

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF HUMAN  
FINITUDE: A "RETRIEVAL" OF  
KIERKEGAARD'S PROTO-HERMENEUTICS

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The aim of relation is relation's own being, that is, contact with the *Thou*. For through contact with every thou we are stirred with a breath of the *Thou*, that is, of eternal life.<sup>1</sup>

— Martin Buber

To enter into relation with another individual, to establish an "existence-communication" where fundamental ethical demands are experienced directly — the twentieth-century Jewish theologian Martin Buber saw the reality of this relation to the *Thou* as mediating access to "eternal life." And the 'aim', the authentic *telos* of this relationship with the other, Buber urged, rests simply in establishing relationship itself, in achieving genuine 'contact' with another independent, existing person.

The emphasis in Buber's existentialist thought on the ethical primacy of an *I-Thou* relation is anticipated, as is well-acknowledged, by seminal insights from within the large, literary corpus of Søren Kierkegaard. For the Danish Lutheran Kierkegaard, the basic concern of this ethical relation with the *Thou* finds its most paradigmatic expression in the existing human's relationship to the absolute 'Other.' It is a relationship which is grounded in — language suggestively evoked in Buber's later formulations — in the infinite interest in one's "eternal happiness." And this "relation of the subject [to God] is precisely the knotty subject," a concern of central importance

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within Kierkegaard's philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

What is at stake here? Why does this subjective relationship of the existing individual to her eternal happiness, this "God-relationship," constitute, for Kierkegaard, *the* knotty subject? Understood properly, it is just this dilemma which confronts each person as an existing individual. It was this overarching concern which bore a foundational bearing for his entire thinking, and indeed, for his own life:

... what good would it do me to be able to explain the meaning of Christianity if it had no deeper significance for me and for my life; — what good would it do me if truth stood before me, cold and naked, not caring whether I recognized her or not, and producing in me a shudder of fear rather than a trusting devotion? I certainly do not deny that I still recognise an imperative of understanding and that through it one can work upon men, but it must be taken up into my life, and that is what I now recognise as the most important thing.<sup>3</sup>

The 'imperative' nature derives from its intellectual, and more decisively, from its existential claims upon the person's life, as she lives it; its difficulty rests in the manner in which we relate to the truth.

Before tackling the 'knotty subject' of the believer's existential stance, we need to underscore a basic condition for any truth-relationship at all. It is the concern that opens the pseudonym Johannes Climacus' first work, *Philosophical Fragments* — namely, "Can the truth be learned?" Can we even acquire Kierkegaard's "imperative of understanding" at all, not only to 'work upon' others, but to take up truth in our own individual lives? Instead of engaging in a predominant approach in formulating this issue — by concentrating on Kierkegaard's celebrated thesis that "truth is subjectivity," that knowledge of truth is obtained *via* some existential, subjective mode of inquiry — we want to retrieve here what seems an almost entirely neglected element in most expositions on his

philosophy: a full description of Kierkegaard's essentially *negative* response to the question.

That is, we want to outline those conditions and features inherent in the human predicament that, at least for Kierkegaard, present themselves as barriers, or perhaps better, as inevitable limitations or horizons to human attempts at knowing. And in this respect, we want to secure for Kierkegaard an anticipatory status not only as a proto-deconstructionist, as scholars as diverse as Louis Mackey, Mark Taylor and others have variously suggested, but also, and perhaps more calmly, as an important proto-*hermeneutical* thinker – as anticipating stances maturely formulated in later Continental philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and others. We want to establish what Kierkegaard sees as the situated contingency and 'fallibilistic' status intrinsic in any human knowledge.

Drawing particularly from the hallmark writings of the pseudonymous Johannes Climacus, we will try to piece together an organized view of how Kierkegaard would urge us to understand that most elevated project of human knowledge that is, metaphysical speculation, this theoretical explanation into the way things are.<sup>4</sup> It was the urgent need for delimiting this tendency in "the present age" towards totalizing system-building which provoked Kierkegaard into enlisting the talents of a dialectician like Johannes Climacus. The well-known historical outcome of this maneuver was an elaborate, existential defense of a thoroughly more tempered view of human knowing, working towards a hermeneutical 'reconstruction' of human finitude, and of the radical contingency of human knowledge and historical existence itself.

