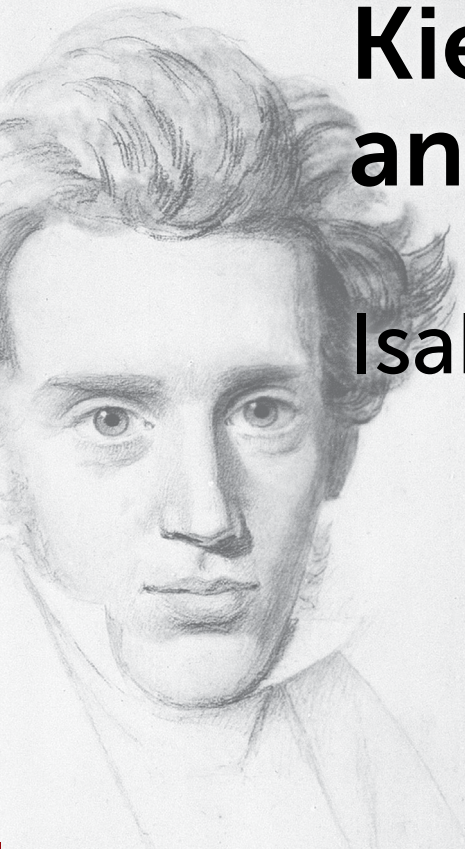
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Kierkegaard and the Affects



Isak Winkel Holm

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KIERKEGAARD AND THE AFFECTS

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Kierkegaard and the Affects

Elements in the Philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard

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Abstract: 'Is reason then alone baptised, are the passions pagans?' By placing Edward Young's question on the frontispiece of *Either/Or*, Søren Kierkegaard announces a problem that runs throughout his authorship: what role do the affects play in human existence? His answer helps explain his enduring importance for modern philosophy. Across works such as *Either/Or*, *The Concept of Anxiety*, and *The Sickness unto Death*, Kierkegaard develops powerful accounts of affects such as irony, melancholy, anxiety, and despair, while also exploring the affective dimensions of philosophical writing itself. This Element examines Kierkegaard's treatment of affectivity across his writings and across individual affects. It argues that his account is organised around a tension between two forms of affective life: *baptisable affects* that can be transformed and integrated into the project of becoming a self, and *non-baptisable affects* that resist such transformation and threaten to derail it.

Keywords: Søren Kierkegaard, Affect theory, Cognitive theory of emotion, Existentialism, Aesthetics

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> *Don Juan* continually hovers between being idea, that is, force, life – and individual. But this hovering is the musical vibration. When the sea heaves and is rough, the seething waves in their unrest form pictures, like creatures; it seems as if it were these creatures that set the waves in motion, and yet it is, conversely, the undulation of the waves that form them. Thus, *Don Juan* is a picture that is continually coming into view but does not attain form and consistency, an individual who is continually being formed but is never finished, about whose history one cannot learn except by listening to the noise of the waves.
>
> Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Part One

1 Introduction: Pagans of the Soul

On the frontispiece page of *Either/Or*, Søren Kierkegaard quotes the English poet and priest Edward Young: 'Is reason then alone baptised, are the passions pagans?'[1] A year later, in 1844, he returns to Young's metaphor in his journal: 'Let no one misunderstand all my talk of pathos and passion as if I intended to acknowledge every uncircumcised immediacy, every unshaven passion.'[2] The verb 'acknowledge' in the English translation obscures the more unusual Danish expression *lyse i Hævd*, a social act by which a father publicly declares his parenthood of a child. In this way, Kierkegaard extends Young's biblical or colonial metaphor with a domestic one, situating his reflection on pathos and passion along a series of boundaries: between Christians and pagans, circumcised and uncircumcised, shaven and unshaven, and legitimate and illegitimate.

In the epigraph from *Either/Or*, the boundary between Christians and pagans separates reason from passion. To question this boundary is to suggest that affectivity, and not only rationality, may touch 'Things sacred', as Young's poem continues – whether all affects do so or only some. In the journal entry, Kierkegaard makes clear that he intends the latter. His position would be misunderstood if one assumed that he sought to acknowledge 'every uncircumcised immediacy, every unshaven passion'. In other words, the metaphorical boundary here separates those forms of pathos and passion that are to be incorporated into the Christian community from those unregenerate forms of affect that are best left outside. I argue that Kierkegaard's treatment of the affects is structured by this boundary between what may be called *baptisable* and *non-baptisable* affects.

[1] SKS 2,9/KW 3,1, translation modified. In *Night Thoughts*, from 1742–1745, Young writes: 'Are *Passions*, then, the Pagans of the Soul?/ *Reason* alone baptiz'd?' See Young 1989: p. 107, v. 629.

[2] SKS 18/KJN 2: JJ:237.

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In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), for example, Kierkegaard, writing under the pseudonym Johannes Climacus, argues that 'pencil-pushing modern speculative thought depreciates passion, and yet, for the existing person, passion is existence at its very highest – and we are, after all, existing persons'.[3] His Hegelian contemporaries 'depreciate' or 'disdain' (*lader ringe om*) passion by overlooking its indispensable role in human existence. At the same time, Kierkegaard devotes much of his early work to diagnosing a dangerous addiction to fleeting moods that dissolves ethical character. In *The Concept of Irony* (1841), he analyses the title character of Friedrich Schlegel's novel *Lucinde* (1799). This young woman organises her life around bodily pleasure, avoids work, and scorns every feminine occupation. Instead, she 'disperses and exhausts all the powers of the soul in a state of soft enjoyment, and lets consciousness itself evaporate into a loathsome gloaming'.[4]

Thus, if the Hegelians depreciate passion, the Romantics eulogise it, overlooking the need to direct the powers of the soul towards the formation of a self. According to Kierkegaard, the affects occupy both the highest and lowest forms of existence. Baptisable affects are teleological insofar as they contribute to the *telos* of becoming a self, whereas non-baptisable affects are a-teleological insofar as they hinder this process.

In *The Sickness unto Death* (1849), Kierkegaard, this time writing under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus, analyses the sorrow that arises when the subject becomes aware of its sinfulness. He argues that this form of sorrow cannot be accepted at face value; one cannot assume that it contributes to the development of ethical character: 'In any case, it is absolutely womanish simply to accept this sorrow at face value, to fail to pay even the least attention to the duplicity that is present in all passionateness.'[5] Anti-Climacus stresses that the 'duplicity' or – more literally – 'double-tonguedness' (*Tvetungethed*) is present in *all* passionateness. The issue is not that some affects are plain-spoken while others are double-tongued; rather, all affects oscillate between meaning and meaninglessness. As he goes on to suggest, the passionate person may subsequently realise – 'almost to the point of madness – that he has said the opposite of what he intended to say'.[6]

In Kierkegaard's philosophical lexicon, the term *dialectical* signifies the togetherness of two elements that are at once inseparable and in

[3] SKS 7,181/KW 12.1,197, translation modified.
[4] SKS 1,328/KW 2,295.
[5] SKS 11/SUD, 223.
[6] Ibid.

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unresolved tension with each other.[7] The 'double-tonguedness' of passion can therefore be understood as a *dialectic of affect*. Kierkegaard's treatment of the affects is dialectical insofar as the baptisable and the non-baptisable dimensions of affectivity both exclude and presuppose one another. If the central question in his authorship is how to become a self, affects are at once a necessary condition for this task and a dangerous deviation from it.

The epigraph to this Element is drawn from the analysis of Don Juan's 'unreflective, substantial passion', the 'energy of sensuous desire' with which he seduces every woman, in the aesthete's reading of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in Part One of *Either/Or*.[8] The aesthete, referred to as 'A', compares Don Juan to 'sea-maidens', figures from Norse mythology continually created by the seething waves in their unrest. Like them, the Spanish nobleman 'continually hovers between being idea, that is, force, life – and individual'.[9] As we shall see in Section 4, earnestness (*Alvor*) is Kierkegaard's term for a second-order affect that baptises, circumcises, and shaves the pagan affects so that their uncut force may energise the formation of the individual, rather than decentre it or dissolve it into the lukewarm routines of habit. Yet affectivity is dialectical, because the formless, restless force that disrupts the configuration of the self is also the force that drives this process of formation forward. If affectivity is dialectical, it is because baptisable and non-baptisable affects are energised by the same presubjective and presocial force. Without non-baptisable affectivity, there would be no subjectivity to baptise and no energy by which to baptise it. According to Kierkegaard, in other words, every human being – not only Don Juan – hovers between being force, life, and individual.

This Element provides a brief overview of Kierkegaard's 'talk of pathos and passion' – as he writes in the journal entry – with continual reference to the dialectical tension between baptisable and non-baptisable affectivity. Kierkegaard rarely uses the term *Affekt* (or *Affect*) apart from in notes on Benedict de Spinoza's *Ethics* (1677) and references to pathological and 'convulsive' emotions.[10] I employ *affects*, in the plural, in a broad sense to refer to the precognitive and pre- and paralinguistic forces that shape experience, thought, action, and, above all, self-formation. In this usage, *affects* functions as an umbrella term for a wide range

[7] See Westphal 2010: 148.
[8] SKS 2,120, 103/KW 3,118, 100.
[9] SKS 2,97/KW 3,92, translation modified.
[10] SKS 18/KJN 2: JJ:443; SKS 4,254/KW 7,49.

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of phenomena. The focus here, however, is not on cataloguing distinct affects but on the dialectical double bind that renders affectivity as a whole both baptisable and non-baptisable.[11]

Three Versions of the Non-baptisable

Several of Kierkegaard's most influential works offer detailed analyses of particular affects: irony in *The Concept of Irony* (1841), melancholy and boredom in *Either/Or* (1843), anxiety in *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844), and despair in *The Sickness unto Death* (1849). His authorship also treats a wider range of less frequently discussed affects, including grief, joy, concern, jealousy, empathy, vanity, offence, shuddering, earnestness, and sense of injustice. To borrow a term from contemporary intellectual history, we may say that Kierkegaard's authorship represents an affective turn.[12] This sustained focus on affectivity contributes significantly to his distinctive place in modern philosophy. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that this affective turn is preceded by earlier turns, most notably the Pietist movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Kierkegaard family attended services in the Herrnhut Congregation of Brethren, which cultivated an anti-clerical and anti-intellectual 'religion of the heart'.[13] Kierkegaard retained throughout his life a marked sympathy for Pietist writers and Christian mystics. He was also influenced by the German Romantics' enthusiastic turn to the concept of mood (*Stimmung*) and by the Hegelian tradition's concern with ethical passions. Historically, Kierkegaard's treatment of the affects represents a convergence of Pietist celebration of inwardness, Romantic fascination with the fragmentary, and Idealist inquiry into the grounds of human meaning-making.

Even if Kierkegaard wrote book-length studies of particular affects, he rarely addresses affect in general, as Descartes does in *The Passions of the Soul* and Spinoza in the *Ethics*. His authorship contains 'much talk of pathos and passion', but no systematic treatise on the subject. Although he appears to be well acquainted with major philosophical theories of affect, including those of Descartes and Spinoza, he is known for suppressing or obscuring his sources. When he draws on established theories, he does so selectively and idiosyncratically. His most important emotion

[11] My account of the role of formless force in the double bind of baptisable and non-baptisable affectivity draws inspiration from Jacques Derrida's analysis of the force of law and the aporetic – Kierkegaard would say 'dialectical' – relation between justice and law; see Derrida 1992.

[12] I am borrowing this formulation from Andersen 2016.

[13] Barnett 2016.

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words are *Lidenskab* (passion), which denotes intense and focused affects; *Følelse* (feeling or emotion), which refers to the range of everyday affective responses; and *Stemning* (mood or attunement), which designates objectless and atmospheric forms of affectivity. These are supplemented by a number of near-synonymous terms, such as *Rørelse* (stirring of the soul), *Sindsbevægelse* (agitation), and *Affekt*.[14] Although these terms point to different aspects of emotional life, Kierkegaard neither defines them precisely nor uses them consistently. For example, his account of *Stemning* in *The Concept of Anxiety* differs markedly from its use in 'At a Graveside', published less than a year later.[15]

The challenge, then, is how to approach Kierkegaard and the affects without merely compiling a short catalogue of individual Kierkegaardian affects. I propose that this complex field can be organised around three different versions of the opposition between baptisable and non-baptisable affectivity: that between truth and noise, between unity and fragmentation, and between sovereignty and insurgency.

In the first opposition – between truth and noise – the disjunction between baptisable and non-baptisable affectivity is framed as a question of knowledge. From this perspective, affects play a central role in shaping the subject's understanding, or misunderstanding, of the world. In *Two Ages* (1846), for example, Kierkegaard describes a principle as 'the substance, the idea in the unopened form of feeling and enthusiasm'.[16] The word 'unopened' designates an undeveloped and inchoate mode of cognition, embedded in the opacity of the affects, as opposed to the explicit and 'open' kind of knowledge that can be articulated in conceptual propositions. At the non-baptisable end of this dichotomy lie the affects of the animal, which is 'a slave of blind instinct and acts blindly';[17] at the baptised end are forms of affect that are compatible with and responsive to conceptual knowledge. In the epigraph's image of Don Juan's hovering at the surface of the seething waves, the question of truth is figured in the opposition between language and noise. One cannot learn anything about his history, the aesthete argues, by hearing meaningful words that refer to his erotic passion, but only by 'listening to the noise of the waves'.[18] To learn in this way would be to gain access to the cognitive dimension of affectivity.

