imagine; for it is only aesthetics that thoughtlessly believes it praises the power of love by having the lost man loved by an innocent girl and thereby saved; it is only aesthetics that sees wrongly and believes that the girl is the heroine, instead of the merman. So the merman cannot belong to Agnes unless, after having made the infinite movement of repentance, he makes one movement more: the movement by virtue of the absurd. By his own strength he can make the movement of repentance, but for that he also uses absolutely all his strength, and therefore he cannot possibly come back again by his own strength and grasp actuality.

When one does not have passion enough to make either the one movement or the other, when one muddles through life, repents a little and thinks the rest will take care of itself, then one has once

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* I det Foregaaende har jeg med Flid holdt ethvert Hensyn til Spørgsmaalet om Synden og dens Realitet borte. Det Hele er rettet paa Abraham, og ham kan jeg endnu naae i umiddelbare Kategorier, det vil sige, forsaavidt jeg kan forstaae ham. Saasnart Synden kommer frem, da gaaer Ethiken til Grunde, netop paa Angeren; thi Angeren er det høieste ethiske Udtryk, men netop som saadant den dybeste ethiske Selvmodsigelse.

* In the preceding I have deliberately kept away every consideration of the question of sin and its reality. The whole is centered on Abraham, and him I can still reach in immediate categories—that is, insofar as I can understand him. As soon as sin appears, ethics founders, precisely on repentance; for repentance is the highest ethical expression, but precisely as such the deepest ethical self-contradiction.

DANISH

at leve i Ideen, og saa kan man meget let opnaae og forhjælpe Andre til det Høieste ɔ: bedaare sig selv og Andre i den Forestilling, at i Aandens Verden gaaer det til som i Gnavspil, hvor Alt gaaer paa bedste Beskub.

Man kan da forlyste sig selv ved at betænke, hvor underligt det dog er, at netop i en Tid, hvor jo Enhver kan gjøre det Høieste, Tvivlen om Sjælens Udødelighed kan være saa udbredt; thi den, der virkelig har gjort blot Uendelighedens Bevægelse, han tvivler neppe. Lidenskabens Slutninger ere de eneste paalidelige ɔ: de eneste overbevisende. Heldigviis er Tilværelsen her kjærligere, trofastere end hvad Viismænd paastaae, thi den udelukker intet Menneske end ikke det ringeste, den narrer Ingen, thi i Aandens Verden er kun den narret, der narrer sig selv.

Det er Alles Mening, og forsaavidt jeg tør tillade mig at dømme derom, er det ogsaa min Mening, at det er ikke det Høieste at gaae i Kloster, men derfor er det ingenlunde min Mening, at i vor Tid, da intet Menneske gaaer i Kloster, Enhver er større end de dybe og alvorlige Sjæle, der fandt Hvile i et Kloster. Hvor Mange har i vor Tid Lidenskab nok til at tænke det og da at dømme sig selv oprigtigt.

Alene Forestillingen om, saaledes at tage Tiden paa sin Samvittighed, at give den Tid til i sin søvnløse Utrættelighed at udforske hver en lønlig Tanke, saaledes, at [190] man, hvis man ikke hvert Øieblik gjør Bevægelsen i Kraft af det Ædleste og Helligste i et Menneske, med Angst og Gru kan opdage*, og om ikke ved andet, saa ved Angst fremlokke den dunkle Rørelse, som dog skjuler sig i ethvert Menneskeliv, medens man, naar man lever i Samfund med Andre, saa let glemmer, saa let slipper fra det, paa saa mange Maader holdes oppe, faaer Leilighed til at begynde paa en frisk – alene denne Forestilling, opfattet med sømmelig Ærbødighed, tænkte jeg kunde tugte mangen Enkelt i vor Tid, der allerede mener, at være kommen til det Høieste.

SKS 4.190 Dog dette bekymrer man sig lidet om i vor Tid, der er kommen til det Høieste, medens dog ingen Tid som netop den har været hjemfalden til det Comiske. Og ubegribeligt er det, at det ikke allerede er skeet, at Tiden selv ved en generatio æquivoca har affødt sin Helt, den

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and for all renounced living in the idea; and then one can very easily attain the highest, and help others to it—that is, delude oneself and others into thinking that in the world of spirit things go as in a game of *gnav*, where everything happens by the luck of the draw.[31]

One can then amuse oneself by reflecting how strange it is that precisely in an age when, after all, everyone can do the highest, doubt about the immortality of the soul can be so widespread; for whoever has really made even just the movement of infinity hardly doubts. The conclusions of passion are the only reliable ones, that is, the only convincing ones. Fortunately existence is here more loving, more faithful, than the wise men claim; for it excludes no one, not even the lowliest; it fools no one, for in the world of spirit only the one who fools himself is fooled.

It is everyone's opinion, and so far as I may permit myself to judge, it is mine too, that entering a monastery is not the highest; but it is by no means my opinion that therefore in our age, when no one enters a monastery, everyone is greater than the deep and earnest souls who found rest in a monastery. How many in our age have passion enough to think this, and then to judge themselves honestly?

Merely the idea of taking time upon one's conscience in this way, of giving it time, in its sleepless tirelessness, to search out every secret thought, so that, [190] if one does not at every moment make the movement by virtue of what is noblest and holiest in a human being, one may discover with anguish and horror*, and if by nothing else then by anguish lure out, the dark stirring that nonetheless hides in every human life—whereas, living in company with others, one so easily forgets, so easily gets away with it, is held up in so many ways, gets the chance to start afresh—merely this idea, grasped with due reverence, would, I thought, chasten many an individual in our age who already believes he has reached the highest.

But our age, which has reached the highest, cares little about this, even though no age has been so given over to the comic as precisely this one. And it is incomprehensible that it has not already happened that the age, by a generatio aequivoca

31 *Gnav*: a Danish parlor game of chance played with numbered counters that the players swap around the table.

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Dæmon, der skaanselsløst vil opføre det forfærdelige Skuespil, at bringe hele Tiden til at lee og bringe den til at glemme, at den leer ad sig selv. Eller hvad er Tilværelsen mere værd end at lee ad, naar man allerede i sit 20de Aar er kommen til det Høieste. Og dog hvilken høiere Bevægelse har Tiden udfundet siden den Stund, da man opgav at gaae i Kloster?

Er det ikke en jammerlig Leveviisdom, Klogskab, Modløshed, der sidder til Høibords, der feigt indbilder Menneskene, at de have gjort det Høieste, og lumskeligen afholder dem fra endog at forsøge det Mindre? Den, der har gjort Klosterbevægelsen, han har kun een Bevægelse tilbage, det er det Absurdes. Hvor Mange forstaae i vor Tid, hvad det Absurde er, hvor Mange leve i vor Tid saaledes, at de have givet Afkald paa Alt, eller have faaet Alt, hvor Mange ere blot saa redelige, at de vide, hvad de kunne og hvad de ikke kunne? Og er det ikke sandt, forsaavidt man finder saadanne, man snarest finder dem blandt de mindre Dannede og tildeels blandt Qvinder?

I en Art Clairvoyance aabenbarer Tiden, saaledes som en Dæmonisk altid aabenbarer [191] sig selv uden at forstaae sig selv, sin Brøst; thi den fordrer atter og atter det Komiske. Skulde det virkelig være det, Tiden behøvede, skulde Theatret maaskee behøve et nyt Stykke, hvor det blev gjort latterligt, at Een døde af Kjærlighed, eller vilde det ikke snarere være Frelsende for Tiden, hvis det skete iblandt os, hvis Tiden blev Vidne til en saadan Begivenhed, for at den engang kunde faae Mod til at troe paa Aandens Magt, Mod til at lade være, feigt at qvæle det Bedre i sig selv, misundeligt at qvæle det hos Andre – ved Latteren.

SKS 4.191 Skulde Tiden virkelig behøve en latterlig Erscheinung af en Opvakt, for at faae Noget at lee ad, eller skulde den ikke snarere behøve, at en saadan begeistret Skikkelse mindede den om, hvad der var glemt?

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[spontaneous generation], has brought forth its own hero, the demon who will ruthlessly stage the terrible spectacle of making the whole age laugh and making it forget that it is laughing at itself. Or what is existence worth but to be laughed at, when one has already reached the highest at twenty? And yet what higher movement has the age discovered since people gave up entering monasteries?

Is it not a pitiful worldly wisdom, prudence, faintheartedness, that sits at the head of the table, that cowardly makes people imagine they have done the highest, and slyly keeps them from even attempting the lesser? Whoever has made the monastic movement has only one movement left: that of the absurd. How many in our age understand what the absurd is? How many in our age live in such a way that they have renounced everything, or received everything? How many are even honest enough to know what they can do and what they cannot? And is it not true that, insofar as one finds such people, one is most likely to find them among the less educated, and in part among women?

In a kind of clairvoyance the age reveals its failing, just as a demonic person always reveals [191] himself without understanding himself; for it demands the comic again and again. Should that really be what the age needed? Should the theater perhaps need a new play in which it was made ridiculous that someone died of love? Or would it not rather be saving for the age if this happened among us, if the age witnessed such an event, so that for once it might gain courage to believe in the power of spirit, courage to stop cowardly stifling what is better in itself, and enviously stifling it in others—by laughter?

Should the age really need a ridiculous Erscheinung [apparition] of one of the awakened in order to have something to laugh at, or should it not rather need such an inspired figure to remind it of what has been forgotten?[32]

32 "The awakened" (*en Opvakt*): the name for adherents of the pietist revival movements then active in Denmark.
33 "Know yourself": the inscription at the temple of Apollo at Delphi, taken up by Socrates as his watchword.

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SARAH AND TOBIAS

Sarah, whose seven bridegrooms died on the wedding night, is the true heroine of Tobit.

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Vilde man have et Anlæg i en lignende Stil, der dog, fordi Angerens Lidenskab ikke blev sat i Bevægelse, vilde blive mere rørende, saa kunde man dertil benytte en Fortælling, der forekommer i Tobiæ Bog. Den unge Tobias vil ægte Raguels og Ednas Datter Sara. Med denne Pige har det et sørgeligt Sammenhæng. Hun har været given til 7 Mænd, der alle ere omkomne i Brudehuset. Dette er i Retning af mit Anlæg en Fregne ved Fortællingen; thi den comiske Virkning er næsten uundgaaelig, naar Tanken vækkes om en Piges 7 frugtesløse Forsøg paa at blive gift, skjønt hun var ganske nær derved, ligesaa nær som en Student, der 7 Gange gik reject til Attestats.

If one wanted a sketch in a similar style, but one that would be more moving because the passion of repentance was not set in motion, one could use a story that occurs in the Book of Tobit. The young Tobias wants to marry Sarah, the daughter of Raguel and Edna. There is a sad story attached to this girl. She has been given to seven men, all of whom perished in the bridal chamber. For my sketch this is a blemish on the story; for the comic effect is almost unavoidable when one thinks of a girl's seven fruitless attempts to get married, though she came quite close each time—as close as a student who failed his final examination seven times.[35]

I Tobiæ Bog ligger Accenten paa et andet Sted, og derfor er det høie Tal af Vigtighed og i en vis Forstand endog et tragisk Medvirkende; thi desto større er den unge Tobias's Høimod, deels forsaavidt han er Forældrenes eneste Søn (6, 15), deels fordi det Afskrækkende mere paanøder sig. Dette maa altsaa bort. Sara er da en Pige, der aldrig har elsket, der endnu gjemmer en ung Piges Salighed, hendes uhyre Prioritets Obligation i Tilværelsen, hendes »Vollmachtbrief zum Glücke« – at elske en Mand af sit ganske Hjerte. Og dog er hun ulykkeligere end Nogen, thi hun veed, at den onde Dæmon, der elsker hende, vil dræbe Brudgommen i Bryllupsnatten.

In the Book of Tobit the accent falls elsewhere, and therefore the high number matters and is in a certain sense even a tragic contributing factor; for young Tobias's magnanimity is all the greater, partly insofar as he is his parents' only son (6:15), partly because the deterrent presses itself on him more forcefully. This, then, must go. Sarah, then, is a girl who has never loved, who still keeps a young girl's bliss, her immense first mortgage on existence, her "Vollmachtbrief zum Glücke" [warrant for happiness]—to love a man with all her heart. And yet she is unhappier than anyone, for she knows that the evil demon who loves her will kill the bridegroom on the wedding night.