#### *A Pseudonymous Perspective on the Metaphysical Project*

Employing for his own particular purposes an insight derived from Lessing, Johannes Climacus endorses the thesis that "a system of existence cannot be given."<sup>5</sup> For Climacus, so-

called systems of existence, necessarily arising from an essentially detached viewpoint, are fundamentally contrary to the nature of human existence itself. Kierkegaard's distinctive formulations about "metaphysics" are fueled by exactly anti-Hegelian concerns of this sort, by what Johannes Climacus and other pseudonyms considered as fundamental shortcomings in any metaphysical project.

What best characterizes metaphysics, and the way in which speculative thought conceives of existence? It is preeminently a desire to understand one's existence *sub specie aeterni*,<sup>6</sup> the attempt to conjoin in human systems thought and existence, ideality and actuality. This attitude fosters a "metaphysical withdrawal,"<sup>7</sup> which always remains an existential impossibility because it requires an abstraction out of existence itself. As Climacus puts it, "The systematic idea is subject-object, is the unity of thinking and being; existence, on the other hand, is precisely the *separation*."<sup>8</sup> To locate Kierkegaard's insight in more familiar, philosophical environs, metaphysical systematization is preeminently that sort of thinking which Hilary Putnam would indict as being a wistful, realist longing for a God's-eye perspective, an 'externalistic' all-encompassing viewpoint from which to definitively understand the whole of reality.<sup>9</sup>

Johannes Climacus sets a fundamental opposition in motion here. On the one hand, we can embrace the deliverances of a theoretical metaphysics; on the other, we are confronted with existence itself, with the actuality of living one's own life. This same dilemma faced another Kierkegaard pseudonym, Constantin Constantius, in *Repetition*.<sup>10</sup> There, the issue was whether movement in the "existential" sense was possible, and Constantius set the stage with a classical dispute between the Eleatics, who theoretically denied motion, and Diogenes, who came forward to refute them. "He literally did come forward, because he did not say a word but merely paced pack and forth a few times, thereby assuming that he had

sufficiently refuted them."<sup>11</sup>

Metaphysical speculation, like the Eleatic denial of real motion, is always on the side of theoretically 'freezing' actuality, of trying to rarefy the constant flux of human existence into permanent, immobilized systems. Instead of movement forward, instead of genuine existential repetition, speculative thought feigns motion through a recollection (in a Socratic fashion) of systematic knowledge which one has, in fact, always immanently possessed.

Johannes Climacus affirms a related doctrine. Rather than stress on 'repetition' for acquiring existential knowledge, the arguments in the *Postscript* instead emphasize the ethical category. It is in the ethical – which, on at least one possible characterization, is where an individual moves beyond pure immediacy, and the multiplicities of options given by reflection, to that place where one relates in a *committed* sense of subjectivity – in which we encounter the difficulty of actual existence. Climacus writes:

The continued striving is the expression of the existing subject's ethical life view. The continued striving must therefore not be understood metaphysically, but neither is there any individual who exists metaphysically.<sup>12</sup>

This "continued striving," which, in apostolic Pauline language, is familiarly expressed as a pressing on to that goal ahead,<sup>13</sup> is eminently the language of actuality, of existential movement. And this necessity, Climacus would urge, demonstrates the incompatibility of living in effortless, speculative categories. To reemphasize his insight, "neither is there *any* individual who exists metaphysically."<sup>14</sup>

The project which underlies the project in the *Postscript* is thus more fundamental in a religious sense. The task is ethical and religious existence itself. The goal, the absolute *telos*, resides in one's acquiring of her own infinite, eternal happiness.

To yield to the ethical sphere, through resolving to

commit oneself, is to enter into actual existence. Metaphysics, on the other hand, would have us to go even beyond existence, as the term itself could literally be taken to imply, the 'meta-', or moving past or beyond, of natural existence itself; to move beyond the difficulty which constitutes the task of life.<sup>15</sup> This recalls Kierkegaard's repeated illustration of the system-builder who makes for herself a grand castle, and then occupies the hut next door, or the comical figure of Johannes Climacus' Herr Professor, who, in explaining all of existence, "has in sheer absentmindedness forgotten what he himself is called, namely that he is a human being... and not a fantastical three-eighths of a paragraph."<sup>16</sup>

Kierkegaard's critique of metaphysics, then, is an indictment from an ethical standpoint. It charges the metaphysician with 'skipping,' or 'leaping over,' the ethical sphere — and with that, existence itself. Either an individual refuses to enter into existence, never allowing an *aut/aut* to even arise in one's life. Or one has skipped it, attempting to systematize existence when the real task before one is constituted by life itself. And a final spatial metaphor, which seems, at least on this account, to exhaust metaphysics' possible neglect of existence, is that the person stands outside of existence altogether.