[14] For an overview of Kierkegaard's emotion words, see Carvalhais de Oliveira 2016.
[15] Compare SKS 4,322/KW 8,14 with SKS 5,445/KW 10,75.
[16] SKS 8,95–6/KW 14,101, translation modified.
[17] SKS 4,270/KW 8,68.
[18] SKS 2,97/KW 3,92.

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In the second opposition – between unity and fragmentation – the conflict between circumcised and uncircumcised affects is a matter of wholeness. What is at stake is whether affects support or undermine the existential coherence of the self. In *The Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard diagnoses the ironist who lives in a hypothetical and subjunctive way: 'his life loses *all continuity*. He succumbs completely to mood. His life is *nothing but moods*.'[19] The problem here is that the moods are heterogeneous: 'since there is no continuity in the ironist, the most contrasting moods succeed one another. At times he is a god, at times a grain of sand. His moods are just as occasional as the incarnations of Brahma.'[20] Non-baptisable affects – particularly the occasional moods embraced by the ironist and the aesthete – dissolve existential coherence and undermine ethical character. At the other pole of this opposition, baptisable affects conform to and even contribute to the formation of the self. In the image of Don Juan as a 'sea-maiden', this question is addressed through the description of the seducer as 'a picture that is continually coming into view but does not attain form and consistency, an individual who is continually being created but is never finished'.[21] Thus, the opposition between unity and fragmentation concerns the tension between the formlessness of his desire – 'force', 'life', and 'unrest' – and the unattained 'form' and 'consistency' of a unified self.

Finally, in the third opposition – between sovereignty and insurgency – the conflict between baptisable and non-baptisable affectivity is framed as a power struggle. In this view, affects appear both as a challenge to and a condition for ethical autonomy. The ironist 'succumbs completely to mood', Kierkegaard writes in *The Concept of Irony*,[22] adding that even if he '*considers himself free*', the ironist 'falls under the horrible law of world irony and drudges along in the *most frightful slavery*'.[23] Unsurprisingly, the mastery of affects is a central theme in Kierkegaard's ethical thinking, as it is in the tradition extending from Aristotle through the Stoics and Spinoza to Kant. At the baptisable pole stands the sovereign subject, typically – within the default sexist framing of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century affect theory – a man who is capable of governing his sensuous and bodily responses. At the non-baptisable pole often stands a feminised figure who is portrayed as a slave to her

[19] SKS 1,319/KW 2,208, Kierkegaard's italics. SKS 1,319-20/KW 2,208.
[20] SKS 1,320/KW 2,208.
[21] SKS 2,97/KW 3,92, translation modified.
[22] SKS 1,319/KW 2,208.
[23] SKS 1,320/KW 2,208, Kierkegaard's italics.

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affects, unable to resist 'womanish squealing'.[24] (Kierkegaard often uses the pejorative Danish *fruentimmeragtig*, 'womanish' or 'feminine', in connection with affects.) This is also the position occupied by Don Juan. When we contemplate the sensuous seducer and the mythological 'sea-maidens' as human forms on the surface of the waves, 'it seems as if it were these creatures that set the waves in motion, and yet it is, conversely, the undulation of the waves that create them'.[25] In this affective regime, the affects have agency, not the human subject.

Thus, Kierkegaard's dialectic of affects cannot be captured by a simple on/off button (baptisable/non-baptisable), but rather requires three sliders. Any given affect may be more or less compatible with conceptual knowledge, more or less conducive to existential unity, and more or less subject to autonomous control. The opposition between truth and noise addresses the question of the affective content; that between unity and fragmentation draws attention to affective form; and that between sovereignty and insurgency concerns affective control. Additional oppositions – or 'opposing directions' towards which affect theory is frequently pulled – could readily be introduced, including inside and outside, individual and collective, genuine and inauthentic, pleasurable and painful, with and without facial expression, and so forth.[26] Some of these oppositions will prove relevant in what follows. For present purposes, however, the analysis is limited to truth/noise, unity/fragmentation, and sovereignty/insurgency since these oppositions play a central role in Kierkegaard's account of the formation of the self. In more colloquial terms, Kierkegaard identifies three important ways in which affects can behave badly.

It is crucial to note that the three versions of the opposition between baptisable and non-baptisable affectivity do not always align. Returning to the metaphor of the control panel, the three sliders can be adjusted independently. Often in Kierkegaard's works – and even more so in the secondary literature – the three oppositions are treated as parallel, such that blind, centrifugal, and rebellious affects are grouped together at one end, and cognizant, unified, and domesticated affects at the other. In such cases, the three separate dichotomies effectively collapse into a single one. I argue, however, that in Kierkegaard's writings, the three oppositions frequently diverge. In his analysis of the role of mood in philosophy, he identifies affective phenomena that are necessary preconditions for scientific truth yet incapable

[24] SKS 7,403/KW 12,1, 443, translation modified.
[25] SKS 2,97/KW 3,92, translation modified.
[26] For a discussion of the 'opposing directions' of affect theory, see Rorty 1984: 521 and Roberts 2003: 6–14.

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of achieving unity. In his reflections on aesthetics, he considers affects that establish a kind of unity but resist translation into conceptual language. And in his account of religious experience, he approaches affective experiences that grant access to truth and unity while at the same time undermining the subject's claim to sovereignty. These points of divergence allow for a more differentiated account of the dialectic of affect in Kierkegaard.

Intelligibility and Sensibility

Any theory of affectivity is deeply embedded in a theory of subjectivity. Accordingly, affect theoretical concepts depend on a network of more foundational distinctions such as intelligibility and sensibility, inside and outside, individuality and collectivity, activity and passivity, and freedom and heteronomy. As the philosopher Amélie Oksenberg Rorty observes, 'the views of Aristotle on *pathē*, Seneca on *ira* and *passio*, Spinoza on *affectus*, Hume on the passions, Rousseau on *sentiment*, Sartre on *emotion*, are deeply embedded in their metaphysics and philosophy of mind' and in 'their theories of the essential or individuating properties of persons'.[27] The same holds for Kierkegaard's talk of pathos and passion. What makes his treatment of the affects relevant to contemporary affect theory, I argue, is the way in which he destabilises the network of foundational distinctions on which the concept of subjectivity depends – above all, the oppositions between intelligibility and sensibility and between inside and outside.

Rorty's list of emotion words does not include the concept of sensibility. This omission is understandable, since sensibility refers not only to affective experience but also to other forms of nonconceptual awareness, such as imagination and apprehension. In German Idealism, however, problems that are now central to affect theory were often addressed in terms of the relation between intelligibility and sensibility. Idealist aesthetics – as developed in works from Immanuel Kant through Johann Gottlieb Fichte to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel – may be understood as a celebration of baptisable aesthetic sensibility. In *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), for example, Kant argues that aesthetic pleasure arises when the beautiful object occasions a 'well-proportioned disposition' (*Stimmung*) between imagination and understanding in the observer.[28] In this account, the pleasure of aesthetic experience arises from the 'mutual agreement' between imagination and understanding.[29]

[27] Rorty 2004: 270.
[28] Kant 2000: 104.
[29] Ibid.

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It results from the harmonious interplay between the faculty that synthesises intuitions into sensible forms and the one that organises those representations according to rules or concepts.

In *Lectures on Fine Art*, a work Kierkegaard studied closely, Hegel observes that the word *sense* (*Sinn*) 'is this wonderful word which is used in two opposite meanings. On the one hand it means the organs of immediate apprehension, but on the other hand we mean by it the sense, the significance, the thought, the universal underlying the thing.'[30] As the German *Sinn*, the English *sense* spans both the sensible and the intelligible. Having noted this linguistic windfall, Hegel puts it to use in aesthetics. In the 'sensible' (*sinnvolle*) contemplation of the beautiful object, the two senses of *sense* coincide: 'Now a sensible contemplation does not *separate* the two sides, as one might think; rather, in one direction it contains the opposite one too, and in sensuous immediate intuition it apprehends at the same time the essence and the concept.'[31] In the aesthetic experience – here exemplified by the experience of natural beauty – the sensible and the intelligible are thus inseparable. Throughout the *Lectures*, Hegel argues that the excellence of art consists in the correspondence (*das Zusammenstimmen*) of spirit and sensuous form, of concept and appearance, of *Idee und Gestalt*, in a 'perfect interpenetration'.[32]

Although the linguistic duality of the term *sense* does not carry over into Danish (where the relevant terms would be *sansning* and *mening*), Kierkegaard's dialectic of affect unfolds within the conceptual space defined by the distinction between intelligibility and sensibility, reason and passion, or rationality and affectivity. At the same time, he departs markedly from Idealist aesthetics by emphasising the tension, rather than the correspondence, between these domains. In line with his Idealist predecessors – and with their Danish heirs, above all the influential art critic and playwright Johan Ludvig Heiberg – Kierkegaard maintains that the beautiful work of art represents the perfect interpenetration of idea and form, as Hegel wrote. Unlike them, however, he consistently directs his attention to dissonant experiences in which sensibility resists fusion with intelligibility. Poetry is a kind of reconciliation, the young Kierkegaard writes in *On the Concept of Irony*, 'but it is *not the true reconciliation*, for it does not reconcile me with the actuality in which I am living'.[33]

[30] Hegel 1975: 1, 128–9; 1970: 13, 173.
[31] Ibid., translation modified.
[32] See for instance Hegel 1975: 1, 115, translation modified; 1970: 13, 156.
[33] SKS 1,330/KW 2,297, translation modified.

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In Hegelian terms, the movement from *sense* (understood as immediate apprehension) to *sense* (understood as 'the significance, the thought, the universal underlying the thing') is an *Aufhebung* – a sublation of sensibility into intelligibility. Kierkegaard distinguishes himself by insisting on forms of sensuous experiences that cannot be *aufgehoben* into conceptual meaning.

In this respect, Kierkegaard may be regarded as a precursor of modern aesthetics. From Theodor W. Adorno and Susanne K. Langer through Jacques Rancière to Christoph Menke and Sianne Ngai, theorists of art have explored the dialectical tension between the intelligible and the sensible. Commenting on Hegel's remark about the two senses of the 'wonderful' word *sense*, the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, for example, describes the relation between intelligible and sensuous sense as a 'chiasmus'.[34] By this rhetorical figure, he designates what I have been calling a dialectic: 'nothing other than the necessary double encroachment of one sense on another, which is far more radical and constitutive than one might be led to think by what seems to stem from a linguistic contingency'.[35] For Nancy – and for many contributors to modern philosophical aesthetics – art is not an *Aufhebung* of sensuous sense into intelligible sense. Rather, it is constituted not by a Kierkegaardian 'double movement', but by a 'double encroachment' (*double empiétement*) in which sensibility trespasses into intelligibility and intelligibility, in turn, intrudes into sensibility.

Like Nancy, Kierkegaard holds that the tension between intelligible and sensuous sense is 'necessary', 'radical', and 'constitutive'. In his authorship, recalcitrant and 'unsublatable' sensibility is treated not only as an obstacle but also as a resource. Unlike Nancy, however, Kierkegaard does not restrict this dialectic to the domain of art. One reason why Kierkegaard's treatment of the affects remains relevant, I suggest, is that he displaces the dialectical tension between intelligible and sensuous sense from the field of aesthetics to that of existential inquiry.

Inside and Outside

Affect theory – even before it was named as such – concerns not only the *what* but also the *where* of affect. In premodern and early modern accounts, affectivity was most often located outside the human being, whose soul was understood as being pushed and pulled around by external objects.

[34] Nancy 1996: 15; 1994: 32.
[35] Nancy 1996: 28; 1994: 54.

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In Spinoza's *Ethics*, for example, the affects are conceived as relational phenomena that arise *between* entities – both human and nonhuman – as they act upon one another within a shared, pre-individual domain. After Spinoza, however, affects were gradually relocated to the interior of the human being and interpreted as forms of inwardness – *Innerlichkeit* in German and *Inderlighed* in Kierkegaardian Danish – understood as the subject's authentic core.

This complicated process of interiorisation reached a decisive point in the concept of mood, which became central to German Idealism and Romanticism.[36] This emotion word entered philosophical discourse through *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. As we have seen, Kant characterised the pleasure of the beautiful in terms of a 'well-proportioned' mood (*Stimmung*) between imagination and understanding.[37] Here, the underlying musical metaphor – the German *stimmen* means to tune or attune an instrument – denotes an interior relation between the faculties of the subject, thereby turning affect into a medium through which the subject feels itself immediately and intimately.

Whereas Kant introduced the concept of *Stimmung* to analyse the experience of the beautiful object, Fichte soon repurposed the term to describe the production of the artwork. One of the key texts in the construction of affective inwardness – and likely an important influence on Kierkegaard's treatment of the affects – is Fichte's essay 'On the Spirit and the Letter in Philosophy in a series of Letters, 1795'. In art, the *spirit* is the artist's mood, while the *letter* is the artwork's material form, as Fichte puts it. The artist 'imprints the mood [*Stimmung*] of his spirit into a physical form. What goes on in the soul of the artist, the numerous twistings and turnings of his inner life and of his self-active force, cannot be described. No language has found the words for it.'[38]

The aesthete's image of Don Juan is likely inspired by Fichte's description of the numerous 'twistings and turnings' of the artist's mood. Writing of 'the sweet songster of the night' – one may think here of Mignon in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* – Fichte observes that her 'inner and secret life carries her on to the following notes: its development is not yet complete, this cord does not yet express her whole being'.[39] Accordingly, the life of this female artist 'floats on the surging waves of

[36] For the interiorisation of affects, see Newmark 2008, Campe and Weber 2014, and Wellbery 2017.
[37] Kant 2000: 104.
[38] Fichte 1984: 88.
[39] Fichte 1984: 84, translation modified.