Jeg har læst om megen Sorg, men jeg tvivler om, at der nogensteds findes saa dyb en Sorg som den, der ligger i denne Piges Liv. Naar dog Ulykken kommer udenfra, saa er der dog Trøst at finde. Om Tilværelsen ikke bragte et Menneske, hvad der kunde have gjort ham lykkeligt, det er dog en Trøst, at han kunde have modtaget det. Men

I have read of much sorrow, but I doubt that there is anywhere a sorrow as deep as the one in this girl's life. When misfortune comes from outside, there is after all comfort to be found. If existence did not bring a person what could have made him happy, it is still a comfort that he could have re-

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* Dette troer man ikke paa i vor alvorlige Tid, og dog er det mærkeligt nok, at selv i det, ifølge sit Væsen, mere letsindige og mindre gjennemreflekterede Hedenskab, de to egentlige Repræsentanter for den græske Anskuelse af Tilværelsen γνωθι σαυτον, hver paa sin Viis have antydet, at man ved at fordybe sig i sig selv først og fremmest opdager Dispositionen til det Onde. At jeg tænker paa Pythagoras og Socrates, behøver jeg vel ikke at sige.

* People do not believe this in our earnest age, and yet it is remarkable enough that even in paganism, which by its nature is more lighthearted and less thoroughly reflected, the two true representatives of the Greek view of existence, γνωθι σαυτον [know yourself], each in his own way, have indicated that by delving into oneself one first and foremost discovers the disposition to evil. That I am thinking of Pythagoras and Socrates I hardly need say.[33]

35 The Book of Tobit, in the Apocrypha, which the Danish Bible of the day included; the story is told in chapters 6–8. The student failing his *Attestats* is a theology candidate failing the state degree examination.

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den uudgrundelige Sorg, som ingen Tid kan adsprede, ingen Tid læge, at vide, at det hjalp Intet, [192] om Tilværelsen gjorde Alt! En græsk Forfatter skjuler i sin simple Naivitet saa uendeligt Meget, naar han siger: πάντως γὰρ οὐδεὶς Ἔρωτα ἔφυγεν ἢ φευξεται, μέχρι ἄν κάλλος ᾖ καὶ ὀφθαλμοι βλέπωσιν (cfr. Longi Pastoralia).

SKS 4.192 Der var mangen Pige, der blev ulykkelig i Kjærlighed, men hun *blev* det dog, Sara *var* det, før hun blev det. Det er tungt, ikke at finde den, til hvem man kan hengive sig, men det er *uudsigeligt* tungt ikke at kunne hengive sig. En ung Pige hengiver sig, og da siger man: nu er hun ikke fri mere, men Sara var aldrig fri, og dog havde hun aldrig hengivet sig. Det er tungt, om en Pige hengav sig, og blev bedragen, men Sara var bedragen, før hun hengav sig. Hvilken Verdens Sorg ligger der ikke i det Følgende, da Tobias endelig vil ægte hende? Hvilke Bryllups-Ceremonier, hvilke Forberedelser!

Ingen Pige er bleven bedragen som Sara; thi hun blev bedragen for det Saligste af Alt, den absolute Riigdom, som selv den fattigste Pige eier, bedragen for Hengivelsens trygge, ubegrændsede, ubundne, tøilesløse Fortabelse; thi der skulde jo først ryges, idet Hjertet af Fisken og Leveren blev lagt paa glødende Emmer. Og hvorledes maa Moderen ikke tage Afsked med Datteren, der da ligesom hun selv er bedragen for Alt, i Continuitet hermed maa bedrage Moderen for det Skjønneste. Man læse blot Fortællingen. Edna tilberedte Kammeret og hun ledede Sara derind, og græd, og hun annammede sin Datters Graad. Og hun sagde til hende: mit Barn vær frimodig! Himmelens og Jordens Herre give Dig Glæde for denne Din Sorg! Datter, vær frimodig.

Og nu Bryllups Øieblikket, man læse, hvis man ellers kan det for Taarer: men da de begge vare indelukte tilhobe, opstod Tobias af Sengen og sagde: Staa op Søster! og vi vil bede, at Herren maa forbarme sig over os (8, 4).

Dersom en Digter læste denne Fortælling, dersom han vilde benytte den, jeg vedder hundrede mod En, han lagde Alt an paa den unge Tobias. Dette Heltemod at ville vove sit Liv i en saa øiensynlig Fare, hvorom Fortællingen

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ceived it. But the unfathomable sorrow that no time can dispel, no time can heal: to know that it would help nothing [192] if existence did everything! A Greek author hides so infinitely much in his simple naïveté when he says: πάντως γὰρ οὐδεις Ἔρωτα ἔφυγεν ἢ φευξεται, μέχρι ἄν κάλλος ᾖ καὶ ὀφθαλμοι βλέπωσιν [for no one has ever escaped Love, or ever will, so long as there is beauty and eyes to see] (cf. Longus, *Pastoralia*).[36]

Many a girl has become unhappy in love, but she *became* so; Sarah *was* so before she became so. It is hard not to find the one to whom one can give oneself, but it is *unspeakably* hard not to be able to give oneself. A young girl gives herself, and then people say: now she is no longer free. But Sarah was never free, and yet she had never given herself. It is hard if a girl gave herself and was deceived, but Sarah was deceived before she gave herself. What a world of sorrow lies in what follows, when Tobias at last wants to marry her! What wedding ceremonies, what preparations!

No girl has been deceived as Sarah was; for she was cheated of the most blessed thing of all, the absolute wealth that even the poorest girl possesses, cheated of the secure, unbounded, unfettered, unbridled abandon of self-giving; for first there had to be the fumigation, with the heart and liver of the fish laid on glowing embers. And how the mother must take leave of her daughter, who, just as she herself is cheated of everything, must in continuity with this cheat her mother of the most beautiful thing! Just read the story. Edna prepared the chamber and led Sarah into it, and wept, and she received her daughter's tears. And she said to her: "My child, take heart! May the Lord of heaven and earth give you joy for this sorrow of yours! Daughter, take heart."[37]

And now the moment of the wedding—read it, if you can for tears: But when the two of them were shut in together, Tobias rose from the bed and said: "Get up, sister, and let us pray that the Lord may have mercy on us" (8:4).

If a poet read this story, if he wanted to use it, I bet a hundred to one he would stake everything on young Tobias. That heroism of being willing to

36 Longus, Greek author of the pastoral romance *Daphnis and Chloe* (2nd or 3rd century AD); the line comes from its prologue.
37 Tobit 6–7: the smoke of the burned fish heart and liver drives off the demon Asmodeus; Edna's words are from Tobit 7:16–18.

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endnu engang minder; thi Raguel siger Morgenen efter Brylluppet til Edna: send en af Pigerne hen og lad hende see, om han lever, men hvis ikke, at jeg kan begrave ham, og Ingen skal vide det (cfr. 8, 13) – dette Heltemod blev Opgaven. Jeg tillader mig at foreslaae en anden.

Det er kjækt, og behjertet og ridderligt handlet af Tobias, men enhver Mand, der ikke har Mod dertil, han er en Ærtekjelling, der hverken veed, hvad Kjærlighed er, eller hvad det er at være Mand, eller [193] hvad det er Umagen værd at leve for, han har end ikke fattet det lille Mysterium, at det er bedre at give end at modtage, og har ingen Ahnelse om det store: at det er langt sværere at modtage end at give; det vil da sige, naar man har havt Mod til at undvære og i Nødens Stund ikke blev feig. Nei, Sara hun er Heltinde.

SKS 4.193 Hende vil jeg nærme mig, som jeg aldrig har nærmet mig nogen Pige, eller følt mig fristet til i Tanken at nærme mig nogen, jeg har læst om. Thi hvilken Kjærlighed til Gud hører der dog ikke til, for at ville lade sig helbrede, naar man saaledes fra Begyndelsen af er forqvaklet uden Skyld, fra Begyndelsen af et forulykket Exemplar af et Menneske! Hvilken ethisk Modenhed for at paatage sig det Ansvar, at tillade den Elskede et saadant Vovestykke! Hvilken Ydmyghed ligeoverfor et andet Menneske! Hvilken Tro til Gud, at hun ikke i næste Øieblik skulde hade den Mand, hvem hun skyldte Alt!

Lad Sara være en Mand, og det Dæmoniske ligger lige ved Haanden. Den stolte, ædle Natur kan taale Alt, men een Ting kan den ikke taale, den kan ikke taale Medlidenhed. Der ligger en Krænkelse deri, som kun kan tilføies ham af en høiere Magt; thi ved sig selv kan han aldrig blive Gjenstand derfor. Han har syndet, da kan han bære Straffen, uden at fortvivle, men det uden Skyld fra Modersliv at være udseet til Offer for Medlidenheden, en sød Lugt i dens Næse, det kan han ikke udholde.

Medlidenhed har en besynderlig Dialektik, den fordrer i det ene Øieblik Skyld, i det næste vil den ikke have det, og derfor bliver det, at være prædestineret til Medlidenhed, forfærdeligere og forfærdeligere, jo mere Individets Ulykke er i Retning af det Aandelige. Men Sara har ingen Skyld, hun er henkastet som et Rov for alle Lidelser og skal dertil endnu martres af Menneskenes Medlidenhed,

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risk his life in so obvious a danger—which the story reminds us of once more, for on the morning after the wedding Raguel says to Edna: "Send one of the maids and let her see whether he is alive, but if not, so that I may bury him and no one will know of it" (cf. 8:13)—that heroism would become the theme. I permit myself to propose another.

It is bravely, boldly and chivalrously done by Tobias; but any man who lacks the courage for it is a weakling who knows neither what love is, nor what it is to be a man, nor [193] what is worth living for; he has not even grasped the little mystery that it is better to give than to receive, and has no inkling of the great one: that it is far harder to receive than to give—that is, when one has had the courage to do without, and did not turn coward in the hour of need. No, Sarah—she is the heroine.[38]

Her I will approach as I have never approached any girl, or felt tempted in thought to approach any I have read about. For what love of God it takes to be willing to let oneself be healed, when one has thus been botched from the beginning through no fault of one's own, from the beginning a spoiled specimen of a human being! What ethical maturity, to take on the responsibility of permitting the beloved such a daring deed! What humility before another human being! What faith in God, that she would not in the next moment hate the man to whom she owed everything!

Let Sarah be a man, and the demonic is close at hand. The proud, noble nature can bear everything, but one thing it cannot bear: it cannot bear pity. There lies in it a humiliation that can be inflicted on him only by a higher power; for by himself he can never become its object. If he has sinned, he can bear the punishment without despairing; but to be singled out from his mother's womb, without guilt, as a sacrifice to pity, a sweet savor in its nostrils—that he cannot endure.[39]

Pity has a strange dialectic: one moment it demands guilt, the next it will not have it; and so to be predestined to pity becomes more and more terrible the more the individual's misfortune lies in the direction of the spiritual. But Sarah has no guilt; she is cast out as prey to every suffering, and

38 "It is better to give than to receive": Acts 20:35.
39 "A sweet savor": the Old Testament phrase for a sacrifice pleasing to God (e.g. Genesis 8:21).

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thi endogsaa jeg, der dog beundrer hende mere end Tobias elskede hende, endogsaa jeg kan ikke nævne hendes Navn uden at sige: den stakkels Pige.

Lad en Mand være i Saras Sted, lad ham vide, at dersom han vil elske en Pige, da kommer en Helvedes Aand og myrder den Elskede i Bryllupsnatten, da var det vel muligt, at han valgte det Dæmoniske; han lukkede sig inde i sig selv, og sagde paa den Maade, som en dæmonisk Natur taler i Løndom: »Tak, jeg er ingen Ven af Ceremonier og Vidtløftigheder, jeg forlanger aldeles ikke Kjærlighedens Lyst, jeg kan jo blive en Blaubart, der har min Fryd af at see Pigerne segne i Bryllupsnatten.« Man faaer i Almin [194] delighed meget lidet at vide om det Dæmoniske, uagtet dette Gebeet netop i vor Tid har et gyldigt Krav paa at opdages, og uagtet Iagttageren, naar han ellers forstaaer at sætte sig lidt i Rapport til Dæmonen, næsten kan bruge ethvert Menneske i det mindste momentviis.

SKS 4.194 Shakespeare er og bliver bestandig i denne Retning en Heros. Hiin rædsomme Dæmon, den mest dæmoniske Figur, som Shakespeare har skildret, men ogsaa skildret magesløs: Gloster (siden Richard den Tredie) hvad gjorde ham til Dæmon? Aabenbar det, at han ikke kunde bære Medlidenhed, som han fra Barn af var priisgiven til. Hans Monolog i 1ste Akt af Richard den Tredie er mere værd end hele Moralsystemer, der ingen Ahnelse have om Tilværelsens Rædsler eller om Forklaringen.

...Ich, roh geprägt, und aller Reize baar,
Vor leicht sich dreh'nden Nymphen mich zu brüsten;
Ich, so verkürzt um schönes Ebenmaß,
Geschändet von der tückischen Natur,
Entstellt, verwahrlost, vor der Zeit gesandt
In diese Welt des Athmens, halb kaum fertig
Gemacht, und zwar so lahm und ungeziemend
Daß Hunde bellen, hink' ich wo vorbei.

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on top of that must be tortured by people's pity; for even I, who admire her more than Tobias loved her, even I cannot say her name without saying: the poor girl.