There are two ways in which an existing person can be outside of existence, but in neither of these ways does he mediate. One way is abstracting himself, by going a skeptical impassivity, an abstract indifference... The other way in which the individual can be outside existence is by being in a state of passion, but it is the very moment of passion that he gains the momentum to exist.<sup>17</sup>

We deliberately set aside this latter way of how one 'passionately' proceeds in existence; for present purposes, we want to evaluate the radical limitations inherent in the metaphysical project, as outlined by Climacus.

First, the metaphysical viewpoint, by which a person

wants to eternally understand the whole of existence, is a position *sub specie aeterni*, where "the truth would be something concluded for him."<sup>18</sup> "But where is this point?" Climacus presses. "The I-I is a mathematical point that does not exist at all . . ."<sup>19</sup> It is, quite literally, what Thomas Nagel has aptly called, a "view from nowhere."<sup>20</sup>

And second, the role that speculation plays in actual human existence must be sharply demarcated. This delimiting of 'objective' knowledge will be taken up again in the next section. Here we can note how, at least for Climacus, knowledge, by itself, is woefully inadequate. Climacus insists that "the ethical is not only a knowing; it is also a *doing* that is related to a knowing . . ."<sup>21</sup> In fact, this ethical dimension can be seen as a necessary pre-condition for having any knowledge at all. As Climacus suggests, "To exist subjectively with passion is on the whole an absolute condition for being able to have *any* opinion about Christianity."<sup>22</sup> The presence of subjectivity, of a passionate interestedness, alters our very epistemological capacity to acquire relevant knowledge.<sup>23</sup>

Third, and finally, this theoretical knowledge, divorced from the ethical, cannot even be considered to be the *highest* goal for which we should strive:<sup>24</sup>

By acting, by venturing the decisive thing (which every human being is capable of doing) in utmost subjective passion and in full consciousness of an eternal responsibility, one comes to know something else, also that to be a human being is something other than year in and year out pinning something together in a system.<sup>25</sup>

Knowledge, apart from abstract knowledge, knowledge that focuses on the individual's own existence, is what Johannes Climacus calls the 'essential truth' for human beings.<sup>26</sup>

This last section examines ways in which these limits to human knowledge are made concrete — not through the 'superiority' of an ethical actuality (the more 'positive' approach for

Kierkegaard), but through the inadequacies inherent in the sort of knowledge itself.

*The Undermining of Metaphysics and Human Existence*

A system of existence cannot be given. Is there, then, not such a system? That is not the case. Neither is this implied in what has been said. Existence itself is a system — for God, but it cannot be a system for any existing spirit. System and conclusiveness correspond to each other, but existence is the very opposite . . . Existing is the spacing that holds apart; the systematic is the conclusiveness that combines.<sup>27</sup>

Johannes Climacus' metaphor of 'spacing,' that concept which intrinsically "holds apart" an otherwise 'conclusive' portrait of existence, admits to a decisive gap in any attempt to understand human existence. A stronger, more explicitly skeptical belief bolsters the lack of systematic conclusiveness in this picture of human existence. In the fashion of an unrelenting Pyrrhonism, Johannes Climacus in the *Postscript* presses the more unsettling contention that "the perpetual process of becoming is the uncertainty of human life, in which *everything is uncertain*. Every human being knows this and says so once in a while . . ." <sup>28</sup> All of our attempts at conclusive, speculative systems of knowing are fundamentally undermined by the nature of human existence itself.

What are these "spaces" — epistemological, metaphysical, ethico-religious, and otherwise — which deny actually existing persons a complete system of existence? How does metaphysical speculation fail to provide a secure base of reference, an epistemically privileged ground whereby one can withstand the radical contingencies of human existence itself? We want to single out one aspect in Climacus' account that underscores the 'negative' features in the human epistemological situation: the inescapable character of "approximation-knowledge."