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aesthetic feeling, as does the life of art in every true genius'.[40] According to aesthete 'A', Don Juan – the incarnation of 'the geniality of sensuousness' – hovers on the seething waves in their unrest.[41] Within Fichte's strict distinction between inner and outer, the aesthetic mood is understood as a 'basic drive' (*Urtrieb*), located in the songster's '*inner* and secret life' or, later in the essay, in the artist's '*inner* life' and '*inner* vibrations'.[42]

It is tempting to describe Kierkegaard's treatment of the affects as the end point of this historical process of interiorisation. With the momentum from his Pietist upbringing, he drives the inwardness of affectivity to the extreme. In *The Concept of Anxiety*, the pseudonymous author Vigilius Haufniensis talks about the 'inwardness of feeling'.[43] Likewise, in *Fear and Trembling*, Johannes de silentio writes that, in the ethical view of life, the task of the single individual is 'to divest himself of the determinant of inwardness and express it in what is outward', rather than disappear once again into 'the determinant of inwardness, into feeling, mood, etc'.[44] In both cases, the pseudonyms locate affectivity in the interior of the human subject. However, it is important to note that both authors are also highly sceptical towards 'the *viscera* of feeling' in the human breast.[45] According to Haufniensis, the inwardness of feeling is 'a fire that may cool as soon as earnestness no longer attends to it'. If it is visceral, it is also ephemeral. And for de silentio, the paradox of faith is 'that there is an inwardness that is incommensurable with the outer', yet this religious inwardness, 'note well, is not identical with that first inwardness, but is a new inwardness'. In fact, he adds, faith is grouped in a 'rather commonplace company' if it is identified with immediate affects such as 'feeling, mood, idiosyncrasy, *vapeurs*, etc'.[46]

The interiority of emotional life, constructed throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, remains with us today. Outside the context of affect theory, we typically speak of feeling, mood, idiosyncrasy, *vapeurs*, and so on as located in our innermost being. In recent decades, however, affect theorists, some of them returning to Spinoza, have attempted to recover the externality of affects characteristic of premodern and early modern thought. As cultural theorist Lauren Berlant writes

[40] Ibid.
[41] For Don Juan as 'the geniality of sensuousness', see SKS 2,104/KW 3,101, translation modified.
[42] Fichte 1984: 88, 90, my italics.
[43] SKS 4,448/KW 8,149.
[44] SKS 4/FT, 161.
[45] SKS 11,238/KW 19,127.
[46] SKS 4/FT, 161.

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in *Cruel Optimism* (2011), sensibility is not individual, but a 'collective sensorium', indeed a 'mass sensorium'.[47] Berlant and numerous other affect theorists point out 'that affective atmospheres are shared, not solitary, and that bodies are continuously busy judging their environments and responding to the atmospheres in which they find themselves'.[48]

Like contemporary affect theory, Kierkegaard deconstructs the dichotomy of inside and outside, thereby decentring the sovereign subject. However, his account of the exteriorisation of affect does not depend on a distinction between the individual and the collective, the solitary and the shared, or psychology and cultural theory. While he shares with present-day affect theory a critique of the sovereign subject, he pursues this critique in a different register: the subject is decentred in a different way. A further reason why Kierkegaard's treatment of the affects remains relevant is that he relocates affective exteriority from the social to the religious.

Kierkegaard Research and the Affects

Like Kierkegaard himself, Kierkegaard scholars have focused on particular affective qualities rather than affectivity in general. It is impossible to provide even a rough overview of the many insightful books and articles that address the individual affects in Kierkegaard's works. The same goes for phenomena such as love, humour, forgiveness, patience, courage, humility, and hope that, while not strictly affects, possess strong affective dimensions. There are also books that explore affects which Kierkegaard did not explicitly conceptualise but can be said to play a central role in his works.[49] However, since Vincent A. McCarthy's *The Phenomenology of Moods in Kierkegaard* (1978) was published half a century ago, comprehensive explorations of Kierkegaard's treatment of the affects have been few and far between.

In broad outline, there have been two principal ways of approaching Kierkegaard's dialectic of affects. The first disregards the double-tonguedness of passion and treats affectivity as wholly non-baptisable. This approach effectively casts Kierkegaard as an irrationalist who dissolves philosophical validity into the subjectivism of arbitrary feeling. The prominence of this reading helps explain why his treatment of the affects remains a curiously understudied field of research. I limit myself here

[47] Berlant 2011: 68, 8.
[48] Berlant 2011: 15.
[49] See the exploration of the mood of 'prophetic noir' in Holm 2022.

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to two influential examples. In the German-speaking world, the former Kierkegaardian Georg Lukács, in *The Destruction of Reason* (1954), posits that Kierkegaard destroyed reason through a subjectivist 'pseudo-dialectic' grounded in 'his innermost feelings'.[50] In the Anglo-American context, Walter Kaufmann, in *Existentialism: From Dostoevsky to Sartre* (1956), claims that Kierkegaard 'rashly renounced clear and distinct thinking altogether' in favour of irrational passion.[51] Given the prominence of algorithmically mediated affect in today's political climate, concern for the fragile Enlightenment project may be understandable. However, a crucial distinction must be made between acknowledging every unshaven passion and seeking to understand the tension between shaven and unshaven affectivity.

The second way of approaching Kierkegaard's dialectic of affects softens its tension by privileging those emotional experiences that – after a quick shave and a circumcision – can be incorporated into the Christian community. In his pioneering work, McCarthy writes that 'Kierkegaard takes moods and the emotional life with the utmost seriousness' and 'recognizes the logic of the heart just as the logic of the mind'.[52] To take moods with the utmost seriousness is to refrain from dismissing affectivity – as Lukács and Kaufmann, among others, have done – and to treat it as more than non-signifying or irrational intensity. To demonstrate the seriousness with which Kierkegaard takes emotional life, McCarthy develops what he calls a 'dialectic of moods', a framework in which each individual mood is mapped onto a 'chart' that traces the subject's progress or standpoint in the advance towards religious existence.[53] On this approach, taking moods seriously means sublating them from affective sensibility to the intelligibility of Kierkegaard's so-called theory of stages. The term *dialectic* thus bears markedly different meanings in what McCarthy calls a 'dialectic of moods' and in what I have described as a 'dialectic of affect'. In a striking instance of prosopopoeia, he writes: 'Each mood declares in an ever deeper way: "This life has been inadequate; this life is despair."'[54] The term *prosopon* denotes a mask, while *poien* derives from *poiēsis* (making). Here McCarthy not only gives each mood a human face, he also lends it a voice that articulates precisely what reason would wish to hear, thereby mapping it onto a theory of ethical development. An affectivity

[50] Lukács 1981: 253, 87.
[51] Kaufmann 1956: 18.
[52] McCarthy 1978: 2.
[53] McCarthy 1978: 120–1.
[54] McCarthy 1978: 132.

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that is so well-spoken and well-shaven would be stripped of its dialectical tension. I agree entirely with McCarthy that Kierkegaard 'recognizes the logic of the heart just as the logic of the mind'.[55] What I would add is that Kierkegaard not only recognises the one logic *just as* the other but also insists on the dialectical tension between them.

Two broadly comparable approaches to the dialectic of affect can be identified within affect theory more generally. First, a tradition drawing on Spinoza – particularly as mediated by Gilles Deleuze – has emphasised the importance of non-baptisable affectivity. In some respects, these theorists converge with Lukács and Kaufmann, though they assign the opposite value to non-signifying affects. In his influential early essay 'The Autonomy of Affect' – first published in 1995 and later included in *Parables for the Virtual* (2002) – the philosopher Brian Massumi argues for a distinction between emotion and affect. Whereas an *emotion* constitutes a 'conscious-autonomic mix', that is, a relatively stable and recognisable fusion of intelligibility and sensibility, *affect* is defined by the 'disconnection of signifying order from intensity'.[56] As Massumi writes, the non-signifying and nonpersonal force of affect 'is not exactly passivity, because it is filled with motion, vibratory motion, resonation. And it is not yet activity, because the motion is not of the kind that can be directed (if only symbolically) towards practical ends in a world of constituted objects and aims.'[57] Massumi's distinction between emotion and affect parallels, to some extent, the opposition between baptisable and non-baptisable affectivity suggested here. However, this strand of affect theory tends to prioritise the separation of these two regimes rather than their interrelation.

Second, a theoretical tradition often referred to as the *cognitive theory of emotion* or *appraisal theory* instead emphasises the baptisable side of affective life. According to Robert C. Solomon, Martha Nussbaum, and Robert Roberts, among others, emotions such as fear, anger, joy, sadness, and pity are cognitive insofar as they are directed at what we take to matter in the world. In *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (2001), Nussbaum argues that 'emotions are suffused with intelligence and discernment' and 'contain in themselves an awareness of value or importance'.[58] She describes her position as 'Neo-Stoic' because, like the Stoics, she understands emotions as forms of evaluation

[55] McCarthy 1978: 2.
[56] Massumi 2002: 24–5.
[57] Massumi 2002: 26.
[58] Nussbaum 2001: 1.

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or belief – of *appraisal* – while rejecting the Stoic claim that such evaluations are invariably false. Her principal target is the view that emotions are '"non-reasoning movements," unthinking energies that simply push the person around, without being hooked up to the ways in which she perceives or thinks about the world'.[59] Whereas William James is often cited as the classical example of a noncognitive account, Brian Massumi offers a contemporary Deleuzian example. As will be shown in Section 2, the cognitive theory of emotion informs several of the most illuminating studies of Kierkegaard's treatment of the affects discussed in this Element. However, I argue that this approach risks transforming the dialectic of care into a dietetics of care – that is, into a method for distinguishing between healthy and unhealthy affects.

My approach to Kierkegaard's dialectic of affects draws on a branch of affect theory – exemplified by scholars such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Ann Cvetkovich, and the aforementioned Lauren Berlant – that avoids rigidly distinguishing between emotion and affect in order to be able to analyse the interweaving of intelligibility and sensibility. In *Cruel Optimism*, Berlant describes the task of affect theory as the exploration of the experience of historical change that is sensed before it is spoken: 'Change is an impact lived on the body before anything is understood, and as such is simultaneously meaningful and ineloquent, engendering an atmosphere that they spend the rest of the story and their lives catching up to.'[60] A visceral experience that is at once meaningful and ineloquent corresponds, in my terms, to a dialectical experience. In a recent Cambridge Element, the scholar of religion Donovan Schaefer proposes a distinction between a Deleuzian branch of affect theory, represented by Massumi and focused on *affect* in the singular, and a phenomenological branch, associated with Sedgwick, Cvetkovich, and Berlant, which instead analyses *the affects* in the plural.[61] By titling the present Element *Kierkegaard and the Affects*, I thus align my approach with this latter strand of contemporary affect theory.

About This Element

In a footnote to the introduction of *The Concept of Anxiety*, Haufniensis reflects on the importance of mood in 'science', by which he means philosophy: 'That science, just as much as poetry and art, presupposes

[59] Nussbaum 2001: 24.
[60] Berlant 2011: 39.
[61] See Schaefer 2015, 2019.

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mood both in the producer and the recipient, that an error in the modulation is just as disturbing as an error in the development of thought, have been altogether forgotten in our time.'[62] It is generally accepted that poetry and art presuppose mood in the producer and the recipient; Haufniensis's claim is that the same holds for philosophy. As has already been noted, Kierkegaard, writing under the pseudonym Johannes Climacus, argues that 'pencil-pushing modern speculative thought depreciates passion'.[63] According to Haufniensis's account, this depreciation entails a failure to recognise the role of the affects in philosophical writing itself. He further suggests that it is not the presence of mood, as Lukács and Kaufmann would maintain, but rather the 'absence or falsification of mood' that constitutes an 'error of thought'.[64]

I will return to Haufniensis's remarkable footnote in Section 2. At the outset, I stress that affect is here understood as a matter of style. Throughout his work, Kierkegaard uses the term *modulation* to denote the controlled variation of tone, pitch, and affective intensity in speech and writing. For the philosophical author, to write without committing an error in the modulation is itself a task. Indeed, the affective force of Kierkegaard's literary style is a defining feature of his authorship. His turn to affects is, among other things, a turn towards forms of philosophical writing that generate affect. Moreover, in his theory of 'indirect communication', he develops a set of sophisticated poetological reflections on his own textual strategies. His 'talk of pathos and passion' is therefore not only constative but also performative: as a writer, he does not merely thematise pathos and passion but also seeks to evoke them in the reader.

Accordingly, an investigation of Kierkegaard's treatment of the affects cannot be confined to his explicit philosophical claims about them. It must also attend to the intricate ways in which affect both shapes and is shaped by his texts. In other words, the analysis will have to combine the methodological resources of philosophy and literary studies. As the distinguished Kierkegaard scholar Michael Theunissen once observed, after a lifetime of engagement with the field, that, of Kierkegaard's works, only *The Concept of Anxiety* and *The Sickness unto Death* are *theoriefähig* – that is, amenable to theory.[65] To understand not only Kierkegaard's *talk of* pathos and passion, but also his *text of* pathos and passion, however, it is necessary to consider the many works that

[62] SKS 4,322/KW 8,14, translation modified.
[63] SKS 7,181/KW 12.1,197, translation modified.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Personal communication at a doctoral seminar, Freie Universität, Berlin, March 1996.