Let a man be in Sarah's place, let him know that if he wants to love a girl, a spirit from hell will come and murder the beloved on the wedding night—then it might well be that he chose the demonic; he shut himself up within himself and said, the way a demonic nature talks in secret: "Thanks, I'm no friend of ceremonies and fuss; I don't in the least demand the pleasures of love; after all, I can become a Bluebeard who takes his delight in seeing girls sink down dead on the wedding night." In general [194] one learns very little about the demonic, even though this territory, precisely in our age, has a valid claim to be explored, and even though the observer, if he knows how to put himself a little in rapport with the demon, can make use of almost any human being, at least for a moment.[40]

In this respect Shakespeare is and remains a hero. That dreadful demon, the most demonic figure Shakespeare has portrayed—and portrayed incomparably—Gloucester (later Richard III): what made him a demon? Evidently this, that he could not bear the pity to which he had been exposed since childhood. His monologue in the first act of *Richard III* is worth more than whole systems of morality that have no inkling of the terrors of existence, or of their explanation.

...Ich, roh geprägt, und aller Reize baar,
Vor leicht sich dreh'nden Nymphen mich zu brüsten;
Ich, so verkürzt um schönes Ebenmaß,
Geschändet von der tückischen Natur,
Entstellt, verwahrlost, vor der Zeit gesandt
In diese Welt des Athmens, halb kaum fertig
Gemacht, und zwar so lahm und ungeziemend
Daß Hunde bellen, hink' ich wo vorbei. [...I,
roughly stamped and bare of every charm
To strut before the lightly twirling nymphs;
I, cut so short of fair proportion,
Wronged by treacherous nature,
Misshapen, neglected, sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarcely half

40 Bluebeard: in Charles Perrault's tale (1697), a nobleman who murders his successive wives.

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Saadanne Naturer som Glosters kan man ikke frelse ved at mediere dem ind i en Samfunds Idee. Ethiken gjør egentlig kun Nar ad dem, som det jo vilde være en Spot over Sara, hvis den vilde sige til hende, hvorfor udtrykker Du ikke det Almene og gifter Dig. Saadanne Naturer ere fra Grunden af i Paradoxet, og de ere ingenlunde ufuldkomnere end andre Mennesker, kun at de enten fortabes i det dæmoniske Paradox eller frelses i det guddommelige. Man har nu Tid ud og Tid ind glædet sig ved, at Hexe, Nisser, Trolde o. s. v. vare *[misdannede Skikkelser]*, og det er unegteligt, at ethvert Menneske har en Tilbøielighed til, naar han seer *[et misdannet Menneske]*, strax at knytte Forestillingen dertil om en moralsk Depravation.

Hvilken uhyre Uretfærdighed, da Forholdet snarere maa vendes om, at Tilværelsen selv har fordærvet dem, saaledes som en Stedmoder gjør Børnene vanartede. Det oprindeligt ved Natur eller Historie-Forhold at være sat uden for det Almene, det er Begyndelsen til det Dæmoniske, som Individet dog selv ikke har Skyld i. Cumberlands Jøden er saaledes ogsaa en Dæmon, om han end gjør det Gode. Saaledes kan det Dæmoniske ogsaa yttre sig som Foragt for Mennesker, [195] en Foragt, der dog vel at mærke ikke bringer den Dæmoniske selv til at handle foragteligt, tvertimod har han sin Styrke i at vide, at han er bedre end Alle, som dømme ham. – Angaaende alt Sligt burde Digterne nærmest først gjøre Allarm.

SKS 4.195 Gud veed hvilke Skrifter de nu levende yngre Versemagere læse! Deres Studium bestaaer nok i at lære Riim udenad. Gud veed, hvad deres Betydning er i Tilværelsen! I dette Øieblik veed jeg ikke, de gjøre anden Nytte, end at de føre et opbyggeligt Bevis for Sjælens Udødelighed, idet man trøstig kan sige om dem til sig selv, hvad Baggesen siger om Byens Digter Kildevalle: blir han udødelig, saa blive vi det Alle. – Hvad her er sagt i Anledning af Sara nærmest i Retning af digterisk Frembringelse og derfor med en phantastisk Forudsætning, har sin fulde Betydning, naar man med psychologisk Interesse vilde fordybe sig i Betydningen af

ENGLISH

Made up, and that so lame and so unseemly
That dogs bark as I limp by.][41]

Natures like Gloucester's cannot be saved by mediating them into an idea of society. Ethics really only makes fools of them, just as it would be mockery of Sarah if it were to say to her: why don't you express the universal and get married? Such natures are from the ground up in the paradox, and they are by no means more imperfect than other people, only they are either lost in the demonic paradox or saved in the divine. Now people have forever taken pleasure in the fact that witches, goblins, trolls, etc. were misshapen figures, and it is undeniable that every human being has a tendency, on seeing someone whose body is misshapen, to attach at once the notion of moral depravity to it.

What a monstrous injustice! For the relation must rather be reversed: existence itself has spoiled them, as a stepmother makes children turn out badly. To be placed outside the universal from the outset, by nature or by historical circumstances, is the beginning of the demonic, for which the individual himself is nonetheless not to blame. Thus Cumberland's Jew is also a demon, even though he does good. Thus the demonic can also express itself as contempt for people, [195] a contempt which, mark well, does not lead the demonic person himself to act contemptibly; on the contrary, his strength lies in knowing that he is better than all who judge him.—About all such things the poets ought to be the first to raise the alarm.[42]

God knows what books the younger versifiers now living read! Their study probably consists in learning rhymes by heart. God knows what their significance in existence is! At this moment I know of no use they serve except to furnish an edifying proof of the immortality of the soul, since one can confidently say of them to oneself what Baggesen says of the town poet Kildevalle: if he becomes immortal, then so shall we all.—What has been said here in connection with Sarah, chiefly with a view to poetic production and therefore on a fantastic presupposition, has its full significance when one wants, with psychological interest, to delve into

41 *Richard III*, 1.1, quoted in the German translation of Schlegel and Tieck.
42 Richard Cumberland's comedy *The Jew* (1794), whose Sheva, despised as a miser, secretly acts as a benefactor; it was staged in Copenhagen.

DANISH

den gamle Sætning: nullum unquam exstitit magnum ingenium sine aliqua dementia.

Thi denne Dementia er Geniets Liden i Tilværelsen, er Udtrykket for, om jeg saa tør sige, den guddommelige Misundelse, medens det Geniale er Forkjærlighedens Udtryk. Saaledes er Geniet fra Begyndelsen af desorienteret i Forhold til det Almene, og bragt i Forhold til Paradoxet, hvad enten han i Fortvivlelse over sin Grændse, der i hans Øine forvandler hans Almagt til Afmagt, søger en dæmonisk Beroligelse, og derfor ikke vil vedgaae det hverken for Gud eller Mennesker, eller han religieus beroliger sig i Kjærlighed til Guddommen. Her ligge psychologiske Opgaver, som man med Glæde, synes mig, kunde offre et heelt Liv paa, og dog hører man saa sjeldent et Ord derom.

I hvilket Forhold staaer Sindssvagheden til Genialiteten, kan man construere den ene ud af den anden; i hvilken Forstand og hvorvidt er Geniet Herre over sin Sindssvaghed; thi det følger af sig selv, at han til en vis Grad er Herre over det, da han jo ellers virkelig var sindssvag. Til saadanne Iagttagelser hører imidlertid Snildhed i høi Grad og Kjærlighed; thi at iagttage den Overlegne er saare vanskeligt. Naar man med Opmærksomhed herpaa vilde gjennemlæse enkelte af de mest geniale Forfattere, var det dog maaskee muligt, en ganske enkelt Gang om end med megen Møie at opdage Lidt.

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the meaning of the old saying: nullum unquam exstitit magnum ingenium sine aliqua dementia [there has never been a great genius without some touch of madness].[43]

For this dementia is the genius's suffering in existence; it is the expression, if I may say so, of divine envy, while his genius is the expression of divine favor. Thus the genius is from the start disoriented in relation to the universal and brought into relation to the paradox—whether, in despair over his limit, which in his eyes transforms his omnipotence into impotence, he seeks a demonic reassurance and therefore will not admit it either before God or before men, or whether he reassures himself religiously in love for the deity. Here lie psychological tasks to which, it seems to me, one could gladly devote a whole life, and yet one so seldom hears a word about them.

In what relation does insanity stand to genius? Can one construct the one out of the other? In what sense and to what extent is the genius master of his insanity?—for it goes without saying that to a certain degree he is master of it, since otherwise he really would be insane. Such observations, however, call for great ingenuity, and for love; for to observe one who is superior is exceedingly difficult. If one were to read through some of the most brilliant authors with an eye to this, it might perhaps be possible, just once in a while and with much effort, to discover a little.

FAUST THE DOUBTER

A sympathetic Faust keeps his doubt silent to spare others.

DANISH

Endnu et Tilfælde vil jeg tænke mig, at en Enkelt ved at være skjult og ved sin Taushed vil frelse det Almene. Dertil kan jeg bruge Sagnet [196] om *Faust.* Faust er en Tvivler*, en Aandens Apostat, der gaaer Kjødets Gang. Dette er Digternes Mening, og medens det atter og atter gjentages, at hver Tid har sin Faust, gaaer dog den ene Digter efter den anden ufortrøden hen ad den slagne Landevei. Lad os foretage en lille Forandring. Faust er Tvivleren κατ' εξοχην; men han er en sympathetisk Natur. Selv i Goethes Opfattelse af Faust savner jeg et dybere psychologisk Indblik i Tvivlens hemmelige

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I will imagine one more case: that an individual, by being hidden and by his silence, wants to save the universal. For this I can use the legend [196] of *Faust*. Faust is a doubter*, an apostate of the spirit who goes the way of the flesh. This is the poets' view, and while it is repeated again and again that every age has its Faust, one poet after another still goes undaunted down the same beaten track. Let us make a little change. Faust is the doubter κατ' εξοχην [par excellence]; but he is a sympathetic nature. Even in Goethe's conception of Faust I

43 Jens Baggesen (1764–1826), Danish poet; Kildevalle is a poetaster in one of his comic verses. The Latin saying is from Seneca, *On Tranquility of Mind* 17.10.

DANISH

Samtaler med sig selv. I vor Tid, da jo Alle have oplevet Tvivlen, har endnu ingen Digter gjort noget Skridt dertil.

SKS 4.196 Jeg tænker da ogsaa, at jeg gjerne kunde byde dem kongelige Obligationer at skrive paa, for at skrive alt det Meget, de i denne Henseende have oplevet – de skrev neppe mere end hvad der kunde rummes paa den forreste Margen.

45 46 48 49

Kun naar man saaledes bøier Faust ind i sig selv, kun da kan Tvivlen tage sig poetisk ud, kun da opdager han egentligt ogsaa selv i Virkeligheden alle dens Lidelser. Han veed da, at det er Aanden, der bærer Tilværelsen, men han veed ogsaa, at den Tryghed og Glæde, i hvilken

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miss a deeper psychological insight into doubt's secret conversations with itself. In our age, when after all everyone has experienced doubt, no poet has yet taken a single step in that direction.[44]

I think, too, that I could well offer them royal bond paper to write on, to set down all the great deal they have experienced in this respect—they would hardly write more than could fit in the front margin.

Only when Faust is bent inward into himself in this way, only then can doubt appear poetic; only then does he himself really discover all its sufferings in actuality too. He knows then that it is spirit that sustains existence, but he also knows that the

44 Faust: the scholar of legend who sells his soul to the devil, most famously treated in Goethe's *Faust* (Part One, 1808). "Sympathetic" in the older sense: feeling with others.

45

* Vil man ikke bruge en Tvivler, kunde man vælge en lignende Figur, en Ironiker f. Ex., hvis skarpe Blik fra Grunden af har opdaget Tilværelsens Latterlighed, hvem en hemmelig Forstaaelse med Kræfterne i Livet forvisser om, hvad Patienten ønsker. Han veed, at han har Latterens Magt, hvis han vil bruge den, han er sikker paa sin Seier, ja hvad mere er paa sin Lykke.

* If one does not want to use a doubter, one could choose a similar figure, an ironist, for example, whose sharp eye has seen through the ludicrousness of existence from the ground up, and whom a secret understanding with the forces of life assures of what the patient wishes. He knows that he has the power of laughter if he wants to use it; he is sure of his victory, indeed, what is more, of his happiness.

46

Han veed, der vil opløfte sig en enkelt Stemme, der vil holde igjen, men han veed, han er stærkere, han veed, at man endnu et Øieblik kan bringe Mændene til at synes alvorlige, men han veed ogsaa, at de i Smug længes efter at lee med ham; han veed, at man endnu et Øieblik kan bringe Qvinden til at holde Viften for Øinene, naar han taler, men han veed, at hun leer bag ved Viften, han veed, at Viften er ikke absolut ugjennemsigtig, han veed, at man kan skrive en usynlig Skrift paa den, han veed, at naar en Qvinde slaaer efter ham med Viften, da er det fordi hun har forstaaet ham, han veed ubedragelig Besked om, hvorledes Latteren sniger sig ind og boer skjult i et Menneske, og naar den engang har taget Bolig, sidder paa Luur og venter.