In achieving this task, Climacus' project develops in a perhaps unexpected way. The conclusion to this polemical appraisal of so-called 'objective' knowledge, far from yielding to an epistemic nihilism, or inducing some sort of Pyrrhonic *ataraxia*, provides, rather, measures for overcoming skepticism. It enables the individual, in some deeply existential sense, to engage, and appropriately come to grips with, that most paradigmatic philosophically 'modern' aspiration: *de omnibus dubitandum est* [everything must be doubted].<sup>29</sup>

To inquire broadly, what role can historical or theoretical 'objective' demonstration play in the believer's life? What constitutes the proper relation between faith and objective certitude? And can one ever reach a point of final stopping place, where religious certainty is decisively granted? These types of questions arise inevitably for Johannes Climacus' philosophy whenever anyone tackles the 'objective question' of Christianity, that is, when one inquires into the historical and philosophical truth within the Christian faith. We want to keep in mind two broader concerns. First, what exactly do these "objective" truths establish, if anything, for an individual believer? And second, how should we understand the particular relationship between objective certitude and faith?

Johannes Climacus' response to these concerns is doubly negative. That is to say, Climacus repeatedly affirms—in a theme which strongly anticipates what in contemporary philosophical circles has been termed a 'fallibilist' epistemological position—human finitude rooted in historicity, a fundamental contingency inherent in all potential grounds for 'objective' human knowledge.<sup>30</sup> What faith demands is certitude, but of a categorically different type than what "approximation certainty of probabilities" can provide. It is an assurance which presupposes an infinite interest as its *conditio sine qua non*, and which can only be satisfied by some proportionate means. As Climacus states it, only an insecure, embarrassed species of faith would seek out the approximation-knowledge of objective demonstration.<sup>31</sup> These objective truths provide only an

"approximation-knowledge," a less-than-certain account where every future critical deliberation leaves the believer *in suspenso*, forever, while remaining in reflective speculation, deferring existential decision. It is a speculative skepticism which paralyzes. In Climacus' words, "objectively understood, there are more than enough results anywhere, but no decisive result anywhere."<sup>32</sup>

A further claim is made that even if the objective truths of Christian faith were established as the *most* secure of all human enterprises of knowledge, for a believer, nothing is gained, not even in the least, "with regard to the power and strength of his faith."<sup>33</sup> On the contrary,

... in this prolix knowledge, in this certainty that lurks at faith's door and craves for it, he is rather in such a precarious position that much effort, much fear and trembling will be needed lest he fall into temptation and confuse faith with knowledge.<sup>34</sup>

For Climacus, radically, only in an epistemologically imperfect world is faith even conceivable (!).

That is to say, a fundamental deficiency marks any positive knowledge. As Climacus says, "all of this positive fails to express the state of the knowing subject *in existence*."<sup>35</sup> Speculative, theoretical results are disingenuous claims of inhumanly grasping the whole of reality *sub specie aeterni*.

### *The Recovery of Finite Human Understanding*

We can legitimately question whether Johannes Climacus' appraisal of all sensate, historical, and speculative truths is unwarrantedly dismissive, whether he has too quickly disregarded the substantive contribution which objective truth provides.<sup>36</sup> What concerns us here, however, is instead what place these claims occupy in Climacus' broader philosophy. While objective reasoning, in matters of objective truth, might

yield certain appropriate methods, this approach fails on an existential level. It cannot provide the certainty required for concern in one's *summum bonum*. "Faith does not result from straightforward scholarly deliberation . . ." — only the infinite inwardness of faith is "dialectically adequate" to secure a real foothold in true religiousness.<sup>37</sup>

No religious result can ever be reached, if one remains in presuppositionless speculation. As Kierkegaard noted in his journals, reflection stays only "the *possibility* of reflection."<sup>38</sup> But once one has — Climacus would here say through a 'leap' inwardly integrated objective results, then doubt inevitably arises.<sup>39</sup>