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Theunissen regarded as *theorieunfähig*. It is often precisely the tension between the intelligible and the sensible that renders these works unamenable to theory but indispensable for an account of Kierkegaard's treatment of the affects.

I have sought to combine philosophy and literary studies by structuring each of the following three sections into a theoretical and an analytical subsection, loosely modelled on the distinction between prelude and fugue in Bach's keyboard works. In the theoretical prelude, I present a philosophical account each specific version of the opposition between baptisable and non-baptisable affectivity – truth and noise, unity and fragmentation, sovereignty and insurgency – with particular emphasis on its role in Kierkegaard scholarship. In the analytical fugue – or, departing from Bach's model, in the analytical fugues, in the plural – I turn to specific textual examples from Kierkegaard's authorship in which the theoretical problem is worked out in detail. In these analytical subsections, I focus on points of divergence where the three oppositions cease to run in parallel.

2 Truth and Noise

The opposition between baptisable and non-baptisable affectivity is, in the first instance, a question of knowledge. Affects can be cognitive insofar as they are embodied ways of responding to and grasping the world. At the same time, they may take the form of blind bodily instincts, expressed, as Kierkegaard occasionally writes, in 'convulsive wailing'.[66] This contrast between cognition and convulsion – between thinking and unthinking emotional experiences – is central to Kierkegaard's dialectic of affect.

Among the affect theories available to Kierkegaard, the conception of affects as modes of cognition is most closely associated with Hegel. As noted in the Introduction, Hegel praised the 'wonderful' German word *Sinn* (sense) for encompassing two opposed meanings: intelligible sense and sensuous sense. In the aesthetic experience, he goes on to say, these two senses converge: 'Now a sensible contemplation does not *separate* the two sides, as one might think; rather, in one direction it contains the opposite one too, and in sensuous immediate intuition it apprehends at the same time the essence and the concept.'[67] According to Hegel, ethical life in ancient Greece is characterised by a comparable correspondence of sensuous immediate intuition and essence. In his critique of

[66] SKS 4,216/KW 7,7, translation modified.
[67] Hegel 1975: 1,129, translation modified, 1970: 13,173.

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Kantian moral theory, which sharply opposes abstract duty to bodily inclination, Hegel describes *Sittlichkeit* (ethical substance) as a reconciliation of rationality and sensibility. In *The Philosophy of History*, he characterises the Greek city-state as 'The Political Work of Art', that is, as comparable to a beautiful artwork. At this historical stage, the individual citizens were still unable to think rationally about their relation to the political community; instead, the constitution had 'entered into the blood and life of the community' and had 'become the habit of moral and civil existence'.[68] In *Reason in History*, another version of his lectures on world history, Hegel writes that the ethos of the Greek *polis* is 'not of the moral, the reflective kind in which one's own conviction rules supreme. This latter is rather the peculiarity of the modern world […]. An Athenian citizen did what was required of him, as it were from instinct.'[69] In this account, noble emotions and higher impulses – for example, Antigone's sisterly love, which Hegel famously celebrates – are not to be dismissed as mere bodily instincts. Rather, they refer to ethical norms embodied in the blood and life of the community.

In contemporary philosophy, as has already been noted, a broadly comparable account of affect is developed within cognitive theories of emotion, also known as appraisal theories. In this view, an affect such as Antigone's love for her deceased brother involves an awareness of her social, political, and familial situation and must therefore be understood as a form of *appraisal* or value judgment concerning Polyneices. The term *aboutness* may be more intuitive than *appraisal*: emotions are cognitive insofar as they are about what we take to matter in the world. Hence, they are 'part and parcel of the system of ethical reasoning', as Martha Nussbaum argues in *Upheavals of Thought* (2001): 'We cannot plausibly omit them, once we acknowledge that emotions include in their content judgments that can be true or false, and good or bad guides to ethical choice.'[70] In Hegelian terms, emotions include in their content ethical judgments that are made, as it were from instinct.

Essential Passion

The link between cognitive theories of emotion and Kierkegaard scholarship is represented by the work of the American philosophers Robert C. Roberts and Rick Anthony Furtak, whose approaches are closely related,

[68] Hegel 1991: 277.
[69] Hegel 1985: 53.
[70] Nussbaum 2001: 1.

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though they differ in important respects.[71] I begin with Roberts, whose account applies his philosophy of emotion to Kierkegaard's authorship, arguing that 'Kierkegaard stresses the connection between emotions and thoughts (concepts)'.[72] Because of this connection between affectivity and rationality, 'the concept of an emotion is central to Kierkegaard's thinking about subjectivity, inwardness, existence, and character'.[73] Roberts's primary concern is the concept of ethical character understood as a well-formed and fully functioning person. At its core, a person's character 'is not just manifested in emotion, but is somehow actualized or made present in a special way in emotion'.[74] In line with classical thinkers such as Aristotle and the Stoics, Roberts argues, Kierkegaard conceives of character as a connection between sensibility and intelligibility. From the perspective of moral psychology, there are proper and improper ways in which to combine body and soul: 'His [Kierkegaard's] basic position is that *the mature self is a proper synthesis of passion and reflection*.'[75] In other words, becoming a subject is, according to Roberts's understanding of Kierkegaard, 'a matter of proper *passional* formation'.[76]

Roberts clarifies the connection between emotions and thoughts by arguing that emotions – both in general and in Kierkegaard's authorship – involve an awareness of the world. In his terminology, emotions are 'concern-based construals': ways of 'seeing as', or 'aspect perceptions', that activate and transfigure underlying concerns by picking out different aspects of a given situation.[77] The notion of concern is central to Roberts's version of the cognitive theory of emotions. It is not just that emotions *contain* an awareness of value or importance, it is also that individual emotional states are *grounded in* a deeper-lying awareness of value which Roberts terms concern. To take an example from Hegel rather than Roberts: if Antigone is overcome by defiant anger towards Creon, it is because she is deeply invested in the well-being of her family.

In Kierkegaard's work, Roberts argues, the distinction between concern and emotion is reflected in the dual sense of the word *Lidenskab* (passion). At times, Kierkegaard uses 'passion' as a 'dispositional term', indicating a persistent concern that may not be present in every

[71] For a critical assessment of Roberts's and Furtak's contribution to Kierkegaard research, see Welz 2007 and Rosfort 2021.
[72] Roberts 1998: 189.
[73] Roberts 1998: 203.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Roberts 1998: 182, Roberts's italics.
[76] Roberts 1984: 74, Roberts's italics.
[77] Roberts 1984: 76, 86.

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given moment. To illustrate this usage, Roberts quotes a passage from *Two Ages*: 'If the essential passion is taken away, the one concern, and everything becomes meaningless externality, devoid of character, then the spring of ideality stops flowing and communal life becomes stagnant water.'[78] What Kierkegaard calls 'the essential passion' (*den væsentlige Lidenskab*) is an affect that relates to an idea. Somewhat surprisingly, in the Thomasine Gyllembourg novella analysed in *Two Ages*, Kierkegaard finds the essential content of passion in the idea of extra-marital romantic love. Thus, essential passion can be 'violent, riotous, wild, ruthless towards everything but its idea', he concedes, but given the relationship to an idea, this kind of passion is the 'one concern' (*det ene Hensyn*) that functions as a 'spring of ideality' in human life.

At other times, however, Kierkegaard uses 'passion' to refer to brief and intense emotional episodes – for instance when he describes 'men whom I generally regard as good-natured and who generally are not unfriendly towards me', but who can suddenly 'get into a passion' (*komme i Lidenskab*).[79] The distinction between 'passion as interest' and 'passion as emotion' – between enduring concern and momentary affect – is crucial to Roberts's account of ethical character as 'a matter of personality-integrating enthusiasm'.[80]

According to Roberts, 'the connection between emotions and thoughts (concepts)' is to be understood as the subordination of emotions to thoughts.[81] If emotions are central to Kierkegaard's thinking, he argues, it is because some of them are compatible with the medium of rational thought. In a footnote to *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard, writing under the pseudonym Johannes Climacus, calls to mind 'Plutarch's splendid definition of virtue: "Ethical virtue has the passions for its material, reason for its form." See his little book on the virtues.'[82] Roberts is fond of this reference to Plutarch, because it shows how concern – which 'belongs to the world of the thoughts'– gives form to otherwise formless affective material.[83] According to this intellectualist account of affect, 'to exist well is to incorporate right thinking into a pathos-filled life'.[84]

[78] SKS 8,60-1/KW 14,62, translation modified; see Roberts 1998: 181.
[79] SKS20/KJN 4: NB:10.
[80] Roberts 1998: 181.
[81] Roberts 1998: 189.
[82] SKS 7,150/KW 12.1,161–2; see Roberts 1998: 180; 2022: 125, 70, 79.
[83] Roberts 1998: 192.
[84] Roberts 1998: 192, 203.

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In the vocabulary of this Element, Roberts collapses the three oppositions – truth/noise, unity/fragmentation, sovereignty/insurgency – into one, asserting that 'essential' emotions (truth) are necessary for establishing psychological continuity (unity) because they are shaped and controlled by propositional rationality (sovereignty). At the other end of this opposition, according to Roberts, lies 'immature, unformed, chaotic, and childish "immediacy"'.[85] Consequently, Kierkegaard's treatment of the affects is viewed as undialectical. To return to Young's metaphor, Roberts describes the baptisable and non-baptisable aspects of affectivity as contradictory, but not as inseparable. He condemns unshaved and uncircumcised affects as morally 'immature' and 'childish', rather than acknowledging unshavenness as an ineradicable aspect of affectivity as such. It is true that Kierkegaard – in the *Postscript* and in several other pseudonymous and signed works – often writes that passion is nothing but formless raw material for form-giving reason. But, as we shall see, it is equally true that Kierkegaard frequently makes the opposite point: that affects, separated from 'right thinking', are indispensable for giving form to the mature human self.

Passionately Based Convictions

The titles of Rick Anthony Furtak's two monographs on Kierkegaard and the affects – *Wisdom in Love* (2005) and *Knowing Emotions* (2018) – indicate his conception of emotions as cognitive phenomena. Furtak's account aligns closely with that of Roberts in maintaining that 'our dispositions of love, care, or interest' ground our individual emotional experiences.[86] He diverges from Roberts, however, by emphasising that concern is not only to be understood as '*cognition-based passions*', but also as '*passionately based convictions*'.[87] Furtak's distinctive contribution lies in his insistence on a mode of affective cognition irreducible to rational cognition and not fully subject to the control of the sovereign subject: 'Forming an attachment or enthusiasm, beginning to love or to care, is a basic movement of the heart: it does not require justification, since it is that which justifies.'[88] In *Works of Love*, Furtak argues, Kierkegaard describes love as an 'emotional *a priori*' that conditions our experience of the world, 'enabling certain things to stand out – to be obvious and apparent to us'.[89]

[85] Roberts 1998: 182.
[86] Furtak 2014: 148.
[87] Ibid., Furtak's italics.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Furtak 2018: 111.

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This conception of affective cognition provides a theoretical starting point for Furtak's perceptive analyses of various dimensions of Kierkegaard's writings. In *Wisdom in Love*, for example, he offers an eye-opening affect theoretical account of the aesthetic stage (or sphere of existence). As many commenters have noted, Kierkegaard's notions of 'the aesthetic' and 'the aesthete' do not refer to aesthetics as the theory of art, but to the original Greek term *aisthēsis*, meaning sensibility in a broad sense. The aesthetic stage is therefore marked by a distinctive mode of affectivity, and the aesthete's existential problem is, among other things, emotional dysfunction. According to Furtak, the problem consists in severing affective force from affective cognition, feeling from judgment. Whereas cognitive theories maintain that emotions are responsive to objects in the world towards which one has a relation of care, the aesthete's strategy is to abstract the 'raw feel' or 'raw force' of the emotion 'from its grounding conditions'.[90] As Furtak puts it, an emotion thus 'cut off from its intentional object' resembles a plant removed from its native soil.[91] In a slightly idiosyncratic use of the term, he describes the aesthete as a 'sentimental', given that sentimentality denotes 'the habit of having emotions that involve either impaired or mistaken judgment'.[92]

To illustrate the aesthete's strategy of violently uprooting affective experience, Furtak turns to one of the aesthete's so-called diapsalmata, the series of brief aphoristic texts that open *Either/Or*:

> What a strange, sad mood came over me on seeing a poor wretch shuffling through the streets in a somewhat worn pale green coat playing in yellow. I felt sorry for him, but nevertheless what moved me most was that the colour of this coat so vividly reminded me of my childhood's first productions in the noble art of painting. This particular colour was one of my favourite colours. Is it not sad that these colour combinations, which I still think of with so much joy, are nowhere to be found in life; the whole world finds them crude, garish, suitable only for Nürnberg prints. If they are encountered occasionally, the meeting is always unfortunate, as this one is.[93]

The diapsalm reflects on how this encounter moves the aesthete affectively (*hvad der mest bevægede mig*). At first, the aesthete does feel pity for the poor wretch, but he quickly forgets both the man and his coat, turning instead to the play of colours in abstraction from their social

[90] Furtak 2005: 53, 81.
[91] Furtak 2005: 81.
[92] Furtak 2002: 207.
[93] SKS 2,31/KW 3,23, translation modified.