He knows that a single voice will rise up to hold back, but he knows he is stronger; he knows that for a moment longer one can make the men look serious, but he also knows that secretly they long to laugh with him; he knows that for a moment longer one can make the woman hold her fan before her eyes when he speaks, but he knows that she is laughing behind the fan; he knows that the fan is not absolutely opaque; he knows that one can write invisible writing on it; he knows that when a woman strikes at him with her fan, it is because she has understood him; he knows unerringly how laughter creeps in and dwells hidden in a person, and, once it has taken up residence, lies in wait.

48

Lad os tænke os en saadan Aristophanes, en saadan Voltaire lidt forandret; thi han er tillige en sympathetisk Natur, han elsker Tilværelsen, han elsker Menneskene og han veed, at om end Latterens Fordømmelse maaskee vil opdrage en frelst ung Slægt, saa vil der i den samtidige gaae en Mængde Mennesker til Grunde. Han tier da, og glemmer saavidt muligt selv at lee. Men tør han tie. Maaskee er der Adskillige, der slet ikke forstaae den Vanskelighed, om hvilken jeg taler. De mene nok, at det var en beundringsværdig Høimodighed at tie. Dette er slet ikke min Mening, thi jeg mener, at enhver saadan Natur, hvis han ikke har havt Høimod til at tie, er en Forræder mod Tilværelsen.

Let us imagine such an Aristophanes, such a Voltaire, a little altered; for he is also a sympathetic nature, he loves existence, he loves people, and he knows that even if the verdict of laughter might perhaps raise a young generation that is saved, a great many people in the present one would go to ruin. So he keeps silent, and as far as possible forgets even to laugh himself. But dare he keep silent? Perhaps there are some who do not understand at all the difficulty I am speaking of. They probably think it would be an admirable magnanimity to keep silent. That is not at all my opinion, for I think that any such nature, if he has not had the magnanimity to keep silent, is a traitor to existence.[47]

47 Aristophanes (c. 446–386 BC), the Athenian comic playwright; Voltaire (1694–1778), the French writer and satirist.

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Menneskene leve, ikke er grundet i Aandens Magt, men let forklarlig som en ureflekteret Lyksalighed.

Som Tvivler, som Tvivleren er han [197] høiere end alt dette, og om Nogen vil bedrage ved at indbilde ham, at han har gjennemgaaet Tvivlen, saa gjennemskuer han det let; thi den, der har gjort en Bevægelse i Aandens Verden, altsaa en uendelig Bevægelse, han kan strax gjennemhøre Replikken, om det er en forsøgt Mand, der taler, eller en Münchhausen. Hvad en Tamerlan formaaer med sine Hunner, det veed Faust han formaaer med sin Tvivl, – at skrække Menneskene forfærdede op, at lade Tilværelsen vakle under deres Fødder, at splitte Menneskene ad, at bringe Angestens Skrig overalt til at lyde. Og hvis han gjør det, da er han dog ingen Tamerlan, han er i en vis Forstand bemyndiget og har Tankens Bemyndigelse.

SKS 4.197 Men Faust er en sympathetisk Natur, han elsker Tilværelsen, hans Sjæl kjender ingen Misundelse, han indseer, han kan ikke standse den Rasen, han vel kan vække, han attraaer ingen herostratisk Ære – han tier, han skjuler Tvivlen omhyggeligere i sin Sjæl, end den Pige, der skjuler en syndig Kjærligheds Frugt under sit Hjerte, han søger saa godt som muligt at gaae i Tridt med andre Mennesker, men hvad der foregaaer i ham, det fortærer han i sig selv, og saaledes bringer han sig selv som et Offer for det Almene.

Man kan stundom høre Menneskene klage, naar et excentrisk Hoved [198] reiser Tvivlens Hvirvel, de sige da: gid han havde tiet. Denne Idee realiserer Faust. Den, der har Forestilling om, hvad det vil sige, at et Menneske lever af Aand, han veed ogsaa, hvad Tvivlens Hunger vil sige, og at Tvivleren hungrer ligesaa meget efter Livets daglige Brød som efter Aandens Næring.

SKS 4.198 Uagtet da al den Smerte, Faust lider, kan være et ret godt Argument for, at det ikke er Stolthed, der har besat ham,

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security and joy in which people live are not grounded in the power of spirit but are easily explained as an unreflective bliss.

As a doubter, as the doubter, he is [197] higher than all this, and if anyone tries to deceive him by making him believe he has gone through doubt, he easily sees through it; for whoever has made a movement in the world of spirit, and so an infinite movement, can tell at once from the lines spoken whether it is a man who has been tried who speaks, or a Münchhausen. What a Tamerlane can do with his Huns, Faust knows he can do with his doubt—frighten people into starting up in terror, make existence sway under their feet, scatter people apart, make the cry of anguish sound everywhere. And if he does it, he is still no Tamerlane; he is in a certain sense authorized, and has the authority of thought.[50]

But Faust is a sympathetic nature; he loves existence, his soul knows no envy, he sees that he cannot stop the raging he could well arouse, he craves no Herostratic fame—he keeps silent, he hides the doubt in his soul more carefully than the girl who hides the fruit of a sinful love beneath her heart; he tries as best he can to keep in step with other people, but what goes on inside him he consumes within himself, and so he brings himself as a sacrifice for the universal.[51]

One sometimes hears people complain, when some eccentric head [198] stirs up the whirlwind of doubt; they say: if only he had kept silent. Faust realizes this idea. Whoever has any notion of what it means for a human being to live by spirit also knows what the hunger of doubt means, and that the doubter hungers just as much for the daily bread of life as for the nourishment of spirit.

Although all the pain Faust suffers might be a fairly good argument that it is not pride that has

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Jeg fordrer da altsaa denne Høimodighed af ham; men naar han har den, tør han saa tie. Ethiken er en farlig Videnskab, og det var vel muligt, at Aristophanes, bestemmet reen ethisk, har besluttet sig til at lade Latteren dømme den forvildede Tid. Æsthetisk Høimod kan ikke hjælpe; thi paa den Conto vover man ikke Sligt. Skal han tie, saa maa han ind i Paradoxet. – Endnu et Anlæg vil jeg antyde, at f. Ex. et Menneske eier en Forklaring af en Heros's Liv, der paa en sørgelig Maade forklarer dette, og dog hviler en heel Samtid absolut trygt i denne Heros, uden at ahne noget Saadant.

So I demand this magnanimity of him; but when he has it, dare he keep silent? Ethics is a dangerous science, and it is quite possible that Aristophanes, determined purely ethically, decided to let laughter judge the misguided age. Aesthetic magnanimity cannot help; for on that account one does not risk such a thing. If he is to keep silent, he must enter into the paradox.—I will hint at one more sketch: that someone, for example, possesses an explanation of a hero's life that explains it in a sorry way, and yet a whole generation rests absolutely secure in this hero without suspecting anything of the kind.

50 Baron Münchhausen, the teller of tall tales in Raspe's and Bürger's books; Tamerlane (Timur, 1336–1405), the Central Asian conqueror.

51 Herostratus burned the temple of Artemis at Ephesus in 356 BC purely to make his name famous.

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saa skal jeg dog bruge et lille Forsigtigheds Middel, som jeg let opfinder; thi som Gregorius Rimini blev kaldet tortor infantium, fordi han antog de smaa Børns Fordømmelse, saaledes kunde jeg fristes til at kalde mig selv: tortor heroum; thi jeg er meget opfindsom, naar det gjelder om at pine Heltene. Faust seer Margrete, ikke efter at han har valgt Lysten; thi min Faust vælger slet ikke Lysten, han seer Margrete ikke i Mephistopheles's Huulspeil, men i al hendes elskelige Uskyld, og da hans Sjæl har bevaret Kjærligheden til Mennesker, kan han ogsaa meget godt forelske sig i hende.

Men han er Tvivler, hans Tvivl har tilintetgjort ham Virkeligheden; thi saa ideal er min Faust, at han ikke hører til disse videnskabelige Tvivlere, der tvivle een Time i hvert Semester paa Kathederet, men forøvrigt kunne gjøre alt Andet, som da ogsaa dette uden Aandens Bistand eller i Kraft af Aand. Han er Tvivler, og Tvivleren hungrer ligesaa meget efter Glædens daglige Brød, som efter Aandens Føde. Dog bliver han sin Beslutning tro og tier, og taler ikke til noget Menneske om sin Tvivl, og til Margrete heller ikke om sin Kjærlighed.

Det følger af sig selv, at Faust er for ideal en Figur til at lade sig nøie med den Passiar, at naar han talte, saa vilde han foranledige en almindelig Discussion, eller det Hele vilde gaae af uden Følge, eller maaskee, eller maaskee. (Her slumrer, som enhver Digter let vil see, det Comiske i Anlægget, ved at bringe Faust i et ironisk Forhold til disse lavcomiske Gjække, der i vor Tid løbe efter Tvivlen, føre et udvortes Argument for, at de virkelig have tvivlet, f. Ex.

en Doctor-Attest, eller bande paa, at de have tvivlet om Alt, eller bevise det deraf, at de paa deres Reise traf sammen med en Tvivler, disse Iilbud og Hurtigløbere i Aandens Verden, der i største Hast hos eet Menneske faaer et lille Nys om Tvivlen, hos en anden om Troen, og nu wirtschafte paa bedste Maade, alt eftersom Menigheden vil have fiint Sand eller grovt Sand). Faust er for ideal en Figur til at gaae i Slæber. Den, der ikke har en uendelig Lidenskab, [199] han er ikke ideal, og den, der har en uendelig Lidenskab, han har forlængst frelst sin Sjæl ud af saadant Vaas. Han tier for at offre sig selv – eller han taler med Bevidsthed om, at han vil forvirre Alt.

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possessed him, I shall nevertheless use a little precaution, which I easily invent; for just as Gregory of Rimini was called tortor infantium [torturer of infants] because he held that little children were damned, so I could be tempted to call myself tortor heroum [torturer of heroes]; for I am very inventive when it comes to tormenting heroes. Faust sees Margarete, not after he has chosen pleasure; for my Faust does not choose pleasure at all. He sees Margarete not in Mephistopheles's concave mirror but in all her lovable innocence, and since his soul has kept its love for people, he can also very well fall in love with her.[52]

But he is a doubter; his doubt has annihilated actuality for him; for my Faust is so ideal that he does not belong among those scholarly doubters who doubt for one hour each semester from the lectern, but can otherwise do everything else—just as they do that, too, without the aid of spirit or by virtue of spirit. He is a doubter, and the doubter hungers just as much for the daily bread of joy as for the food of spirit. Yet he stays true to his resolve and keeps silent, and speaks to no one of his doubt, nor to Margarete of his love.

It goes without saying that Faust is too ideal a figure to be content with the chatter that if he spoke he would set off a general discussion, or the whole thing would pass off without consequences, or perhaps, or perhaps. (Here, as any poet will easily see, lies the comic potential of the sketch, dormant: bringing Faust into an ironic relation to those low-comic buffoons who in our age run after doubt and produce an external argument that they really have doubted, for example

a doctor's certificate, or swear that they have doubted everything, or prove it by the fact that on their travels they met a doubter—those couriers and sprinters in the world of spirit who in the greatest haste pick up a little whiff of doubt from one person, of faith from another, and then wirtschaften [run the shop] as best they can, according to whether the congregation wants fine sand or coarse sand.) Faust is too ideal a figure to go about in slippers. Whoever does not have an infinite passion [199] is not ideal, and whoever has an infinite passion has long since saved his soul from

52 Gregory of Rimini (d. 1358), scholastic theologian who taught that unbaptized infants are damned. Margarete (Gretchen) is the girl Faust seduces in Goethe's play, where he first glimpses a woman's image in a magic mirror in the witch's kitchen.

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such rubbish. He keeps silent in order to sacrifice himself—or he speaks in the awareness that he will throw everything into confusion.[53]

SKS 4.199 Tier han, da dømmer Ethiken ham; thi den siger: »Du skal anerkjende det Almene, og det anerkjender Du netop ved at tale, og Du tør ikke have Medlidenhed med det Almene.« Denne Betragtning skulde man ikke glemme, naar man stundom bedømmer en Tvivler strængt, fordi han taler. Jeg er ikke tilbøielig til at bedømme en saadan Adfærd mildt; men her som allevegne gjelder det om, at Bevægelserne skee normalt.

If he keeps silent, ethics condemns him; for it says: "You shall acknowledge the universal, and you acknowledge it precisely by speaking, and you may not have pity on the universal." One should not forget this consideration when one sometimes judges a doubter harshly for speaking. I am not inclined to judge such conduct leniently; but here as everywhere, what matters is that the movements are made properly.