Here we can maintain perhaps one of the most suggestive *rapprochements* between Kierkegaard and later hermeneutical thought: an adherence to the so-called hermeneutical circle. In Climacus' account, and unlike what he sees Hegel as doing, to acquire knowledge is to take a committed stance, to be involved, and even personally contribute, to that which one desires to know. For a later hermeneutic thinker, like Martin Heidegger, and unlike aspects in Husserlian phenomenology, when a person attempts to understand anything, she likewise cannot remain 'presuppositionless', or acquire all her beliefs in a state of pure detachment. "In interpreting," Heidegger explains familiarly, "we do not, so to speak, throw a 'signification' over some naked thing which is present at hand... In every case this interpretation is grounded in *something we have in advance*."<sup>40</sup> This proceeding from a pre-possessed personal 'fore-understanding' might seem circular, even viciously so. But for Heidegger, "what is decisive is not to get out of the circle but *to come into it in the right way*."<sup>41</sup>

In the same manner, Kierkegaard would urge us to see that the Hegelian system, in claiming to begin presuppositionlessly, cannot begin at all: "A logical system must not boast of an absolute beginning, because such a beginning is just like pure being, a pure chimera."<sup>42</sup> We must start to understand somewhere, and this is through what Climacus

calls a personal 'letting go', that is, a 'coming into' the circle of human understanding. In other words, to understand, we must involve ourselves, must already be implicated in that which we desire to know, thus resolving the old Platonic paradox in the *Meno*, of how we can learn anything new at all. All understanding undoubtedly depends upon some human interpretive framework in which we already operate and live. As Alasdair MacIntyre adeptly observes, "a world of textures, shapes, smells, sensations, sound and nothing more invites no questions and gives no grounds for furnishing any answers."<sup>43</sup>

And this situatedness of our knowledge can grant us only provisional legitimacy for any of our beliefs, making us live, in a description that Climacus would undoubtedly endorse, "without the idea of the 'infinite intellect', finality, and absolute knowledge... [where we are called back] to an understanding of what it means to be finite historical beings who are always 'on the way' and who must assume *personal responsibility* for our decisions and choices."<sup>44</sup> Committed existence is a constant process of historical becoming, from which dialectical, and decidedly fallibilistic constant human striving, cannot be excluded.

As neo-pragmatist Richard Rorty, himself sensitive to hermeneutical insights,<sup>45</sup> would say, what Kierkegaard has been calling 'approximation-knowledge' is what we as humans are necessarily left with when we abandon our hope for "metaphysical comfort" – when we displace what Rorty himself refers to (in quasi-Kierkegaardian fashion) as "the desire for objectivity."<sup>46</sup> It results in the situation that "there is always room for improved belief,"<sup>47</sup> that, to use explicit Kierkegaardian language, speculative results are always approximations, and thus unable to bear the weight of one's infinite concern.

The antithesis to this line of thought is contained in a classic statement in modern philosophy, by René Descartes. Descartes, after subjecting all of his prior beliefs to an unrelenting doubt, proceeded to seek out some indubitable truth, to arrive at some fact which was finally secure, entirely immune

from further dialectical doubt. He compared his aspiration to the Greek thinker

Archimedes, [who] in order that he might draw the terrestrial globe out of its place, and transport it elsewhere, demanded only that one point should be fixed and immovable; in the same way I shall have the right to conceive high hopes if I am happy enough to discover one thing only which is certain and indubitable.<sup>48</sup>

As if addressing Cartesian foundationalism directly, Johannes Climacus speaks to this particular speculative tendency that Rorty (as we have already noted) has called our desire for "metaphysical comfort." Climacus' response, an essentially negative one, is that no such immobilized fulcrum, no privileged place by which we can transport the 'terrestrial globe' out of its place, in fact exists:

In a human being there is always a desire, at once comfortable and concerned, to have something really firm and fixed that can exclude the dialectical, but this is cowardliness towards the divine . . . even the most fixed of all, an infinite negative resolution, which is the individuality's infinite form of God's being within him, becomes promptly dialectical. As soon as I take away the dialectical, I am superstitious and defraud God of the moment's strenuous acquisition of what was once acquired.<sup>49</sup>

For the religious relationship, "certainty is impossible for a person in a process of becoming, and it is indeed a deception."<sup>50</sup> And this is what Johannes Climacus has called "the eternal protest against fictions" — that we must face up to our historicity, our constant state of ethical striving.<sup>51</sup>