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and moral context. 'If his emotion is about anything', Furtak comments, 'by the end of the passage, it is about himself, as he mixes in a nostalgic memory'.[94] This illustrates how the aesthete is 'a kind of emotional gourmet' who, disregarding the significance of his or her affects, relishes them as a kind of delicacy.[95] From the perspective of moral psychology, Furtak condemns the sentimental strategy of cutting off emotional responses from their external source: 'Emotions that involve a mistaken relation to reality, which dissolve when the facts come to light, are not worth having.'[96] To be an emotional gourmet is to withdraw from genuine engagement with the world – in this case, from moral engagement with the poor wretch in the street – and thereby to become, in Furtak's words, 'a moral zombie, a dead man in life'.[97]

Rather than analysing the tension between baptisable and non-baptisable affects, Furtak seeks to resolve the tension by distinguishing between emotions worth having and not worth having. Opposing the Stoics' blanket condemnation of affectivity, he argues that only certain forms of affects should be rejected. After citing Edward Young's lines about baptised reason and pagan passion, he remarks that when Kierkegaard condemns sentimentality, 'it is in order to contrast it with "true and genuine feeling"'; the 'sentimental palpitations' are, to their discredit, set 'beside a "far more exalted" class of "healthy and powerful" emotions'.[98] In other words, Kierkegaard's critique of false emotions should be seen as 'a step toward distinguishing what is authentic'.[99] Against this background, the task of a philosophy of affect is to articulate criteria by which to distinguish between true and false, healthy and unhealthy, baptisable and non-baptisable affects – to make us able to tell when emotions are 'well-founded phenomena and when they are weighing us down with their stupidity'.[100] The ambition is 'to develop a method of investigating what it would take for passion to be as reliable as other modes of rational activity'.[101] I acknowledge the importance of this philosophical programme. Yet I would add that it tends to turn Kierkegaard's dialectic of affect into a dietetics of affects. If Kierkegaard's analyses of the aesthete's and the ironist's emotional lives

[94] Furtak 2005: 55.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Furtak 2005: 56.
[97] Furtak 2005: 63.
[98] Furtak 2005: 49; see Kierkegaard's letter to Emil Boesen from January 16, 1842: SKS 28,147–8/KW 23,123.
[99] Furtak 2005: 49.
[100] Furtak 2005: 55.
[101] Furtak 2005: 49, 73.

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make a contribution to affect theory, it is not merely by functioning as an example of a deficient form of affect that must be avoided lest we become moral zombies. It is also because Kierkegaard here probes a double-tonguedness present in affectivity as such. As the following subsections will show, the separation of affective force from affective cognition, of feeling from judgment, is an important condition of possibility both for writing about religion and becoming a self.

Science Presupposes Mood

My first textual example of the truth/noise opposition is the footnote to the introduction of *The Concept of Anxiety*, which has already been briefly mentioned. In this passage, the pseudonym Vigilius Haufniensis reflects on the relationship between mood and conceptual truth:

> That science, just as much as poetry and art, presupposes mood both in the producer and the recipient, that an error in the modulation is just as disturbing as an error in the development of thought, have been altogether forgotten in our time, when one has altogether forgotten inwardness and the category of appropriation in the joy at all the magnificence one thought to possess, or through greed lost like the dog that preferred the shadow. Yet every error gives birth to its own enemy. An error of thought has dialectics outside; the absence or falsification of mood has the comical outside as its enemy.[102]

Haufniensis's provocative claim that science presupposes mood is an attack on the traditional ideal of affectless philosophical prose (in the Hegelian vocabulary Haufniensis employs, 'science' means philosophy). The clumsy repetition of the expression 'altogether forgotten' (*aldeles glemt*) may be interpreted as indicating that he stands alone in making this claim, an implication that both existing English translations subtly mitigate.[103] Like poetry and art, philosophy presupposes mood, so that pure conceptual cognition depends on the nonconceptual dimension of affect.[104] What Haufniensis calls 'an error in the modulation' is not the disturbing presence of irrational affect in philosophical prose but, by contrast, the disturbing 'absence or falsification of mood'. Affectlessness is not a precondition for but rather an impediment to philosophical thinking.

To claim that the mood of a philosophical investigation can be an 'error' or a 'falsification' is to attribute a cognitive dimension to affect. Moods

[102] SKS 4,322/KW 8,14, translation modified.
[103] KW 8,14 and Kierkegaard 2014.
[104] See Stegmaier 1997: 345.

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can only be true or false if they are 'hooked up' to the ways in which we perceive or think about the world, as Nussbaum phrased it.[105] If we think of the affects as mere convulsions, as 'bodily tugs or stabs or flashes',[106] it would make no sense to describe them as neither erroneous nor false.

Haufniensis's dense remarks on mood in philosophy are taken up by Martin Heidegger in his famous account of mood (*Stimmung*) as being-there's 'primordial disclosure' of a world.[107] According to *Being and Time* (1927), moods are ways of being in touch with the world. In a lecture held a couple of years later, Heidegger repeats Haufniensis's footnote nearly verbatim – without mentioning Kierkegaard – stating 'in a provisional and rough and ready manner that moods are the "presupposition" [*Voraussetzung*] for, and "medium" of thinking and acting'.[108] Recently, the intersection of the Heideggerian theory of mood and the cognitive theory of emotion has been explored by the philosopher Matthew Ratcliffe. According to Ratcliffe, 'existential feelings', which comprise moods, are not directed at specific objects or situations but are 'background orientations through which experience as a whole is structured'.[109] Even if moods lack clear *aboutness*, they shape how we think about the world and how we act in it.

As always, Kierkegaard places emphasis on the 'unsublatable' tension between concept and mood. The running text after the footnote investigates the falsification of mood in three misguided philosophical approaches to the phenomenon of sin. As Haufniensis states at the outset, 'the mood that corresponds to sin is earnestness',[110] that is, a mood according to which sin is 'to be overcome' and not just observed and theorised.[111] The philosophical disciplines of aesthetics, metaphysics, and psychology commit errors in the modulation insofar as their moods are not that of earnestness. When sin is treated in the philosophical discipline of aesthetics, 'the mood becomes either light-minded or melancholic, for the category under which sin lies is contradiction, and this is either comic or tragic'.[112] When sin is subjected to metaphysical treatment, 'the mood becomes that of dialectical equanimity and disinterestedness, which

[105] Nussbaum 2001: 24, 46.
[106] Nussbaum 2001: 17.
[107] Heidegger 1962: 134.
[108] Heidegger 1995: 68.
[109] Ratcliffe 2008: 2.
[110] SKS 4,322/KW 8,14.
[111] SKS 4,322/KW 8,15.
[112] SKS 4,322/KW 8,14, translation modified.

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ponder sin as something that cannot stand up to thought'.[113] Finally, when sin is discussed in psychology, 'the mood becomes that of persistent observation, like the fearlessness of a secret agent'.[114]

In all three philosophical disciplines, according to Haufniensis, the tension between intelligibility and sensibility entails that 'instead of the endurance of the true mood there is the fleeting charade of false moods'.[115] In the vocabulary of this Element, this is a point of divergence of the truth/noise and unity/fragmentation oppositions. On the one hand, the moods of the aesthetic, metaphysical, and psychological treatments of sin are related to scientific truth, even if the cognitive import of the moods is erroneous. On the other hand, these philosophical moods dissolve the affective wholeness of the text, turning it into a fleeting charade or buffoonery (*Gjøglespil*) of false moods.

In the second half of Haufniensis's dense footnote, he shifts the focus from mood in the *producer* of philosophical prose to mood in the *recipient*. The argument hinges on a poem by the Latin poet Phaedrus who, in his versification of Aesop's *Fables*, tells the story of a dog that carries a piece of meat in its mouth, spies its mirror image in a river, and, 'thinking it was flesh and blood', tries to snap the treat from the dog reflected in the water. As a consequence, of course, the dog misses 'both shade and substance, beef and bone'.[116] In its cameo appearance in *The Concept of Anxiety*, Phaedrus' deluded dog serves as an image of the philosophers who are putting too much confidence in abstract concepts: in our time, one 'has altogether forgotten inwardness and the category of appropriation in the joy at all the magnificence one thought to possess, or through greed lost like the dog that preferred the shadow'.[117] The category of appropriation (*Tilegnelse*) was later to become a central concept in Kierkegaard's sharp critique of Hegel and the Danish Hegelians. In the image of the dog from the *Fables*, appropriation is allegorised as a process of digestion: as opposed to the actual piece of meat, the meat reflected on the surface of the river cannot be absorbed by the dog's entrails. Similarly, the dog-like philosopher – one might think of a Danish Hegelian – is unable to assimilate the beef and bone of the abstract philosophical concepts into his own concrete life. He thinks he 'possesses' the concepts, but he

[113] Ibid.
[114] SKS 4,322/KW 8,15.
[115] SKS 4,322/KW 8,14, translation modified.
[116] Phaedrus 1765: 12–13. Kierkegaard read Phaedrus in the Danish translation, see Fædrus 1826: 4.
[117] SKS 4,322/KW 8,14, translation modified.

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only sees them at a certain distance and is therefore unable to transform philosophical meaning into existential meaning.

Here Haufniensis links his investigation of philosophical moods to Kierkegaard's poetological reflections known as his theory of indirect communication. At issue is the importance of textual moods in order to ensure that the philosophical content is appropriated by the reader. An affectless philosophical style creates mere shadows on the surface, devoid of 'beef and bone', and this superficiality precludes the reader's visceral and existential relation to the philosophical content. It is a kind of knowledge that lacks the sense of personal relevance which the emotions give.[118] In other words, Haufniensis's footnote formulates a programme for the performative dimension of the affects in Kierkegaard's philosophical style.

The Interesting

The second textual example is drawn from 'The Seducer's Diary' which concludes Part One of *Either/Or*. Upon encountering Cordelia, Johannes the Seducer is overcome by intense emotion. After first seeing her on Langelinie (a wharf north of Copenhagen), he employs a marine metaphor in a diary entry written a few days later to depict his internal conflict between rationality and affectivity: on the one hand, the calm 'Cliff King' (*Klintekongen*), a Danish mythical figure said to rule over the coastal cliffs of Stevns and Møn, and on the other, the turbulent sea:

> I scarcely know myself. My mind roars like a turbulent sea in the storms of passion. If someone else could see my soul in this state, it would seem to him that it, like a skiff, plunged prow-first down into the ocean, as if in its dreadful momentum it would have to steer down into the depths of the abyss. He does not see that high on the mast a sailor is on the lookout. Roar away, you wild forces, keep moving, you powers of passion; even if your waves hurl foam towards the clouds, you still are not able to pile yourselves up over my head – I am sitting as calmly as the Cliff King.
>
> I am almost unable to find a foothold; like a water bird, I am seeking in vain to alight on the turbulent sea of my mind. And yet such turbulence is my element, I build upon it as the *Alcedo ispida* builds its nest upon the sea.[119]

In the vocabulary of 'The Seducer's Diary', the contrast between unperturbed rationality and turbulent affectivity is 'interesting'. When Johannes sees Cordelia again a week later, he writes in his diary: 'How beautiful it

[118] Furtak 2017: 124.
[119] SKS 2,314–5/KW 3,324–5, translation modified.

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is to be in love; how interesting it is to know that one is in love. This, you see, is the difference.'[120] Johannes employs the term 'interesting' more than thirty times in the short novel, and Kierkegaard continues to make use of it in the rest of his authorship. The concept was first introduced by Friedrich Schlegel in his dissertation *On the Study of Greek Poetry* (1795–1797). Here Schlegel, in his early twenties, adds the aesthetic category of the interesting to Kant's notion of the beautiful, developed in *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790). Schlegel agrees with Kant that the beautiful may be defined as free play between the mental faculties of understanding and imagination,[121] but argues that such harmony between the intelligible and the sensible is found only in ancient Greek literature. By contrast, modern literature, from Shakespeare onwards, is marked by the '*total predominance of the characteristic, individual, and the interesting*'.[122] In Golden Age Copenhagen, Schlegel's concept of the interesting happened to become a buzzword celebrated by poets, dramatists, and critics alike. According to the art critic Johan Ludvig Heiberg an interesting person is a 'veiled being' who allows the observer to sense a hidden depth of passion behind the outer appearance.[123]

Compared with its use by Kierkegaard's Danish contemporaries, Kierkegaard's adaptation of the concept of the interesting is distinctive in emphasising the tension between the intelligible and the sensible, embodied in the contrast between the Cliff King's calm and the turbulence of the sea. One might say that, for Kierkegaard, the interesting denotes an aesthetically experienced tension between rationality and affectivity. Unlike the pleasures of ordinary forms of agreeable experience – for instance, a seducer's enjoyment of contemplating any pretty young girl on Langelinie – the pleasure of the interesting is a second-order feeling that arises from the gap between thinking and feeling. The model is once again Kant's account of the pleasure of the beautiful which is caused not by the perceived object itself but by the 'well-proportioned disposition' between imagination and understanding that the object elicits in the observer.[124] According to Kant, the well-proportioned *Stimmung* of the beautiful experience is a second-order feeling arising from how first-order sensibility relates to intelligibility. The crucial difference is that, in the interesting aesthetic experience, the relationship between the sensible and the intelligible

[120] SKS 2,323/KW 3,334.
[121] Schlegel 2001: 241.
[122] Schlegel 2001: 228, Schlegel's italics.
[123] Heiberg 1861: 3,371. See Henriksen 1969: 32 ff.; Nielsen 1982: 19–61; and Koch 1992.
[124] Kant 2000: 104.

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is not characterised by harmony and 'mutual agreement', as Kant writes about the beautiful,[125] but rather by tension and conflict.