Naar galt skal være, saa er dog en Tvivler, om han end ved at tale bragte al mulig Ulykke over Verden, langt at foretrække for disse elendige Slikmunde, der smage paa Alt, og som ville helbrede Tvivlen uden at kjende den, og som da derfor i Almindelighed ere den nærmere Anledning til, at Tvivlen bryder vildt og ustyrligt frem. – Taler han, da forvirrer han Alt; thi om det ikke skeer, det faaer han først bag efter at vide, og Udfaldet kan ikke hjælpe Een, hverken i Handlingens Øieblik eller med Hensyn til Ansvaret.

If it must go wrong, a doubter—even if by speaking he brought every possible misfortune on the world—is still far preferable to those miserable sweet-tooths who taste everything, who want to cure doubt without knowing it, and who are therefore generally the immediate occasion for doubt breaking out wild and uncontrollable.—If he speaks, he throws everything into confusion; for whether that does not happen he learns only afterward, and the outcome cannot help a person, either in the moment of action or with respect to responsibility.

Tier han paa eget An- og Tilsvar, da kan han vel handle høimodig, men han vil til sin øvrige Smerte føie en lille Anfægtelse; thi det Almene vil bestandig pine ham og sige: Du skulde have talt, hvor vil Du finde Visheden om, at det dog ikke var en krypt Hovmod, der styrede Din Beslutning.

If he keeps silent on his own responsibility, he may indeed act magnanimously, but to his other pain he will add a little spiritual trial; for the universal will constantly torment him and say: "You should have spoken—where will you find the certainty that it was not, after all, a hidden pride that governed your decision?"

Kan Tvivleren derimod blive den Enkelte, der som den Enkelte staaer i et absolut Forhold til det Absolute, saa kan han faae en Bemyndigelse for sin Taushed. I saa Fald maa han gjøre sin Tvivl til Skyld. I saa Fald er han i Paradoxet, men i saa Fald er hans Tvivl helbredet, om han end kan faae en anden Tvivl.

If, on the other hand, the doubter can become the single individual who as the single individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute, then he can obtain an authorization for his silence. In that case he must make his doubt into guilt. In that case he is in the paradox; but in that case his doubt is healed, even though he may get another doubt.

Selv det nye Testament vilde anerkjende en saadan Taushed. Der forekommer endog Steder i det nye Testamente, som anprise Ironi, kun at den bruges til at skjule det Bedre. Denne Bevægelse er imidlertid ligesaavel Ironiens som enhver anden, der har sin Grund

Even the New Testament would acknowledge such a silence. There are even passages in the New Testament that commend irony, provided only that it is used to conceal the better. This movement, however, belongs as much to irony as to anything else

53 "Doubted everything": a jab at the Danish Hegelians' slogan *de omnibus dubitandum est*, "everything must be doubted." Sand, fine or coarse, was bought for strewing and scouring floors.

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i, at Subjectiviteten er høiere end Virkeligheden. Dette vil man i vor Tid ikke vide Noget af, man vil overhovedet ikke vide mere om Ironi end hvad Hegel har sagt, der besynderlig nok ikke forstod sig stort paa den, og bar et Nag til den, hvilket vor Tid har gode Grunde til ikke at opgive; thi den skal blot vogte sig for Ironien.

Det hedder i Bjergprædikenen: naar Du [200] faster, da salv Dit Hoved og toe Dit Ansigt, at ikke Menneskene skulle see Dig faste. Dette Sted vidner ligefrem om, at Subjectiviteten er incommensurabel for Virkeligheden, ja at den har Lov at bedrage. Naar blot de Folk, der i vor Tid føite om med løs Tale om Menighedens Idee, vilde læse det nye Testamente, saa kom de maaskee paa andre Tanker.

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that has its ground in subjectivity's being higher than actuality. Our age wants to know nothing of this; in general it wants to know no more about irony than what Hegel said—Hegel, who oddly enough did not understand much about it and bore it a grudge, which our age has good reasons not to give up, for it had better simply beware of irony.[54]

It says in the Sermon on the Mount: "When you [200] fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that people may not see that you are fasting." This passage bears direct witness that subjectivity is incommensurable with actuality—indeed, that it has leave to deceive. If only the people who in our age go flapping about with loose talk of the idea of the congregation would read the New Testament, they might perhaps think differently.[55]

ABRAHAM'S SILENCE

Abraham speaks to no one, since what he must say cannot be understood.

DANISH

SKS 4.200 Men nu Abraham, hvorledes handlede han? thi jeg har ikke glemt, og Læseren vil nu maaskee behage at erindre, at det var for at støde an derpaa, jeg indlod mig i hele den foregaaende Undersøgelse, ikke som om Abraham derved blev mere forstaaelig, men for at Uforstaaeligheden kunde blive mere desultorisk; thi, som sagt, Abraham kan jeg ikke forstaae, ham kan jeg kun beundre. Det blev ogsaa bemærket, at intet af de beskrevne Stadier indeholdt en Analogi til Abraham; de bleve kun udviklede, for at de, medens de bleve viste indenfor deres egen Sphære, i Misvisningens Øieblik kunde ligesom antyde det ubekjendte Lands Grændse.

Forsaavidt der skulde være Tale om en Analogi, maatte det være Syndens Paradox, men dette ligger igjen i en anden Sphære, og kan ikke forklare Abraham, og er selv langt lettere at forklare end Abraham.

Abraham talte altsaa ikke, han talte ikke til Sara, ikke til Elieser, ikke til Isaak, han forbigik de 3 ethiske Instantser;

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But now Abraham—how did he act? For I have not forgotten, and the reader will now perhaps kindly recall, that it was in order to run up against this point that I entered into the whole preceding investigation—not as if Abraham would thereby become more understandable, but so that the incomprehensibility might become more desultory. For, as I said, Abraham I cannot understand; him I can only admire. It was also pointed out that none of the stages described contained an analogy to Abraham; they were developed only so that, while being shown within their own sphere, they might at the moment of the compass's deviation, as it were, point to the border of the unknown land.[56]

Insofar as there could be any question of an analogy, it would have to be the paradox of sin; but that again lies in another sphere, cannot explain Abraham, and is itself far easier to explain than Abraham.

So Abraham did not speak. He did not speak to Sarah, not to Eliezer, not to Isaac; he passed over

54 Hegel attacked the Romantic irony of Schlegel and others; Kierkegaard's dissertation *The Concept of Irony* (1841) had taken issue with him.

55 Matthew 6:17–18. The "idea of the congregation" was a watchword of N. F. S. Grundtvig and his followers.

56 "Desultory" keeps the Danish *desultorisk*, from the Latin *desultor*, a rider who leaps from horse to horse: the incomprehensibility shows up by leaps and contrasts.

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thi det Ethiske havde for Abraham intet høiere Udtryk end Familie-Livet.

Æsthetiken tillod, ja fordrede Taushed af den Enkelte, naar han ved at tie kunde frelse en Anden. Dette allerede viser tilstrækkelig, at Abraham ikke ligger indenfor Æsthetikens Omfang. Hans Taushed er ingenlunde for at frelse Isaak, som overhovedet hele hans Opgave, at offre Isaak for sin egen og for Guds Skyld, er Æsthetiken en Forargelse; thi den kan vel forstaae, at jeg offrer mig selv, men ikke at jeg offrer en Anden for min egen Skyld. Den æsthetiske Helt var taus. Ethiken dømte ham imidlertid, fordi han var taus i Kraft af sin tilfældige Enkelthed. Hans menneskelige Forudvidenhed var det, der bestemte ham til at tie.

Dette kan Ethiken ikke tilgive, enhver saadan menneskelig Viden er kun en Illusion, Ethiken fordrer en uendelig Bevægelse, den fordrer Aabenbarelse. Den æsthetiske Helt kan da tale, men vil ikke.

SKS 4.201 Den egentlige tragiske Helt offrer sig selv og alt Sit for det Almene; hans Gjerning, enhver Rørelse i ham tilhører det Almene, han er aabenbar, og i denne Aabenbarelse Ethikens elskelige Søn. Dette passer ikke paa Abraham, han gjør Intet for det Almene og han er skjult.

Nu staae vi da ved Paradoxet. Enten kan den Enkelte som den Enkelte staae i et absolut Forhold til det Absolute, og saa er det Ethiske ikke det Høieste, eller Abraham er tabt, han er hverken en tragisk Helt eller en æsthetisk Helt.

Forsaavidt kan det atter synes her, at Paradoxet er det Letteste og Nemmeste af Alt. Imidlertid maa jeg gjentage, at den, der holder sig overbevist derom, han er ikke Troens Ridder, thi Nøden og Angesten er den eneste Berettigelse, der kan tænkes, om den end ikke kan tænkes i Almindelighed; thi saa hæves Paradoxet.

Abraham tier – men han *kan* ikke tale, deri ligger Nøden og Angsten. Naar jeg nemlig, idet jeg taler, ikke kan gjøre mig forstaaelig, saa taler jeg ikke, om jeg end talte uafbrudt Nat og Dag. Dette er Abrahams Tilfælde. Han kan sige Alt; men Eet kan han ikke sige, og dog naar han ikke kan sige det ɔ: sige det saaledes, at en Anden forstaaer det, saa taler han ikke. Det Lindrende i Talen er, at den oversætter mig i det Almene. Abraham kan nu sige

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the three ethical authorities, for for Abraham the ethical had no higher expression than family life.

Aesthetics permitted, indeed required, silence of the single individual when by keeping silent he could save another. This alone shows sufficiently that Abraham does not lie within the scope of aesthetics. His silence is by no means meant to save Isaac; indeed, his whole task—to sacrifice Isaac for his own sake and for God's—is an offense to aesthetics, for aesthetics can well understand that I sacrifice myself, but not that I sacrifice another for my own sake. The aesthetic hero was silent. Ethics, however, judged him, because he was silent by virtue of his accidental particularity. It was his human foreknowledge that determined him to keep silent.

This ethics cannot forgive; any such human knowledge is only an illusion. Ethics demands an infinite movement; it demands disclosure. So the aesthetic hero can speak, but will not.

The tragic hero proper sacrifices himself and all that is his for the universal; his deed, every stirring in him, belongs to the universal; he is disclosed, and in this disclosure he is the beloved son of ethics. This does not fit Abraham: he does nothing for the universal, and he is hidden.

So now we stand at the paradox. Either the single individual as the single individual can stand in an absolute relation to the absolute, and then the ethical is not the highest; or Abraham is lost—he is neither a tragic hero nor an aesthetic hero.

In this respect it may again seem here that the paradox is the easiest and simplest thing of all. But I must repeat that whoever holds himself convinced of this is no knight of faith; for distress and anguish are the only justification conceivable, even if it cannot be conceived in general, for then the paradox is canceled.

Abraham keeps silent—but he *cannot* speak; therein lies the distress and the anguish. For if, when I speak, I cannot make myself understood, then I am not speaking, even if I talked without stopping night and day. This is Abraham's case. He can say everything; but one thing he cannot say, and yet when he cannot say it—that is, say it in such a way that another understands it—then he is

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det Skjønneste, noget Sprog kan opdrive, om hvorledes han elsker Isaak. Men dette er ikke det, der ligger ham paa Sinde, det er det Dybere, at han vil offre ham, fordi det er en Prøvelse.

Dette Sidste kan Ingen forstaae, og saa kan Enhver kun misforstaae det Første. Denne Nød kjender den tragiske Helt ikke. Han har for det første den Trøst, at ethvert Modargument er skeet sin Ret, at han har kunnet give Klytaimnestra, Iphigenia, Achilleus, Choret, ethvert levende Væsen, enhver Røst fra Menneskehedens Hjerte, enhver snild, enhver ængstende, enhver anklagende, enhver medlidende Tanke Leilighed til at staae op imod sig. Han kan være sikker paa, at Alt, hvad der lod sig sige mod ham, er blevet sagt, skaanselsløst, ubarmhjertigt – og at stride mod den ganske Verden er en Trøst, at stride med sig selv er forfærdeligt –; han skal ikke frygte for at have overseet Noget, at han engang bagefter maaskee skal raabe som Kong Edvard d.

4. ved Efterretningen om Clarences Mord:

SKS 4.202 Wer bat für ihn? Wer kniet' in meinem Grimm
Zu Füßen mir und bat mich überlegen?
Wer sprach von Bruderpflicht? Wer sprach von Liebe*.

58

Den tragiske Helt kjender ikke Eensomhedens forfærdelige Ansvar. Dernæst har han den Trøst, at han kan græde og klage med Klytaimnestra og Iphigenia – og Taarer og Skrig lindre, men uudsigelige Sukke martre. Agamemnon kan hurtig samle sin Sjæl i Vished om, at han vil handle, og da har han endnu Tid at trøste og opmuntre. Dette kan Abraham ikke.