As one 'postmodernist' philosopher has said, radically underscoring this hermeneutical recognition of human finitude, the (proto-)deconstructionist and (proto-)hermeneutical

insights by renegade thinkers like Kierkegaard must always:

blow the whistle on the excessively apodictic frame of mind endemic to metaphysics and urge in its place a sense of raising truth from below, of forging certain contingent unities of meaning which may become unstuck at any moment, or which may take on an unexpected sense at a later date which will lead us to revise them radically.<sup>52</sup>

From a human standpoint, no fixed 'center' of knowledge exists. We are always denied what deconstructionists have called a 'metaphysics of presence', a fullness or totality of meaning. In other words, "the subjective existing thinker is always just as negative as he is positive, and vice versa,"<sup>53</sup> claims an anticipatory Johannes Climacus.

It is only the 'superstitious' believer, who, in presumed 'positivity', "fancies himself to have a certainty that can be had only in *infinitude*, in which, however, he *cannot be* as an existing person but at which he is constantly striving."<sup>54</sup> And in this resolution is realized the earlier, promised overcoming of paralyzing 'objective' skepticism - not through some Cartesian foundationalist certitude, but by the existential 'coming into' of the human hermeneutical circle *the right way*.

#### ENDNOTES

1 Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1958), p. 63.

2 Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 37.

3 Søren Kierkegaard, *The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard*, trans. Alexander Dru (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958, 1959), p. 44.

4 Following one common strategy, we will "let the pseudonyms stand on their own feet," and refer to insights taken from Kierkegaard's aesthetic works as expressing the positions of the respective pseudonym. This is a strategy which, as Robert M. Adams points out, most probably reflects the nature of Kierkegaard's own radical views on the notion of authority and of authorship. [see Robert M. Adams, "Truth and Subjectivity," in *Reasoned Faith*, ed. by Eleonore Stump (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1993), p. 18].

5 *Postscript*, p. 118

6 Cf. *Postscript*, p. 171: "...because in a fantastical sense all systematic thinking is *sub specie aeterni* [under the aspect of eternity]."

7 *Postscript*, p. 270.

8 *Postscript*, p. 123, emphasis added.

9 See Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), esp. p. 49-74. Cf. *Postscript*, p. 118: "Existence is a system — *for God*, but it cannot be a system for any existing spirit. System and conclusiveness correspond to each other, but existence is the very opposite..."

10 Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

This parallel insight which follows is indebted to insightful discussion by William V. Spanos, *Heidegger and Criticism: Retrieving the Cultural Politics of Destruction* (Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 53-80; and especially by John D. Caputo, in "Hermeneutics and the Recovery of Man," in *Hermeneutics and Modern Philosophy*, edited by Brice Wachterhauser (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1986), p. 346-367; and later discussion in *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987).

For a different account to Caputo's claims on this matter, see James' Edwards article, "Deconstruction and the End of Philosophy," p. 183-201, in *Religion, Ontotheology, and Deconstruction*, ed. by Henry Ruf (New York: Paragon House, 1989), which is sharply critical of Kierkegaard for purportedly still embracing, unlike Wittgenstein, what Derrida has called the metaphysics of presence.

11 *Repetition*, p. 131.

12 *Postscript*, p. 121-122.

13 Philippians 3:12-14. Cf. I Corinthians 9:24-27.

14 *Postscript*, p. 122.

15 Cf. a similar point made by William V. Spanos, in *Heidegger and Criticism* (p. 54), that Western metaphysics has been "the discourse of the ontotheological tradition that, in fulfilling the *re-presentational* imperatives of a philosophical perspective... sees the temporal realm of finite things *meta-ta-physika* (all-at-once)," and is now, as initiated by thinkers such as Heidegger and Derrida, in the process of being overcome.

16 *Postscript*, p. 145.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 399.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 197.

19 *Ibid.*

20 Cf. Johannes Climacus' appraisal of this in the earlier *Philosophical Fragments* [trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983)], p. 13. His discussion is centered upon learning, *via* a Socratic, speculative reflection, the 'immanent' truth:

"...in that same instant the moment is hidden in the eternal, assimilated into it in such a way that I, so to speak, still cannot find it even if I were to look for it, because there is no Here and no There, but only a *ubique et nusquam* [everywhere and nowhere]."

21 *Postscript*, p. 160, emphasis added.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 280, emphasis added.