After a while, however, Johannes regains control over his feelings so that the tension shifts from his inner life to his relationship with Cordelia. 'Woman is substance, man is reflection,' Johannes observes in a pseudo-Hegelian vocabulary,[126] thereby gendering the concept of the interesting. The seducer's cool rational reflection plays the role of the Cliff King to Cordelia's storms of passion. In one of his early diary entries, he offers an explicit formulation of this strategy: 'the strategic principle, the law for every move in this campaign, is always to have tangential contact with her in an interesting situation. Consequently, the interesting is the territory in which the struggle is to be carried out; the potency of the interesting must be exhausted.'[127] If the territory of the interesting is the borderland between intelligibility and sensibility, the potency of the interesting is the energy generated by the tension between them. (It should be kept in mind that Cordelia's sensibility consists not only of affectivity, but also of imagination, though that is another matter.)[128]

In other words, Johannes's many reflections on the interesting – as the law for every move in his erotic campaign – hinge on an implicit affect theory. In his diary, he compares Cordelia to ordinary young girls whose souls are 'diffused or slackened by the indeterminate emotions of erotic love' and who in their minds have 'an indeterminate, foggy image that is supposed to be an ideal by which the actual object is to be tested'.[129] The young girls' emotions, or 'stirrings' (*Rørelser*), are modes of cognition insofar as they test an object in the world by an ideal in their mind, even if the ideal in question is merely an indeterminate, foggy image. Cordelia's emotions are not indeterminate and nebulous in this way – especially not after Johannes's erotic campaign, which he predicts will make her passion 'definite, energetic, deducing, dialectical'.[130] The third adjective in this inventory is inaccurately rendered as 'determinate' in the English translation. In Danish, Cordelia's passion is described, somewhat unexpectedly, as *sluttende*, that is, 'deducing' or 'drawing conclusions'. Like the ordinary young girls of Copenhagen, Cordelia tests the actual object

[125] Ibid.
[126] SKS 2,419/KW 3,431.
[127] SKS 2,420/KW 3,345–6.
[128] For an analysis of 'The Seducer's Diary' as an interplay between rationality and imagination – another subset of sensibility – see Holm 1998: 157–204.
[129] SKS 2,365/KW 3,377, translation modified.
[130] SKS 2,400/KW 3,411–2.

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by comparing it to an abstract ideal; what makes her stand out, however, is that her deduction process is definite and energetic.

In some versions of cognitive theory, emotions are described as judgments – not conceptual and reflective, but implicit and pre-reflective. As noted, Martha Nussbaum, in *Upheavals of Thought*, urges us to acknowledge 'that emotions include in their content judgments that can be true or false'.[131] To give another example, in *The Passions* (1976), the American philosopher Robert Solomon defines an emotion as 'a basic judgment about our Selves and our place in our world, the projection of the values and ideals, structures and mythologies, according to which we live and through which we experience our lives'.[132] In Solomon's terms, Cordelia's 'deducing' and 'dialectical' passion constitutes a basic judgment about herself and her place in her world – and it is because of this judgment that she chooses to break the engagement with Johannes.

This is precisely the deduction he wants her to make, in order to nudge her out of the ethical order. In his diary, he describes his strategy as 'to guide her in such a way that in her bold flight she loses sight of marriage and of the continent of actuality altogether, so that her soul, as much in pride as in her anxiety about losing me, will destroy an imperfect human form in order to hurry on to something that is superior to the ordinarily human'.[133] Here, Cordelia's passion is described as a preconceptual way of seeing and judging the world. She 'loses sight of' (*taber af Syne*) marriage and 'the continent of actuality altogether', and she judges the engagement to be an 'imperfect human form' tested against the ideal in her mind. Put differently, Cordelia can be betrayed only because her emotions contain within themselves a notion of truth.

However, if Cordelia is dependent on Johannes's skills to develop the cognitive content of her passions, Johannes in turn depends on her affectivity in order to begin thinking at all. This is the vampiric dimension of 'The Seducer's Diary'. At the end of the Cliff King quote with which I opened this subsection, Johannes likens himself to the kingfisher, the *Alcedo ispida*, a bird that, according to Greek mythology, 'builds its nest upon the sea'.[134] Johannes intimates that his rationality has no other place to build its nest than on the waves of affectivity. Even if he is unsuccessful in his attempt to alight on the turbulent sea of his own mind, 'such turbulence is my element'. As he writes in a later diary entry, 'I find myself

[131] Nussbaum 2001: 1.
[132] Solomon 1983: 185.
[133] SKS 2,415/KW 3,428, translation modified.
[134] SKS 2,314–5/KW 3,324–5.

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right in my element in this clamour of the elements'.[135] Johannes, then, is not a philosopher whose element is pure conceptual thought. Rather, his element is turbulent passion on which his thinking strives to build a nest. Like Haufniensis in *The Concept of Anxiety*, Johannes the Seducer demonstrates how rationality presupposes affectivity.

3 Unity and Fragmentation

The dialectic of affect raises not only a question of knowledge but also a question of unity. At one end of this version of the opposition between baptisable and non-baptisable affectivity, affects support and create existential and aesthetic wholeness. At the other, the tensions between intelligibility and sensibility, as well as between incompatible affective qualities, undermine any attempt to establish coherence. Kierkegaard's account of affectivity and unity draws on the German Romantics, in particular their central concept of mood or attunement (*Stimmung*), which, as we have seen, started its philosophical career in Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. As a young man, Kierkegaard took notes on Friedrich Schlegel's aforementioned dissertation *On the Study of Greek Poetry*, in which Schlegel reflects on the role of mood in literary and dramatic form. In the 'interesting' modern dramas, 'beauty never determines the arrangement of the whole'.[136] Shakespeare's works, Schlegel observes, are not well proportioned, but rather 'awkward and uncouth'.[137] Nevertheless, Shakespeare's lyric drama, exemplified by *Romeo and Juliet*, possesses a mood-based aesthetic unity: 'it is a poem in dramatic form whose unity is a musical mood or a lyrical uniformity – the dramatic expression of a lyric enthusiasm'.[138] According to Schlegel, 'the unity of the mood [*Einheit der Stimmung*] cannot be grasped by means of the understanding, but can only be apprehended by means of a more refined sensibility'.[139]

Like the German Romantics, contemporary literary studies and philosophical aesthetics have treated affects not only as a thematic concern but also as a formal problem. To give just one example, the literary scholar Sianne Ngai, in her influential *Ugly Feelings* (2004), argues that aesthetic mood – 'tone' in her terminology – is to be regarded as a formal

[135] SKS 2,412/KW 3,424, translation modified.
[136] Schlegel 2001: 250.
[137] Schlegel 2001: 251.
[138] Schlegel 2001: 241.
[139] Ibid.

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aspect of a literary work: 'By "tone" I mean a literary or cultural artifact's feeling tone: its global or organizing affect, its general disposition or orientation toward its audience and the world.'[140] In Section 2, I mentioned 'Plutarch's splendid definition of virtue', as Johannes Climacus called it, according to which ethical virtue has the passions for its material, reason for its form.[141] By contrast, aesthetic mood, as Schlegel and Ngai conceive of it, is not just emotional material that needs forming by the artist's rationality. As a 'global or organizing' affect, it rather gives shape to a literary work's orientation or attitude towards the world. In Schlegel's terms, affect here determines 'the arrangement of the whole'.

Mood Aesthetics

In Kierkegaard research, the relationship between affectivity and unity has been investigated mainly by scholars coming from cultural disciplines. Inspired by a seminal lexicon article by the literary scholar David Wellbery from 2003,[142] a number of German scholars have explored the role of mood (*Stemning* or *Stimmung*) in Kierkegaard's authorship.[143] In the book chapter 'Kierkegaards Stimmungen' (2012), Klaus Müller-Wille offers a panoramic overview of the changing role of the concept of mood in Kierkegaard's authorship. His *Stimmungs-Ästhetik* (mood aesthetics), Müller-Wille argues, is structured by a clash between two divergent conceptions of mood. The dialectic of affect is here approached as an unresolved tension between Idealist and Romantic aesthetics. On the one hand, Kierkegaard adheres to an aesthetics that praises the unified and harmonious affects generated by the beautiful artwork. On the other, he is also informed by a Romantic or, one could say, modernist aesthetics that celebrates the 'interesting' – fragmentary and dissonant – aesthetic forms analysed by Schlegel.

According to Müller-Wille, Kierkegaard's valorisation of this dialectic is ambivalent. In many instances, he follows post-Romantic writers – most notably Hegel – in expressing moral concern about the Romantic concept of mood. However, when viewed across his authorship as a whole, mood is 'not only used negatively, but also positively'.[144] In the terms of this Element, it is treated not merely as an obstacle but also as a resource.

[140] Ngai 2004: 28.
[141] SKS 7,150/KW 12.1,161–2.
[142] Wellbery 2003, 2017.
[143] Müller-Wille 2012; Jacobs 2013; Reents 2015.
[144] Müller-Wille 2012: 225, my translation.

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What Müller-Wille calls Kierkegaard's negative use of mood is difficult to overlook in Kierkegaard's early authorship. In his first publication, *From the Papers of One Still Living* (1838) – which is, somewhat incidentally, a literary analysis of a novel by the then unknown Hans Christian Andersen – Kierkegaard criticises Andersen for having serious issues with affectivity. In real life, the young Andersen is unable to win a 'competent personality', that is, to attain form and consistency as an individual. He is nothing but 'a possibility of a personality, moving through an elegiac duodecimo-scale of almost echoless, dying tones, just as easily roused as subdued, and wrapped up in such a web of occasional moods'.[145] Kierkegaard contends that a similar turbulence of occasional moods characterises Andersen's third novel, *Only a Fiddler* (*Kun en Spillemand*), published in 1837:

> The same joyless battle Andersen himself fights in life now repeats itself in his poetry. But precisely because Andersen thus cannot separate the poetic from himself, because, so to speak, he cannot get rid of it, but as soon as a poetic mood has acquired freedom to act, this is immediately overwhelmed, with or without his will, by the prosaic – precisely therefore is it impossible to obtain a total impression from Andersen's short novels. Precisely therefore is it possible that readers are put into the most singular mood, very different from the one intended by Andersen.[146]

In Müller-Wille's terms, the author's serious lack of a worldview 'expresses itself in the heterogeneity of Andersen's work which […] sets loose dissonant moods (rather than rhetorically governed affects)'.[147] Interestingly, Andersen has issues with unity as well as sovereignty. With respect to wholeness, the reader is unable to 'obtain a total impression' (*et heelt Indtryk*) from the novel. In terms of sovereignty, the most singular mood of the novel ends up being 'very different from the one intended Andersen'.

In Part One of *Either/Or*, the aesthete 'A' – a close relative of Andersen and the ironist – laments that his 'life achievement amounts to nothing at all, a mood, a single colour'.[148] In part two of the same work, Judge Wilhelm, the ethicist, advises his aesthetic friend that the only remedy for his severe mood addiction is ethical coherence. If God, according to Augustine, is a circle whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere, the aesthete, according to Wilhelm, has his centre in the periphery:

[145] SKS 1,37, 25/KW 1,82, 70, translation modified.
[146] SKS 1,31/KW 1,75.
[147] Müller-Wille 2012: 222–3, my translation.
[148] SKS 2,37/KW 3,28.

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> The mood of the person who lives aesthetically is always eccentric, because he has his centre in the periphery. The personality has its centre in itself, and the person who does not have himself is eccentric. The mood of the person who lives ethically is centralised, he is not in the mood, he is not mood, but he has mood and has the mood within himself. What he works for is the continuousness, and this is always the master of the mood.[149]

Here the judge argues for the alignment of the sovereignty/insurgency and the unity/fragmentation oppositions: the only way to become a 'master of the mood' (*Stemningens Mester*) is by attaining ethical wholeness or 'continuousness' (*Continuerligheden*). The words 'eccentric' and 'centralised' describe a person's life as a formal problem, that is, as a question of the relationship between individual elements.

However, this negative use is not the whole story of Kierkegaard's use of mood. 'The question remains', Müller-Wille writes, whether the critique of eccentric and decentring moods in Andersen, the ironist, and the aesthete, 'does justice to the, in many ways, much more complex […] philosophy of mood developed by aesthete "A" in Part One of *Either/Or*'.[150] In other words, there remains a question about Kierkegaard's ambivalence to the Romantic notion of moods.

In his Mozart dissertation, 'A' reflects on the aesthetic representation of the formlessness – the force, life, unrest – of Don Juan's 'immense passion'.[151] While the dramatic situation is reflective, in the sense that its unity is created by what the dramatic characters say and do, the opera's 'musical situation' is unreflective:

> In opera, by contrast, unreflective, substantial passion finds its expression. The musical situation is constituted by the unity of mood, in the discrete plurality of voices [*Stemmefleerhed*]. This is precisely the distinctive characteristic of music, that it can maintain the plurality of voices in the unity of mood. Ordinarily when we use the word 'plurality', we mean a unity that is the final result; in music such is not the case.[152]

While Schlegel spoke of 'the unity of the mood' (*Einheit der Stimmung*) in Shakespeare's lyrical drama – a unity that cannot be grasped by means of the understanding – 'A' speaks of the opera's 'unity in the mood' (*Eenhed i Stemningen*). In the opera, the aesthete writes, the unity is not a logical coherence that emerges as 'the final result' of the theatregoer's *thinking*

[149] SKS 3,221/KW 4,230, translation modified.
[150] Müller-Wille 2012: 236.
[151] SKS 2,103/KW 3,100.
[152] SKS 2,120/KW 3,118, translation modified.