Naar hans Hjerte er bevæget, naar hans Ord vilde indeholde en salig Trøst for den ganske Verden, da tør han ikke trøste, thi skulde ikke Sara, skulde ikke Elieser,

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not speaking. What brings relief in speech is that it translates me into the universal. Now Abraham can say the most beautiful things any language can muster about how he loves Isaac. But that is not what weighs on his mind; it is the deeper thing, that he means to sacrifice him because it is a trial.

This last no one can understand, and so everyone can only misunderstand the first. This distress the tragic hero does not know. He has, first of all, the comfort that every counterargument has been given its due, that he has been able to give Clytemnestra, Iphigenia, Achilles, the chorus, every living being, every voice from the heart of humanity, every shrewd, every anxious, every accusing, every compassionate thought the opportunity to rise up against him. He can be sure that everything that could be said against him has been said, unsparingly, mercilessly—and to struggle against the whole world is a comfort, to struggle with oneself is terrible—; he need not fear having overlooked anything, so that one day afterward he might perhaps cry out like King Edward IV on hearing the news of Clarence's murder:[57]

Wer bat für ihn? Wer kniet' in meinem Grimm
Zu Füßen mir und bat mich überlegen?
Wer sprach von Bruderpflicht? Wer sprach von Liebe*. [Who pleaded for him? Who, in my wrath, knelt
at my feet and bade me think again?
Who spoke of brotherly duty? Who spoke of love?]

58

The tragic hero does not know the terrible responsibility of solitude. Next, he has the comfort that he can weep and lament with Clytemnestra and Iphigenia—and tears and cries bring relief, but unutterable sighs torment. Agamemnon can quickly gather his soul in the certainty that he will act, and then he still has time to comfort and encourage. This Abraham cannot do.[59]

When his heart is moved, when his words would hold a blessed comfort for the whole world, he dares not comfort; for would not Sarah, would not

57 Shakespeare, *Richard III*, Act 2, Scene 1, quoted in the German of the Schlegel–Tieck translation.
58

* Cfr. 2. Akt 1. Scene. | * Cf. Act 2, Scene 1.

59 "Unutterable sighs" echoes Romans 8:26.

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skulde ikke Isaak sige til ham: »hvorfor vil Du da gjøre det, Du kan jo lade være.« Og dersom han da i sin Nød vilde give sig Luft, vilde omfavne Alt, hvad der var ham kjært, inden han skred til det Sidste, da skulde han maaskee afstedkomme det Forfærdelige, at Sara, at Elieser, at Isaak forargedes paa ham og troede, han var en Hykler. Tale kan han ikke, han taler intet menneskeligt Sprog.

Om han selv forstod alle Jordens Tungemaal, om de Elskede ogsaa forstode dem, han kan dog ikke tale – han taler i et guddommeligt Tungemaal, han taler i Tunger.

Denne Nød kan jeg vel forstaae, jeg kan beundre Abraham, jeg frygter ikke for, at Nogen ved denne Fortælling skulde fristes til letsindigen at ville være den Enkelte, men jeg tilstaaer ogsaa, at jeg ikke har Mod dertil, og at jeg med Glæde renoncerer paa enhver Udsigt til at komme videre, dersom det blot var muligt, at jeg nogensinde, om end nok saa silde, kom saavidt. I ethvert Øieblik kan Abraham bryde af, han kan angre det Hele som en Anfægtelse, da kan han tale, da kunne alle forstaae ham – men da er han ikke Abraham mere.

Abraham *kan* ikke tale; thi det Alt Forklarende kan han ikke sige, (ɔ: saa det er forstaaeligt), at det er en Prøvelse, vel at mærke, en saadan, hvor det Ethiske er Fristelsen. Den, der er stillet saaledes, han er en Emigrant fra det Almenes Sphære. Men det Næste kan han endnu [203] mindre sige. Abraham gjør nemlig, som tidligere tilstrækkelig udviklet, to Bevægelser. Han gjør Resignationens uendelige Bevægelse, og opgiver Isaak, dette kan Ingen forstaae, fordi det er et privat Foretagende; men dernæst gjør han i ethvert Moment Troens Bevægelse. Dette er hans Trøst. Han siger nemlig: dog vil det ikke skee, eller hvis det skeer, da vil Herren give mig en ny Isaak i Kraft nemlig af det Absurde.

SKS 4.203 Den tragiske Helt han faaer dog Ende paa Historien. Iphigenia bøier sig under Faderens Beslutning, hun gjør selv Resignationens uendelige Bevægelse og de ere nu i Forstaaelse med hinanden. Hun kan forstaae Agamemnon, fordi hans Foretagende udtrykker det Almene. Vilde Agamemnon derimod sige til hende: »uagtet Guden fordrer Dig som Offer, saa var det dog

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Eliezer, would not Isaac say to him: "Why do you want to do it, then? After all, you can refrain." And if in his distress he wanted to give vent to his feelings, to embrace everything dear to him before he proceeded to the final act, he might perhaps bring about the terrible result that Sarah, that Eliezer, that Isaac took offense at him and believed he was a hypocrite. Speak he cannot; he speaks no human language.

Even if he himself understood all the tongues of the earth, even if his loved ones understood them too, still he cannot speak—he speaks in a divine tongue, he speaks in tongues.[60]

This distress I can well understand; I can admire Abraham; I have no fear that anyone will be tempted by this story to want, lightheartedly, to be the single individual. But I also confess that I do not have the courage for it, and that I would gladly renounce every prospect of getting further, if only it were possible that I should ever, however late, get that far. At any moment Abraham can break off; he can repent the whole thing as a spiritual trial; then he can speak, then everyone can understand him —but then he is no longer Abraham.

Abraham *cannot* speak, for the thing that explains everything he cannot say (i.e., so that it is understandable): that it is a trial—mind you, one in which the ethical is the temptation. Whoever is placed like this is an emigrant from the sphere of the universal. But the next thing he can say even [203] less. For Abraham, as was sufficiently developed earlier, makes two movements. He makes the infinite movement of resignation and gives up Isaac; this no one can understand, because it is a private undertaking. But next, at every moment, he makes the movement of faith. This is his comfort. For he says: Still, it will not happen—or if it does, then the Lord will give me a new Isaac, by virtue, that is, of the absurd.

The tragic hero, at any rate, gets to the end of the story. Iphigenia bows to her father's decision; she herself makes the infinite movement of resignation, and now they understand each other. She can understand Agamemnon because his undertaking expresses the universal. If, on the other hand, Agamemnon were to say to her: "Although the god

60 Speaking in tongues: Acts 2:4; 1 Corinthians 14.

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muligt, at han ikke fordrede det, i Kraft nemlig af det Absurde,« saa vilde han i samme Øieblik blive uforstaaelig for Iphigenia. Kunde han sige det i Kraft af menneskelig Beregning, saa skulde Iphigenia vel forstaae ham; men saa vilde deraf følge, at Agamemnon ikke havde gjort Resignationens uendelige Bevægelse, og saa er han ikke Helt, saa er Spaamandens Udsagn en Skipperefterretning, og den hele Begivenhed en Vaudeville.

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demands you as a sacrifice, it is still possible that he does not demand it—by virtue, that is, of the absurd," he would at that very moment become incomprehensible to Iphigenia. If he could say it by virtue of human calculation, then Iphigenia would surely understand him; but then it would follow that Agamemnon had not made the infinite movement of resignation, and then he is no hero, then the seer's pronouncement is a sailor's yarn and the whole event a vaudeville.[61]

ABRAHAM'S LAST WORD

Abraham's answer to Isaac says nothing untrue and yet says nothing.

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Abraham talede da ikke. Kun eet Ord er der opbevaret af ham, den eneste Replik til Isaak, hvilken da ogsaa tilstrækkelig beviser, at han ikke havde talet iforveien. Isaak gjør Abraham det Spørgsmaal, hvor Lammet er til Brændoffer. »Og Abraham sagde: Gud skal see sig om Lammet til Brændofferet min Søn!«

Dette sidste Ord af Abraham skal jeg her lidt nærmere betragte. Dersom dette Ord ikke var, da vilde den hele Begivenhed mangle Noget, dersom det var anderledes, da vilde Alt maaskee opløse sig i Forvirring.

Det har ofte været Gjenstand for min Overveielse, hvorvidt en tragisk Helt, hvad enten han culminerer i en Liden eller en Handling, bør have en sidste Replik. Det beroer, efter hvad jeg kan skjønne, paa, hvilken Livs-Sphære han tilhører, hvorvidt hans Liv har intellectuel Betydning, hvorvidt hans Liden eller Handling staae i Forhold til Aand.

Det følger af sig selv, at den tragiske Helt i sit Culminations Øieblik, ligesom ethvert andet Menneske, der ikke er Mælet berøvet, kan sige et Par Ord, maaskee et Par passende Ord, men Spørgsmaalet er, hvorvidt det er passende for ham at sige dem. Ligger hans Livs-Betydning i en [204] udvortes Gjerning, da har han Intet at sige, da er Alt, hvad han siger, væsentlig Passiar, hvorved han kun svækker Indtrykket af sig selv, hvorimod det tragiske Ceremoniel byder, at han taus fuldkommer sin Opgave, hvad enten denne bestaaer i en Handling eller i en Liden. For ikke at gaae for vidt, vil jeg blot tage hvad der ligger allernærmest.

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So Abraham did not speak. Only one word of his is preserved, his only reply to Isaac, which also proves sufficiently that he had not spoken before. Isaac asks Abraham where the lamb for the burnt offering is. "And Abraham said: God will see to the lamb for the burnt offering himself, my son!"[62]

This last word of Abraham's I shall consider here a little more closely. If this word were not there, the whole event would lack something; if it were different, everything might perhaps dissolve in confusion.

It has often been a subject of my reflection whether a tragic hero, whether he culminates in a suffering or in an action, ought to have a last line. As far as I can see, it depends on which sphere of life he belongs to, whether his life has intellectual significance, whether his suffering or action stands in relation to spirit.

It goes without saying that the tragic hero at his moment of culmination, like any other person who has not been deprived of speech, can say a few words, perhaps a few fitting words; but the question is whether it is fitting for him to say them. If the significance of his life lies in an [204] outward deed, then he has nothing to say; then everything he says is essentially chatter, by which he only weakens the impression he makes, whereas tragic ceremonial requires that he accomplish his task in silence, whether it consists in an action

61 The seer is Calchas. Vaudeville, light comedy with songs, was the popular stage genre of 1840s Copenhagen.
62 Genesis 22:7–8.

DANISH

SKS 4.204 Hvis Agamemnon selv, ikke Kalchas, skulde have draget Kniven mod Iphigenia, da havde han blot nedværdiget sig selv, ved i det sidste Øieblik, at ville sige et Par Ord; thi hans Gjernings Betydning var jo vitterlig for alle, Pietetens, Medlidenhedens, Følelsens, Taarernes Procedure var fuldendt, og for øvrigt havde hans Liv intet Forhold til Aand ɔ: han var ikke Lærer eller Aandens Vidne. Er en Helts Livs Betydning derimod i Retning af Aand, da vilde Manglen paa Replik svække Indtrykket af ham. Det, han da har at sige, er ikke et Par passende Ord, et lille Declamations-Stykke, men Betydningen af hans Replik er, at han gjennemfører sig selv i det afgjørende Øieblik.

En saadan intellectuel tragisk Helt, han bør have og han bør beholde det sidste Ord. Man fordrer af ham den samme forklarede Holdning, som den, der anstaaer enhver tragisk Helt, men da fordrer man endnu eet Ord. Forsaavidt da en saadan intellectuel tragisk Helt culminerer i en Liden (i Døden), da bliver han i dette sidste Ord udødelig før han døer, medens derimod den almindelige tragiske Helt først bliver udødelig efter sin Død.

Socrates kan man bruge som et Exempel. Han var en intellectuel tragisk Helt. Hans Dødsdom bliver ham forkyndt. I det Øieblik døer han, thi den, som ikke forstaaer, at der fordres Aandens hele Kraft til at døe, og at Helten altid døer, før han døer, han skal ikke komme synderligt vidt i sin Betragtning af Livet. Som Helt fordres der nu af Socrates, at han rolig hviler i sig selv, men som intellectuel tragisk Helt fordres der af ham, at han i dette sidste Øieblik har Aandsstyrke nok til at gjennemføre sig selv.

Han kan da ikke som den almindelige tragiske Helt concentrere sig paa at holde sig ligeoverfor Døden, men han maa saa hurtig gjøre denne Bevægelse, at han i samme Øieblik med sin Bevidsthed er ude over denne Strid og hævder sig selv. Dersom saaledes Socrates i Dødens Krisis havde forstummet, da havde han svækket Virkningen af sit Liv, vakt en Mistanke om, at Ironiens Elasticitet i ham ikke var en Verdenskraft, men et Spil, hvis Spænstighed i det afgjørende [205] Øieblik maatte bruges efter omvendt Maalestok til pathetisk at holde ham oppe*.

ENGLISH

or in a suffering. So as not to go too far afield, I shall take only what lies closest at hand.