23 See especially the balanced discussion of this in George E. Arbaugh and George R. Arbaugh's comprehensive volume, *Kierkegaard's Authorship* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968), p. 226-227.

24 This strongly resonates with an insight made by William Barrett in his classic text on existentialism, *Irrational Man* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1958), p. 90-91, when he asks:

"What happens, however, to this view that the highest man is the theoretical man if we conceive of human existence as finite through and through — and if human reason, and the knowledge it can produce, is seen to be finite like the rest of man's being?... Theoretical knowledge may indeed be pursued as a personal passion, or its findings may have practical application; but its value above that of all other human enterprises (such as art or religion) cannot be enhanced by any claims that it will reach the Absolute."

25 *Postscript*, p. 304.

26 Cf. *Postscript*, p. 199fn.: "The reader will note that what is being discussed here is essential truth, or the truth that is related essentially to existence, and that is specifically in order to clarify it as inwardness or as subjectivity that the contrast is pointed out."

27 *Postscript*, p. 118.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 86, emphasis added.

29 In Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1959), Arendt comments how an early Kierkegaard work, *Johannes Climacus, or De omnibus dubitandum est* [trans. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985)] should be judged as "perhaps still the deepest interpretation of Descartes' doubt." [p. 275, fn]. Instructive for present purposes is to observe how this earlier volume underscores the radical deficiency in attempting to live faithfully by that debilitating, modern philosophical aspiration stated in its own title. As Kierkegaard notes in his journal:

"Johannes does what we are told to do — he actually doubts everything — he suffers through all the pain of doing that, becomes cunning, almost acquires a bad conscience... He per-

ceives that in order to hold on to this extreme position of doubting everything, he has engaged all his mental and spiritual powers. If he abandons this extreme position, he may very well arrive at something, but in doing that he would also have abandoned his doubt about everything. Now he despairs, his life is wasted, his youth is spent in these deliberations. Life has not acquired any meaning for him, and all this is the fault of philosophy. [Supplement to *Johannes Climacus*, p. 234-235 (Pap. IV B 16)]."

30 See the excellent discussion of this in Richard Bernstein's widely influential book, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), e.g., p. 182-206, 223-231.

31 *Postscript*, p. 30-31.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

34 *Ibid.*

35 *Ibid.*

36 Cf. Robert M. Adams' important article, "Kierkegaard's Arguments Against Objective Reasoning in Religion," *The Monist* 60 (1976): 228-43, reprinted in *The Virtue of Faith and Other Essays in Philosophical Theology* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1987); for a different sort of account, which is less critical than Adams' article, see C. Stephen Evans, "The Relevance of Historical Evidence for Christian Faith: A Critique of a Kierkegaardian View," *Faith and Philosophy* 7 (1990), esp. p. 472-475.

37 *Postscript*, p. 29. See also *ibid.*, p. 49, "What has been intimated here has been emphasized in the Fragments frequently enough, namely, that there is no direct and immediate access to Christianity..."

38 *Pap. IV B 10:13 n.d.*, 1842-1843. Quoted in the supplement for *Johannes Climacus*, p. 258 (emphasis added).

39 *Op cit.*

40 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 190-191.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 195, emphasis added.

42 *Postscript*, p. 112.

43 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984], p. 79-80.

44 Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, p. 166, emphasis added.  
Cf. *Postscript*, p. 78 (Swenson and Lowrie's translation):

"...the existing individual is constantly in process of becoming, and this should receive an essential expression in all his knowledge. Particularly, it must be expressed through the prevention of an illusory finality, whether in perceptual certainty, historical

knowledge, or illusory speculative results."

45 See later, scattered discussions in his more recent works, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and *Essays on Heidegger and Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and especially the substantive engagement in Part 3 of Rorty's earlier, well-known volume *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 313-394.

46 Richard Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity?" in *Objectivism, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 31, 24.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

48 *The Philosophical Works of René Descartes, in Two Volumes*, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), I., *Meditations on First Philosophy*, p. 149ff.

49 *Postscript*, p. 35.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 74fn.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 226.

52 John D. Caputo, "On Being Inside/Outside Truth," in *Modernity and Its Discontents*, James L. Marsh, John D. Caputo, and Merold Westphal (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), p. 57.

53 *Postscript*, p. 85.

54 *Postscript*, p. 81, emphasis added.