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the lines and actions of the dramatic characters together. Instead, it is *en Samlyden* (a sounding together or consonance) that emerges from *hearing* things together: 'the effect of the forces is a sounding together, a concord, is harmony, and the impression of the musical situation is the unity produced by hearing together that which sounds together'.[153] Underlining Kierkegaard's inspiration from Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Solger rather than Friedrich Schlegel, Müller-Wille argues that Kierkegaard, hiding behind 'A', here conceives of an aesthetic unity that contradicts the Hegelian notion of sublation. 'By an *Aufhebung* of this kind – which the judge explicitly connects to the continuity-creating work of recollection – the immediate mood of the subject is, in the same way, negated and appropriated.'[154] However, the aesthetic mood of the opera cannot be negated and appropriated in this way. Thus, in Mozart's opera as well as in the mood-addicted lives of Andersen, the ironist, and the aesthete, Kierkegaard detects a kind of affective unity which is able to maintain 'the discrete plurality' of conflicting individual affects without sublating sensibility into intelligibility.

Poetics of Unrest

Angelika Jacobs's *Stimmungskunst: von Novalis bis Hofmannsthal* (2013) contains three chapters on Kierkegaard, along with chapters on Wilhelm von Humboldt, Novalis, Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, and Rainer Maria Rilke. If Müller-Wille's concept of *Stimmungs-Ästhetik* (mood aesthetics) focuses on Kierkegaard's theoretical reflections on existential and aesthetic moods, Jacobs's notion of *Stimmungskunst* (mood art) is concerned instead with the performative use of mood – that is, with the deployment of moods in Kierkegaard's philosophical writing. Regardless of this difference in focus, both authors demonstrate that Kierkegaard views mood not merely as an obstacle but also as a resource. 'Through his categories of "tone" and "mood"', Jacobs writes, Kierkegaard 'develops his indirect mode of presentation which draws on the Socratic tradition of oral philosophy as well as – in spite of all critique – on the textures of the Romantics'.[155]

In his theory of 'indirect communication', outlined in the posthumously published *The Point of View for My Work as an Author* (written in 1848), Kierkegaard reflects on how to write about existential and Christian

[153] Ibid.
[154] Müller-Wille 2012: 236.
[155] Jacobs 2013: 201, my translation.

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matters when readers are under the illusion that they already possess the truth. As he notes, it is possible to 'deceive a person into what is true', and this is what he seeks to do in his work as an author, using deception as a corrosive chemical substance in order to strip away the reader's delusions.[156] According to Jacobs, Kierkegaard's 'mood art' should be understood in these terms. The chemical substance functions by compelling the reader to engage in 'self-activity' rather than passive reception. In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, for example, Johannes Climacus writes that the 'indirect form' of his presentation prompts the reader's 'self-activity [*Selvvirksomhed*] of appropriation'.[157] Kierkegaard's 'poetics of unrest' is thus an intentionally incoherent and disharmonious style that provokes self-activity through unresolvable formal tensions, thereby deceiving the reader into what is true.[158] Inspired by Socratic irony, Kierkegaard's style 'confronts the reader with the dubious, directionless moods of her own existence and causes semiotic dizziness'.[159]

This poetics can be illustrated by Kierkegaard's critique of Hans Christian Andersen. 'The same joyless battle Andersen himself fights in life now repeats itself in his poetry,' Kierkegaard writes in his critique of *Only a Fiddler*. This diagnosis of the novel hinges on the relation between existential and aesthetic affects, that is, between life moods and art moods. Existential affects denote the occasional moods that afflict Andersen as a biographical individual, whereas aesthetic affects refer to the singular mood Andersen, as a writer, elicits in his readers. Andersen not only *experiences* moods but also seeks to *evoke* them; he aims to 'put the readers into a definite mood'.[160] Kierkegaard's point, however, is that Andersen fights the *same* joyless battle both in his life and in his poetry.

In interpreting Andersen's novel, Kierkegaard's linkage of existential and aesthetic affects may seem relatively unilluminating. For many literary scholars today, the connection he makes would likely appear reductive. From a poetological perspective, however, the nexus of life and art becomes more compelling. Like Andersen, Kierkegaard as a writer aims to 'put the readers into a definite mood'.[161] His later theory of 'indirect communication' may be understood as a sophisticated poetological account of how to evoke affect in the reader. In *From the Papers of One Still Living*,

[156] SKS 16,35/KW 22,53–4.
[157] SKS 7,220/KW 12. 1,242.
[158] Jacobs 2013: 201, 16, 36.
[159] Jacobs 2013: 228, my translation.
[160] SKS 1,48/KW 1,92.
[161] Ibid.

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Kierkegaard criticises Andersen for failing to create a 'total impression' in the reader.[162] Jacobs's important point is that in Kierkegaard's own philosophical style – and in his poetological reflections on it – semiotic dizziness in the reader is not an obstacle but a resource.

The Shudder of the Thought

Both textual examples discussed in this Section are drawn from *Fear and Trembling* (1843). After a brief introduction, this work opens with a chapter whose title has proven difficult to translate into English. The Danish term *Stemning* has not been rendered as 'mood', but instead, across the different English editions of the book, as 'Prelude', 'Exordium', 'Attunement', and 'Tuning Up', in chronological order.[163] These renderings are well founded because they clearly convey the original musical sense of *Stemning*. The pseudonymous author Johannes de silentio is setting the tone of the book before putting forward its core philosophical concepts – such as movement, paradox, resignation, and faith in virtue of the absurd.

In the very first line of the chapter, de silentio introduces 'a man who as a child had heard the beautiful story of how God tempted Abraham and of how he withstood the temptation'.[164] As this anonymous man grows older, he becomes more and more enthusiastic about the *Akedah*, 'the Binding', the Biblical story in which God commands Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, on Mount Moriah despite the divine promise that all nations of the earth would be blessed through his offspring. This enthusiasm drives him to literary production. The chapter consists of four brief literary texts written by this man, each portraying a failed version of Abraham, a sub-Abraham, who performs the same actions as the real Abraham – arising in the early morning, riding to Mount Moriah with Isaac by his side, climbing the mountain, drawing the knife – but fails at the level of affect. Lacking Abraham's 'marvel' or 'miracle' (*Vidunder*) of a trust in God,[165] these figures become entangled in a web of painful or destructive feelings.

In the first scenario, to preserve Isaac's faith, the sub-Abraham pretends to be a cruel idolater: 'the look in his eyes was wild, his form one of terror', and this sight makes Isaac tremble and cry out in his anguish.[166]

[162] SKS 1,31/KW 1,75.
[163] SKS 4/FT, 105; compare Kierkegaard 1941, 1983, 1985, 2006.
[164] SKS 4/FT, 105.
[165] SKS 4/FT, 133.
[166] SKS 4/FT, 107.

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The second Abraham, though returning with Isaac unharmed, is so traumatised that his 'eye was darkened, he saw joy no more'.[167] The third remains haunted by guilt; unable to find peace, he compulsively repeats the lonesome ride to Mount Moriah.[168] The fourth cannot prevent his body from betraying despair: while drawing the knife, his left hand clenched and 'a shudder went through his body'; by seeing this, Isaac loses his faith.[169] The chapter concludes by noting that these four literary scenarios represent only a portion of the anonymous man's literary output: 'In these and in many similar ways, did the man of whom we speak think about this event.'[170] Before the four literary scenarios, however, de silentio sketches the affective poetics that informs their composition:

> The older he became, the more often his thoughts turned to that story; his enthusiasm for it became greater and greater, and yet he was less and less able to understand the story. Finally, the story caused him to forget everything else; his soul had only one wish: to see Abraham; one longing: to have been witness to that event. He desired not to see the beautiful regions of the East, nor the earthly splendor of the Promised Land, nor that God-fearing couple whose old age God had blessed, nor the venerable form of the aged patriarch, nor the vigorous youth God had granted Isaac – he would not have objected if it had taken place on the barren heath. His desire was to follow along on that three-day journey, when Abraham rode with sorrow ahead of him and Isaac beside him. His wish was to be present at the moment when Abraham lifted his eyes and beheld Mount Moriah in the distance, the moment he left the donkeys behind and went up the mountain alone with Isaac; for what occupied him was not the artistic weave of the imagination but the shudder of the thought.[171]

The following remarks focus on the enigmatic expression 'the shudder of the thought' (*Tankens Gysen*). The first point to note is the genitive construction, which links *Gysen* directly to *Tanken*, indicating that thought is what shudders. It is not an abstract, propositional thought that, from a safe distance, interprets a concrete affective response. As discussed in the Section 2, in the 'interesting' conflict between rationality and affectivity, Johannes the Seducer analysed his storming passions while sitting 'as calmly as the Cliff King'.[172] By contrast, in the shudder of the thought,

[167] SKS 4/FT, 109.
[168] SKS 4/FT, 110.
[169] SKS 4/FT, 111.
[170] Ibid., translation modified.
[171] SKS 4/FT, 105, translation modified.
[172] SKS 2,314–5/KW 3,324–5, translation modified.

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the waves of affect set in motion the very medium of thinking itself – there is nowhere one can sit calmly. In Kierkegaard research, this hybrid of thought and shudder – an oxymoron of thinking and feeling – has often been noted but seldom examined. The neglect is understandable, since de silentio provides little material for interpretation. Nevertheless, I will seek to clarify the notion of the shudder of the thought by introducing three conceptual distinctions.

First, the shudder of the thought can be approached through the distinction between existential and aesthetic affects. In 'Tuning Up', the dominant existential affects are those of the failed sub-Abrahams, including guilt, sadness, and despair. The enthusiasm that the anonymous man feels for the story of Abraham and Isaac is another example of an existential affect. In Robert C. Roberts's terms, the man's 'one wish' and 'one longing' is a passion, understood as a 'personality-integrating enthusiasm'.[173] In both cases, we are dealing with literary representations of existential affects, given that the sub-Abrahams and their anonymous creator are all fictional characters. The shudder of the thought is aesthetic in a different sense. It is not merely an affect depicted in a literary scenario but, rather, an affect evoked by the scenario. De silentio underscores this performative dimension when he writes that the shudder of the thought 'occupied' the anonymous man (*det, der beskæftigede ham*). Producing this kind of shudder is a *beskæftigelse*, that is, an occupation or a work, much like the parallel phrase 'the artistic weave of the imagination' refers to the craft of weaving. After the four literary scenarios, the narrator notes that this kind of affective labour leaves the writer exhausted: 'Every time, after having gone to Mount Moriah and returned home, he collapsed with weariness.'[174] As Kierkegaard wrote in his early critique of *Only a Fiddler*, Hans Christian Andersen's literary practice involved an effort to 'put the readers into a definite mood'.[175] Similarly, the shudder of the thought is a definite mood into which both reader and author are put.

Second, the shudder of the thought arises from the tension between intelligibility and sensibility. This is evident in the portrayal of the anonymous man, who understands the story less and less as his enthusiasm for it grew greater and greater. 'That man was not a thinker,' de silentio remarks immediately after the passage just quoted. Still, however, it is thought that is shuddering. After the four literary scenarios, as we have

[173] Roberts 1998: 181.
[174] SKS 4/FT, 111.
[175] SKS 1,48/KW 1,92.

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seen, de silentio writes that in these and in many similar texts the man continued to '*think* about this event'.[176] What is at stake, then, is a form of thinking that resists detached or lukewarm comprehension by grounding itself in the dissonance between intelligibility and sensibility.

Third, the realm of sensibility can be further divided into two separate mental faculties: imagination and affectivity. This distinction is captured by the opposition between 'the artistic weave of imagination' and 'the shudder of the thought' (*Phantasiens kunstrige Væven* and *Tankens Gysen*). On the one hand, the weave of imagination makes things present by painting their visible form for contemplation. De silentio's list of visible things irrelevant to the man's literary production includes the beautiful regions of the East, the earthly splendour of the Promised Land, the venerable form of the aged patriarch, and the beauty of the young Isaac. On the other hand, the shudder of the thought is elicited by a mode of writing that distances itself from the mere depiction of the appearance of physical objects. For this reason, it would not have mattered to the author if the *Akedah* had taken place on 'the barren heath' – that is, in a setting stripped of visual ornament but capable of precipitating visceral feeling. In these remarks, Kierkegaard articulates his critique of theatrical and textual visibility, a theme that extends from *Either/Or* to his later religious writings. In the Mozart dissertation, for instance, the aesthete 'A' observes that Don Juan – the incarnation of sensuous desire – is 'an inner qualification and thus cannot become visible or reveal itself in the forms of the body and in their movements, or in plastic harmony'.[177] At times, Kierkegaard scholars connect the visceral shudder caused by the representation of the sacrifice to spectatorship and voyeuristic desire.[178] Yet this, I suggest, is a reading that neglects the crucial distinction between weaving and shuddering – between painting things and producing affects.

Taken together, the foregoing conceptual distinctions delineate the shudder of the thought as a composite affect engendered by textual tension. Although the chapter is titled *Stemning*, its unity is not secured by a single, recognisable affect that organises the textual elements around itself. Instead, the textual shudder emerges from affective dissonance. In the Mozart dissertation, as we have seen, 'A' argued that the aesthetic unity of the musical situation was produced 'by hearing together that which sounds together'. A comparable 'hearing together' is required in order

[176] SKS 4/FT, 111, my italics.
[177] SKS 2,109/KW 3,106, translation modified. For Kierkegaard's critique of theatrical visibility, see Puchner 2010: 125–37.
[178] See for instance Mooney 2007.

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to experience the composite shudder created by the text of 'Tuning Up'. The reader is given the work, the *beskæftigelse*, that consists in hearing together the disparate affects of the text.