If Agamemnon himself, and not Calchas, had had to draw the knife against Iphigenia, he would only have demeaned himself by wanting to say a few words at the last moment; for the significance of his deed was plain to all, the procedure of piety, compassion, feeling and tears was complete, and besides, his life had no relation to spirit, i.e., he was not a teacher or a witness of the spirit. If, on the other hand, the significance of a hero's life lies in the direction of spirit, then the lack of a last line would weaken the impression he makes. What he then has to say is not a few fitting words, a little piece of declamation; rather, the significance of his line is that he carries himself through to the end at the decisive moment.

Such an intellectual tragic hero ought to have, and ought to keep, the last word. One demands of him the same transfigured bearing that befits every tragic hero, but then one demands one word more. So if such an intellectual tragic hero culminates in a suffering (in death), then in this last word he becomes immortal before he dies, whereas the ordinary tragic hero becomes immortal only after his death.

Socrates can serve as an example. He was an intellectual tragic hero. His death sentence is announced to him. At that moment he dies—for whoever does not understand that the whole power of the spirit is required in order to die, and that the hero always dies before he dies, will not get very far in his view of life. As a hero, Socrates is now required to rest calmly in himself; but as an intellectual tragic hero he is required to have, in this last moment, strength of spirit enough to carry himself through to the end.

He cannot, then, like the ordinary tragic hero, concentrate on holding firm in the face of death; he must make this movement so quickly that at the same moment he is consciously beyond this struggle and asserts himself. Had Socrates, then, fallen silent in the crisis of death, he would have weakened the effect of his life and roused the suspicion that the elasticity of irony in him was not a world-power but a game, whose springiness at the decisive [205] moment had to be used on an inverted scale to hold him up with pathos*.

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SKS 4.205 Hvad her kortelig er antydet, kan vel ikke finde sin Anvendelse paa Abraham, forsaavidt man mener ved nogen Analogi at skulle kunne udfinde et passende Ord for Abraham til at ende med, men vel forsaavidt, at man indseer Nødvendigheden af, at Abraham i det sidste Øieblik maa gjennemføre sig selv, ikke taus maa drage Kniven, men have et Ord at sige, da han som Troens Fader har absolut Betydning i Retning af Aand. Hvad han skal sige, derom kan jeg ingen Forestilling gjøre mig iforveien; efterat han har sagt det, kan jeg vel forstaae det, vel i en vis Forstand forstaae Abraham i det Sagte, uden dog derved at være kommen ham nærmere, end jeg har været ham i det Foregaaende.

What is briefly suggested here cannot, of course, be applied to Abraham insofar as one supposes that by some analogy one could work out a fitting word for Abraham to end with; but it does apply insofar as one sees the necessity that Abraham at the last moment must carry himself through to the end—must not draw the knife in silence but have a word to say, since as the father of faith he has absolute significance in the direction of spirit. What he is to say I can form no idea of in advance; after he has said it I can indeed understand it, and in a certain sense understand Abraham in what is said, without thereby having come any closer to him than I have been in the preceding.

Dersom der ingen sidste Replik havde existeret af Socrates, da havde jeg kunnet tænke mig ind i ham og dannet en saadan, havde jeg ikke kunnet gjøre det, saa havde en Digter formaaet det, men Abraham naaer ingen Digter.

Had no last line of Socrates' existed, I could have thought my way into him and formed one; had I not been able to do that, a poet could have managed it. But no poet reaches Abraham.

Inden jeg gaaer over til nærmere at betragte Abrahams sidste Ord, maa jeg først gjøre opmærksom paa Vanskeligheden af, at Abraham overhovedet kan komme til at sige Noget. Nøden og Angsten i Paradoxet laae, som ovenfor udviklet, netop i Tausheden, Abraham kan ikke tale*. Forsaavidt er det da en Selvmodsigelse at fordre, at han skal tale, med mindre man vil have ham ud igjen af Paradoxet, saaledes, at han [206] i det afgjørende Øieblik suspenderer det, hvorved han da ophører at være Abraham og annullerer hele det Foregaaende. Dersom

Before I go on to consider Abraham's last word more closely, I must first draw attention to the difficulty of Abraham's being able to say anything at all. The distress and anguish in the paradox lay, as developed above, precisely in the silence: Abraham cannot speak*. To that extent it is a self-contradiction to demand that he should speak, unless one wants him out of the paradox again, so that he [206] suspends it at the decisive moment, whereby he ceases to be Abraham and annuls all that went be-

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* Hvilken Replik af Socrates der maa ansees for den afgjørende, derom kunne Meningerne være delte, da Socrates paa saa mange Maader ved Plato er poetisk forflygtiget. Jeg foreslaaer følgende: Dødsdommen bliver ham forkyndt, i samme Øieblik døer han, i samme Øieblik overvinder han Døden og gjennemfører sig selv i det berømte Tilsvar: at det forundrede ham, at han var bleven dømt med en Majoritet af 3 Stemmer. Ingen løs og ledig Tale paa Torvet, ingen taabelig Bemærkning af en *[Taabe]* kunde han have spøget mere ironisk med, end med den Dødsdom, der dømmer ham selv fra Livet.

* Which of Socrates' lines must be regarded as the decisive one is a matter on which opinions may differ, since Plato has in so many ways poetically volatilized Socrates. I propose the following: the death sentence is announced to him; in that same moment he dies; in that same moment he overcomes death and carries himself through to the end in the famous reply: that he was surprised to have been condemned by a majority of three votes. No idle, loose talk in the marketplace, no foolish remark from a fool could he have joked about more ironically than about the death sentence that condemns him out of life.[63]

63 Plato, *Apology* 36a; most modern editions of the Greek read thirty votes rather than three.

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saaledes Abraham nu i det afgjørende Øieblik vilde sige til Isaak: det er Dig, det gjelder, da var dette kun en Svaghed.

SKS 4.206 Thi kunde han overhovedet tale, da maatte han have talt for længe siden, og Svagheden vilde da ligge i, at han ikke havde havt Aands Modenhed og Concentration til forud at tænke hele Smerten, men skubbet Noget af sig, saaledes at den virkelige Smerte var et Mere end den tænkte. Desuden vilde han ved en saadan Tale falde ud af Paradoxet, og hvis han virkelig vilde tale med Isaak, maatte han forvandle sin Tilstand til en Anfægtelse; thi ellers kunde han dog Intet sige, og gjør han dette, da er han end ikke nogen tragisk Helt.

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Imidlertid er der dog opbevaret et sidste Ord af Abraham, og forsaavidt jeg kan forstaae Paradoxet, kan jeg ogsaa forstaae Abrahams totale Tilstedeværelse i dette Ord. Han siger først og fremmest ikke Noget, og i denne Form siger han hvad han har at sige. Hans Svar til Isaak har Ironiens Form, thi det er altid Ironi, naar jeg siger Noget, og dog ikke siger Noget. Isaak spørger Abraham i den Formening, at Abraham er vidende. Vilde Abraham nu have svaret: jeg veed Intet, saa havde han sagt en Usandhed. Sige Noget kan han ikke; thi hvad han veed, kan han ikke sige. Han svarer da: Gud skal see sig om Lammet til Brændoffer min Søn!

Man seer heraf Dobbeltbevægelsen i Abrahams Sjæl, saaledes som den er beskreven i det Foregaaende. Havde Abraham blot resigneret paa Isaak og ikke gjort mere, saa har han sagt en Usandhed; thi han veed jo, at Gud fordrer Isaak til Offer, og han veed, at han selv netop i dette Øieblik er redebon til at offre ham. Han har da i ethvert Øieblik, efter at have gjort denne Bevægelse, gjort den

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fore. If, then, at the decisive moment Abraham were to say to Isaac: "It is you who are meant"—that would be only a weakness.

For if he could speak at all, he would have had to speak long ago, and the weakness would then lie in his not having had the maturity and concentration of spirit to think through the whole pain in advance, but having pushed some of it away, so that the actual pain was something more than the pain he had thought. Besides, with such a speech he would fall out of the paradox; and if he really wanted to speak with Isaac, he would have to transform his situation into a spiritual trial, for otherwise he could say nothing at all; and if he does that, he is not even a tragic hero.

Nevertheless, a last word of Abraham's has been preserved, and insofar as I can understand the paradox, I can also understand Abraham's total presence in this word. First and foremost, he says nothing, and in this form he says what he has to say. His answer to Isaac has the form of irony, for it is always irony when I say something and yet do not say anything. Isaac asks Abraham on the assumption that Abraham knows. Now had Abraham answered, "I know nothing," he would have said an untruth. Say something he cannot, for what he knows he cannot say. So he answers: "God will see to the lamb for the burnt offering himself, my son!"

Here one sees the double movement in Abraham's soul, as it was described in the preceding. Had Abraham merely resigned Isaac and done no more, then he has said an untruth; for he knows that God demands Isaac as a sacrifice, and he knows that he himself, at this very moment, is ready to sacrifice him. So at every moment, after making this move-

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* Forsaavidt der kan være Tale om nogen Analogi, afgiver Pythagoras's Døds-Situation en saadan, thi den af ham altid hævdede Taushed maatte han gjennemføre i sit sidste Øieblik, og derfor *sagde* han: det er bedre at dræbes end at tale. Cfr. Diogenes 8de Bog § 39.

* Insofar as there can be any talk of an analogy, the situation of Pythagoras at his death provides one; for the silence he had always maintained he had to carry through to his last moment, and therefore he *said*: "It is better to be killed than to speak." Cf. Diogenes, Book 8, § 39.[65]

65 Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* (3rd century AD), whose eighth book covers Pythagoras.

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næste, gjort Troens Bevægelse i Kraft af det Absurde. Forsaavidt siger han ingen Usandhed; thi i Kraft af det Absurde er det jo muligt, at Gud kunde gjøre noget ganske Andet. Han siger da ingen Usandhed, men han siger da heller ikke Noget; thi han taler i et fremmed Tungemaal.

Dette bliver endnu evidentere, naar vi betænke, at det var Abraham selv, der skulde offre Isaak. Havde Opgaven været en anden, havde Herren befalet Abraham at bringe Isaak ud paa Morijabjerget, saa skulde han selv lade sit Lyn ramme Isaak og saaledes tage ham som et Offer, saa kunde Abraham i ligefrem Forstand have Ret i at tale saa ænigmatisk, som han gjør; thi saa kunde han jo ikke selv vide hvad der vilde skee. Men [207] saaledes som Opgaven er stillet Abraham, skal han jo selv handle, han maa altsaa i det afgjørende Øieblik vide, hvad han selv vil gjøre, og altsaa maa han vide, at Isaak skal offres.

SKS 4.207 Har han ikke vidst dette med Bestemthed, saa har han ikke gjort Resignationens uendelige Bevægelse, saa er hans Ord vel ikke Usandhed, men han er tillige meget langt fra at være Abraham, han er ubetydeligere end en tragisk Helt, ja han er en uresolveret Mand, der hverken kan beslutte sig til det Ene eller til det Andet, og som paa Grund deraf altid vil komme til at tale i Gaader. Men en saadan Hæsitator er lige Parodien paa Troens Ridder.

Det viser sig da atter her, at man vel kan forstaae Abraham, men kun forstaae ham saaledes, som man forstaaer Paradoxet. Jeg for mit Vedkommende kan vel forstaae Abraham, men fatter tillige, at jeg ikke har Mod til at tale saaledes, ligesaa lidet som jeg har Mod til at handle som Abraham; men derfor siger jeg ingenlunde, at det er noget Ringe, da det tvertimod er det eneste Vidunderlige.

Og hvad dømte nu Samtiden om den tragiske Helt? at han var stor, og den beundrede ham. Og hiin hæderværdige Samling af Ædle, den Jury, som enhver Slægt constituerer til at dømme den forbigangne Slægt, den dømte ligesaa. Men Abraham var der Ingen, der kunde forstaae. Og dog hvad opnaaede han? At han blev sin Kjærlighed tro. Men den, der elsker Gud, han behøver ikke Taarer, ikke Beundring, han glemmer Lidelsen i Kjærligheden, ja saa aldeles har han glemt den, at der skulde end ikke bag efter være den mindste Ahnelse om hans Smerte, hvis

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ment, he has made the next one, the movement of faith by virtue of the absurd. To that extent he says no untruth; for by virtue of the absurd it is indeed possible that God could do something entirely different. So he says no untruth, but neither does he say anything; for he speaks in a foreign tongue.

This becomes still more evident when we consider that it was Abraham himself who was to sacrifice Isaac. Had the task been different—had the Lord commanded Abraham to bring Isaac out onto Mount Moriah and then himself let his lightning strike Isaac and so take him as a sacrifice—then Abraham would in a straightforward sense have been right to speak as enigmatically as he does; for then he himself could not know what would happen. But [207] as the task is set for Abraham, he himself is to act; so at the decisive moment he must know what he himself will do, and so he must know that Isaac is to be sacrificed.

If he has not known this definitely, then he has not made the infinite movement of resignation; then his word is indeed no untruth, but he is also very far from being Abraham—he is less significant than a tragic hero; indeed, he is an irresolute man who can decide on neither the one thing nor the other, and who for that reason will always end up speaking in riddles. But such a hesitator is the very parody of the knight of faith.

Here again, then, it turns out that one can indeed understand Abraham, but only understand him in the way one understands the paradox. For my part, I can indeed understand Abraham, but I also grasp that I do not have the courage to speak like that, any more than I have the courage to act like Abraham; but I by no means say on that account that it is something slight, since on the contrary it is the one true marvel.

And what did its contemporaries judge of the tragic hero? That he was great, and they admired him. And that honorable assembly of the noble, the jury that every generation constitutes to judge the generation past, judged likewise. But Abraham there was no one who could understand. And yet what did he attain? That he remained true to his love. But whoever loves God needs no tears, no admiration; he forgets the suffering in the love—indeed, he has so completely forgotten it that after-

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Gud selv ikke mindedes den; thi han seer i Løndom, og kjender Nøden og tæller Taarerne og glemmer Intet.	ward there would not be the slightest inkling of his pain, if God himself did not remember it; for he sees in secret, and knows the distress, and counts the tears, and forgets nothing.[67]
Enten er der da et Paradox til, at den Enkelte som den Enkelte staaer i et absolut Forhold til det Absolute, eller Abraham er tabt.	Either, then, there is a paradox, that the single individual as the single individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute, or Abraham is lost.

67 "Sees in secret" echoes Matthew 6:4–6; "counts the tears," Psalm 56:8.

Epilogue

Epilog

Every generation must begin from the beginning; faith is the highest passion in a human being.

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SKS 4.208 Da engang i Holland Priserne paa Kryderier bleve noget flaue, da lod Kjøbmændene et Par Ladninger sænke i Havet for at skrue Prisen op. Dette var et tilgiveligt, maaskee et nødvendigt Bedrag. Er det noget Lignende, vi behøve i Aandens Verden, ere vi i den Grad forvissede om, at være komne til det Høieste, at der intet Andet er tilbage end fromt at indbilde os selv, at vi ikke ere komne saavidt, for dog at faae Noget at udfylde Tiden med? Er det et saadant Selvbedrag, den nærværende Slægt behøver, er det til en Virtuositet heri den skulde dannes, eller er den ikke snarere tilstrækkeligt perfectioneret i den Konst at bedrage sig selv?

Eller er det, den behøver, ikke snarere en redelig Alvor, der uforfærdet og ubestikkelig peger paa Opgaverne, en redelig Alvor, der kjærligt freder om Opgaverne, der ikke ængster Menneskene til at ville forraske sig i det Høieste, men holder Opgaverne unge og skjønne og deilige at see til og vinkende for Alle og dog derhos vanskelige og begeistrende for de Ædle; thi den ædle Natur begeistres kun ved det Vanskelige? Hvad end den ene Slægt lærer af den anden, det egentlige Humane lærer ingen Slægt af en foregaaende. I Henseende til dette begynder enhver Slægt primitivt, har ingen anden Opgave end enhver foregaaende Slægt, kommer heller ei videre, forsaavidt den foregaaende ikke sveg Opgaven, og bedrog sig selv.

Dette egentlig Humane er Lidenskaben, i hvilken ogsaa den ene Slægt fuldkommen forstaaer den anden og forstaaer sig selv. At elske har saaledes ingen Slægt lært af en anden, ingen Slægt kommer til at begynde paa et andet Punkt end ved Begyndelsen, ingen senere Slægt har en kortere Opgave end den foregaaende, og hvis man her ikke vil, som de foregaaende Slægter, blive [209] staaende ved at elske, men gaae videre, saa er dette kun en ørkesløs og daarlig Tale.

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Once in Holland, when the price of spices had gone somewhat slack, the merchants had a few cargoes sunk in the sea to drive the price up. This was a pardonable, perhaps a necessary, deception. Is it something similar we need in the world of spirit? Are we so assured of having reached the highest that nothing else remains but piously to make ourselves believe we have not come that far, just so as to have something to fill the time with? Is it such a self-deception that the present generation needs? Is it to a virtuosity in this that it should be trained—or is it not rather sufficiently perfected already in the art of deceiving itself?[1]

Or is what it needs not rather an honest earnestness that fearlessly and incorruptibly points to the tasks, an honest earnestness that lovingly guards the tasks, that does not frighten people into wanting to rush headlong at the highest, but keeps the tasks young and beautiful and lovely to look at and beckoning to all, and yet at the same time difficult and inspiring to the noble—for the noble nature is inspired only by the difficult? Whatever one generation learns from another, what is genuinely human no generation learns from a previous one. In this respect every generation begins primitively, has no other task than every previous generation, and gets no further—provided the previous one did not betray the task and deceive itself.

This genuinely human thing is passion, in which one generation also fully understands the other and understands itself. Thus no generation has learned from another to love; no generation begins at any other point than the beginning; no later generation has a shorter task than the preceding one; and if here one will not, like the preceding generations, [209] stop at loving but wants to go further, that is only idle and foolish talk.

1 The Dutch East India Company was known for destroying surplus spices to keep prices high.

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SKS 4.209 Men den høieste Lidenskab i et Menneske er Troen, og ingen Slægt begynder her paa et andet Punkt end den foregaaende, enhver Slægt begynder forfra, den følgende Slægt kommer ikke videre end den foregaaende, forsaavidt denne blev sin Opgave tro og ikke lod den i Stikken. At dette skulde være trættende, er naturligviis Noget, Slægten ikke kan sige, thi Slægten har jo Opgaven og har Intet med den Ting at gjøre, at den foregaaende Slægt havde samme Opgave, med mindre den enkelte Slægt, eller de Enkelte i Slægten formastelig ville indtage den Plads, som kun tilkommer den Aand, der styrer Verden og som har Taalmodighed til ikke at blive træt.

Begynder Slægten paa Sligt, da er den forkeert, og hvad Under da, at hele Tilværelsen synes den forkeert; thi der er vist Ingen, der har fundet Tilværelsen mere forkeert end den Skrædder, der efter Eventyret i levende Live kom op i Himlen og fra dette Standpunkt betragtede Verden. Saasnart Slægten kun bekymrer sig om sin Opgave, hvilket er det Høieste, da kan den ikke blive træt; thi Opgaven er altid tilstrækkelig for et Menneskeliv.

Naar Børnene paa en Fridag allerede før Klokken er 12 have gjennemleget alle Lege, og nu utaalmodige sige: er der da Ingen, der kan hitte paa en ny Leeg, beviser dette da, at disse Børn ere mere udviklede og fremmeligere end de Børn i den samtidige eller en forbigangen Slægt, der kunde lade de bekjendte Lege strække til for hele Dagen? Eller beviser det ikke snarere, at hine første Børn mangle, hvad jeg vilde kalde, den elskelige Alvor, der hører til at lege?

Troen er den høieste Lidenskab i et Menneske. Der er maaskee i enhver Slægt Mange, der end ikke komme til den, men Ingen kommer videre. Om der ogsaa i vor Tid er Mange, der ikke opdage den, afgjør jeg ikke; jeg tør kun beraabe mig paa mig selv, der ikke dølger, at det har lange Udsigter med ham, uden at han dog derfor ønsker at bedrage sig selv eller det Store ved at gjøre dette til en Ubetydelighed, til en Børnesygdom, man saa snart som muligt maa ønske overstaaet.

Men ogsaa for den, der ikke engang kommer til Troen, har Livet Opgaver nok, og naar han elsker disse redelig,

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But the highest passion in a human being is faith, and here no generation begins at any other point than the previous one; every generation begins from the beginning; the following generation gets no further than the previous one, provided that one was faithful to its task and did not leave it in the lurch. That this should be tiring is naturally something the generation cannot say, for the generation has the task and has nothing to do with the fact that the previous generation had the same task—unless the particular generation, or the individuals in it, presumptuously want to take the place that belongs only to the spirit that governs the world and has the patience not to grow tired.

If the generation starts on anything like that, it has gone wrong, and no wonder, then, that the whole of existence seems wrong to it; for surely no one has found existence more wrong than the tailor who, according to the fairy tale, went up to heaven while still alive and viewed the world from that standpoint. As long as the generation concerns itself only with its task, which is the highest, it cannot grow tired; for the task is always enough for a human life.[2]

When children on a holiday have already played through all the games before twelve o'clock and now say impatiently, "Can't anyone think up a new game?"—does this prove that these children are more developed and advanced than the children of their own or a past generation who could make the familiar games last the whole day? Or does it not rather prove that those first children lack what I would call the lovable earnestness that belongs to play?

Faith is the highest passion in a human being. There are perhaps many in every generation who do not even come to it, but no one goes further. Whether there are also many in our age who do not discover it I do not decide; I dare appeal only to myself, who makes no secret that in his case it will be a long while, without on that account wishing to deceive himself or what is great by making it a trifle, a childhood illness one must wish to get over as soon as possible.

But even for one who does not come as far as faith, life has tasks enough, and if he loves them hon-

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da skal Livet heller ikke være spildt, om det end aldrig bliver deres ligt, der fornam og grebe det Høieste. Men den, der kom til Troen, (han være den udmærket Begavede eller den [210] Eenfoldige, dette gjør Intet til Sagen) han bliver ikke staaende ved Troen, ja han vilde oprøres, hvis Nogen sagde det til ham, ligesom den Elskende vilde harmes, naar man sagde, han blev staaende ved Kjærligheden; thi, vilde han svare, jeg bliver ingenlunde staaende, da jeg har mit Liv deri. Dog kommer han heller ikke videre, ikke til noget Andet; thi naar han opdager dette, da har han en anden Forklaring.

SKS 4.210 »Man maa gaae videre; man maa gaae videre.« Denne Trang til at gaae videre er gammel i Verden. Den dunkle Heraklit, der nedlagde Tanker i sine Skrifter og sine Skrifter i Dianas Tempel, (thi hans Tanker havde været hans Rustning i Livet, og derfor ophængte han den i Gudens Tempel) den dunkle Heraklit har sagt: man kan ikke gaae to Gange gjennem den samme Flod*. Den dunkle Heraklit havde en Discipel, han blev ikke staaende herved, han gik videre og tilføiede: man kan end ikke gjøre det eengang*. Stakkels Heraklit at have en saadan Discipel!

Den heraklitiske Sætning blev ved denne Forbedring forbedret til en eleatisk Sætning, der negter Bevægelsen, og dog ønskede hiin Discipel kun at være en Discipel af Heraklit, der gik videre, ikke tilbage til det, Heraklit havde forladt.

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estly, his life will not be wasted either, even though it never becomes like the lives of those who sensed and grasped the highest. But whoever has come to faith (whether he be exceptionally gifted or [210] simple makes no difference) does not stop at faith; indeed, he would be indignant if anyone said so to him, just as the lover would be offended if one said he stopped at love; for, he would answer, I am by no means standing still, since my life is in it. Yet neither does he go further, to something else; for if he discovers that, then he has another explanation.

"One must go further; one must go further." This urge to go further is old in the world. The obscure Heraclitus, who deposited his thoughts in his writings and his writings in the temple of Diana (for his thoughts had been his armor in life, and so he hung it up in the deity's temple), the obscure Heraclitus said: "One cannot pass twice through the same river"*. The obscure Heraclitus had a disciple who did not stop there; he went further and added: "One cannot do it even once"*. Poor Heraclitus, to have such a disciple![3]

By this improvement the Heraclitean proposition was improved into an Eleatic proposition that denies motion—and yet that disciple only wanted to be a disciple of Heraclitus who went further, not back to what Heraclitus had left behind.[4]

2 The Grimms' tale "The Tailor in Heaven," in which a tailor, looking down from God's throne, flies into a rage at the injustice he sees on earth.
3 Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 500 BC), called "the Obscure"; the disciple is Cratylus, as reported by Aristotle.
4 The Eleatics, Parmenides and Zeno, denied that motion is real; *Bevægelse* means both "motion" and "movement."
6

* Και ποταμου ροῃ απεικαζων τα οντα λεγει ὡς δις ες τον αυτον ποταμον ουκ εμβαινης. Cfr. Platos Cratyllus § 402. Ast. 3die B. Pag. 158.

* Και ποταμου ροῃ απεικαζων τα οντα λεγει ὡς δις ες τον αυτον ποταμον ουκ εμβαινης [And likening the things that are to the flow of a river, he says that you could not step twice into the same river]. Cf. Plato's Cratylus § 402. Ast, vol. 3, p. 158.[5]

5 Friedrich Ast's edition of Plato (1819–32).
8

* Cfr. Tennemann Gesch. d. Philos. 1ster B. Pag. 220.

* Cf. Tennemann, Gesch. d. Philos. [History of Philosophy], vol. 1, p. 220.[7]

7 Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann, *Geschichte der Philosophie* (1798–1819).