De silentio makes a similar point later in *Fear and Trembling*, when he remarks that his purpose is not to make Abraham more comprehensible, but rather to make the incomprehensibility more 'desultory' (*desultorisk*) – that is, more jumping from one thing to another.[179] He immediately adds a suggestion about the purpose of this formal desultoriness:

> for, as I have said, I cannot understand Abraham, I can only admire him. It has also been pointed out that none of the stages described contained an analogy to Abraham; they were developed only in order that, when they were shown within their own spheres, they could, in the instances where the compass exhibited deviation, hint, as it were, at the boundaries of the unknown country.[180]

Here, de silentio employs a maritime expression to describe his desultory literary style. *Misvisningens Øieblik* – rendered in English translations as 'the moment of variation', 'the moment of deviation', 'the points of discrepancy', 'the point of variation', and 'the instances where the compass exhibited deviation'– refers to a compass that points towards the magnetic north pole rather than the true north.[181] On the preceding pages, de silentio showed (*viste*) a series of fictional characters, each within their own spheres, but he now acknowledges that this literary showing was in fact a mis-showing (*Misvisning*) of the true Abraham. Taken together, however, these deviating demonstrations may indicate the boundaries of the unknown country of faith. Similarly, I contend, the affects evoked in the four literary scenarios in 'Tuning Up' function as *Misvisninger*: inaccurate affective qualities that, when held together by the laborious work of the reader, illuminate the figure of Abraham.

Thus, in the terms of the cognitive theories of emotion, the shudder of the thought is truth-directed. Martha Nussbaum might say that this particular kind of shudder contains in itself 'an awareness of value or importance', namely the value or importance of the story of Abraham and Isaac.[182] Evidently, the truth in question is not philosophical truth that can be captured by conceptual propositions but, rather, religious truth. In a later chapter of *Fear and Trembling*, de silentio confides to us how

[179] SKS 4/FT, 200, translation modified.
[180] Ibid.
[181] FT, 200; see also Kierkegaard 1941, 1983, 1985, 2006.
[182] Nussbaum 2001: 1.

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his 'head spins' or his 'brain reels' when he tries to understand the way Abraham gets everything back by virtue of the absurd.[183] Yet the shudder of the thought enables the reader to approach religious truth, even if it makes their head spin. In *Misvisningens Øieblik* – in the moment of 'mis-showing' – the sensuous figures may indicate the boundary of the unknown country of faith. The composite mood generated by the tensions of a desultory text is a cognitive mood. In Angelika Jacobs's vocabulary, the mood art of 'Tuning Up' constitutes a 'poetics of unrest'.[184] Due to its semiotic and affective dizziness, this poetics 'generates the negative of a virtual unity and motivates the active appropriation of the written tradition'.[185] The poetics of unrest furthers the active appropriation of religious truth.

There is a striking resemblance between the anonymous man's poetological reflections on the relation between affect and religious truth and Vigilius Haufniensis's meta-philosophical reflections on the relation between mood and philosophical truth, articulated in a footnote to *The Concept of Anxiety*. As discussed in Section 2, Haufniensis provocatively claimed that 'science, just as much as poetry and art, presupposes mood both in the producer and the recipient'.[186] When it comes to the scientific treatment of sin, he added, the 'true mood' and 'right mood' (*den sande Stemning* and *den rette Stemning*) is 'earnestness expressed in courageous resistance'.[187] Likewise, thinking about the story of Abraham and Isaac presupposes mood both in the producer and the recipient, and in this case, the 'true' and 'right' mood is the shudder of the thought. The desultory style of 'Tuning Up' is intended to avoid what Haufniensis called an 'error in the modulation', namely, 'the absence or falsification of mood'.[188]

The shudder of the thought thus marks a point at which the truth/noise and the unity/fragmentation oppositions diverge. 'Tuning Up' – and *Fear and Trembling* more generally – is not characterised by a beautiful and harmonious aesthetic unity but by its absence. The text does not aim to produce a well-proportioned *Stimmung* in its reader, in Kant's sense, but rather to generate dissonance. Yet it is precisely this negative, dissonant unity of the desultory text that opens a path towards religious truth for the reader. In other words, Kierkegaard draws on early Romantic insights

[183] SKS 4/FT, 142.
[184] Jacobs 2013: 201, 16, 36.
[185] Jacobs 2015: 194, my translation.
[186] SKS 4,322/KW 8,14.
[187] SKS 4,322, 323/KW 8,14, 15.
[188] SKS 4,322/KW 8,14, translation modified.

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into formal and affective disharmony not only negatively but also positively: as a resource for his strategy of indirect communication.

This Moment Is Life and Death

In a later chapter of *Fear and Trembling*, Johannes de silentio narrates a tragic love story about a young lad who falls in love with a princess but comes to understand that 'the situation is such that it would be impossible for this to become reality, impossible for it to be translated from ideality into reality'.[189] In de silentio's terms, the young man thus becomes a 'knight of infinite resignation' who finds rest in the pain of resignation. Yet in a striking passage, Kierkegaard's pseudonym lingers on the young man *before* he undertakes the movement of resignation – that is, before it is clear whether his love will end in happiness or in despair:

> let it [his love] steal into his most secret, most secluded thoughts, to let it entwine itself in innumerable twists and turns around every ligament of his consciousness – if his love becomes unhappy, he will never be able to wrest himself free of it. He feels a blissful delight in letting this love shudder through his every nerve, and yet his soul is as solemn as that of someone who has drained the cup of poison and feels how the liquid penetrates every drop of his blood – for this moment is life and death.[190]

Shuddering again – this time not in the subject's encounter with faith, but with love, which the young man lets 'shudder through' (*gjennemgyse*) his every nerve. De silentio emphasises the affective dissonance of this shuddering, a clash between incompatible feelings of delight and solemnity: the young man '*feels* blissful delight in letting this love shudder through his every nerve', yet at the same time '*feels* how the liquid penetrates every drop of his blood'. This moment, de silentio writes, 'is life and death'. The oxymoron names not an active decision between two possibilities (there is no decision to be made once the cup of poison has been drained), but the simultaneous experience of contradictory affect: the delight of life and the solemnity of death. The model of this affective dissonance is Socrates' suicide, depicted in the *Phaedo* as a contrast between cheerfulness and sorrow. Plato describes the philosopher as taking the cup of hemlock 'really quite cheerfully, without trembling, without losing colour or expression', even as he exhorts his weeping friends to calm themselves and pull themselves together.[191]

[189] SKS 4/FT, 136.
[190] Ibid., translation modified.
[191] Plato 2017: 117b–18a.

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De silentio identifies a similar form of affective dissonance in the story of Abraham and Isaac. Unlike the young man, who becomes a 'knight of infinite resignation', Abraham is described as a 'knight of faith'. This distinction lies in the fact that Abraham not only performs the movement of resignation but also 'the movement of faith' by which he is assured to get everything back, to receive, by virtue of the absurd, 'what one has wished for, to receive it entire, unabbreviated'.[192] The 'double movement' of faith is, crucially, also a double affect of faith, involving what the poet Anne Carson calls 'emotional schizophrenia'.[193] The knight of faith, de silentio explains, 'has felt the pain of forsaking everything, those things in the world a person holds most dear, and yet finitude tastes fully as good to him as to someone who has never known anything higher'.[194] Comparing the knight of faith with himself, de silentio muses: 'What had been easiest for Abraham would have been difficult for me: to be once again joyful with Isaac!'[195]

Before narrating the story of the young man who cannot possibly realise his hoped for relationship with the princess, de silentio sketches a portrait of a modern knight of faith who, to his astonishment, appears indistinguishable from an ordinary 'tax collector', 'mercantile fellow', 'scrivener', 'capitalist', or 'pork butcher across the way'.[196] Though this apparently solid 'bourgeois philistine' seems to belong entirely to finitude, he nonetheless experiences the affective clash between pain and pleasure that defines the double movement. He has 'felt the pain of forsaking everything, those things in the world a person holds most dear', yet he 'takes delight in everything', for example, in the roast head of lamb with vegetables which his wife is likely to serve him when he returns home.[197]

De silentio often presents the two stages of the double movement of faith as following one after the other. For example, he writes that the knight of faith does exactly what the knight of resignation does – he infinitely renounces the love that is the substance of his life. 'But then the marvel takes place; he makes still another movement, more wondrous than all, for he says: "And yet I have faith that I will get her – namely, by virtue of the absurd."'[198] According to the quasi-Hegelian narrative of

[192] SKS 4/FT, 142.
[193] Carson 1986: 83.
[194] SKS 4/FT, 135.
[195] SKS 4/FT, 130.
[196] SKS 4/FT, 133–5.
[197] Ibid.
[198] SKS 4/FT, 141.

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Kierkegaard's theory of existential stages, the movement of resignation is to be understood as 'the final stage prior to faith'.[199] Note the verb tense: the modernised knight of faith, the man who very much looked like a tax-collector, '*has* felt the pain of forsaking everything […], and yet finitude *tastes* fully as good to him as to someone who has never known anything higher'.[200] Recent Kierkegaard scholarship, however, has shown that the two movements are better understood as simultaneous rather than sequential.[201] To assign each opposing affect to a separate stage is, in effect, to diminish the conflict between them.

The exploration of affective dissonance is not confined to *Fear and Trembling*. In the important notes from a trip to Gilleleje in July 1835, for example, the twenty-two-year-old Kierkegaard, standing on Gilbjerg and watching 'the power of the sea and the battle of the elements', is reminded of his nothingness, but also of the way everything is guided by the heavenly Father's will: 'I felt at one and the same time how great and how insignificant I am. Those two great forces, pride and humility, amicably combined.'[202] In *The Concept of Irony* six years later, as we have seen, Kierkegaard criticises the modern ironist, a stand-in for the Romantic, whose life loses all continuity because he lets 'the most contrasting moods succeed one another' so that, at times, he is a god, at times a grain of sand.[203] The most contrasting moods not only follow one another sequentially but are also present simultaneously, since affective dissonance is a tool with which the ironist seeks to master his affective life: 'he seldom vents his mood except in *the form of contrast*. He hides his sorrow in the superior incognito of jesting; his happiness is muffled up in bemoaning.'[204] By italicizing the expression '*the form of contrast*' (*Modsætningens Form*) Kierkegaard implies that this problem is a formal one which has to do with the configuration of moods rather than with the content of them.

The erotic campaign against Cordelia described in 'The Seducer's Diary' is structured by a similar contrastive form between opposing moods. As Johannes writes in his diary, a 'double movement is necessary in relation to Cordelia'.[205] The strategy he chooses is to use his letters to inflame her and the subsequent conversation to cool her off.

[199] SKS 4/FT, 140.
[200] SKS 4/FT, 135, my italics.
[201] See Krishek 2009: 76 and Lippitt 2016: 52.
[202] SKS 17/KJN 1: AA6.
[203] SKS 1,319-20/KW 2,208.
[204] SKS 1,320/KW 2,93, Kierkegaard's italics.
[205] SKS 2,374/KW 3,386, translation modified.

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Interestingly, Johannes the Seducer here employs the same poison metaphor as Johannes de silentio a year later: 'When she has received a letter, when its sweet poison has entered her blood, then a word is sufficient to make her love burst forth. At the next moment, irony and hoarfrost make her doubtful.'[206]

The argument I wish to advance is that Johannes's erotic double movement functions as a model for the religious double movement discussed in *Fear and Trembling* and elsewhere in Kierkegaard's religious authorship. In both cases, what is at issue is 'the form of contrast' that combines incompatible affects. The affective unity produced by the 'sounding together' of discrete affective qualities is not just confined to Kierkegaard's so-called aesthetic authorship, first developed in the aesthete's analysis of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.[207] Rather, it persists as a central theme throughout his later writings. The most prominent example is Vigilius Haufniensis's definition of anxiety as '*a sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy*'.[208] In a journal note from the final year of Kierkegaard's life, he reflects on his own sympathetic antipathy and antipathetic sympathy towards his contemporaries: 'It is curious that here, too, the lowest and the highest resemble one another. The lowest sort of character is what is womanish, Zerlina-esque: I want to and I don't want to.'[209] Unsurprisingly, the highest instance of this affective dissonance is the one Kierkegaard attributes to himself: 'I want to engage with my contemporaries, and I don't want to and yet I do, i.e., I do not want to engage with them in straightforward fashion – I want to be sacrificed.'[210] As Klaus Müller-Wille observes, Kierkegaard's 'mood aesthetics' is not only put to negative use in a condemnation of 'womanish, Zerlina-esque' ambivalence and of the aesthetic way of life in general. It also plays a positive role as inspiration for Kierkegaard's description of religious existence – which is characterised by 'a fundamental eccentricity of the subject'.[211]

It is important not to confuse the dissonance between affective qualities with the tension between intelligibility and sensibility. It goes without saying that the clash between affect and affect – between the simultaneous feelings of pain and pleasure, sorrow and jesting, antipathy and sympathy,

[206] Ibid.
[207] SKS 2,120/KW 3,118, translation modified.
[208] SKS 4,348/KW 8,42, Kierkegaard's italics.
[209] SKS 26/KJN 10: NB31: 104.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Müller-Wille 2012: 237.

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and so forth – cannot be identified with the tension between the visceral experience of an affect and the conceptual articulation of it. To use one of the French philosopher Jacques Rancière's keywords, *dissensus* is 'a conflict between a sensory presentation and a way of making sense of it, or between several sensory regimes and/or "bodies"'.[212] What is crucial here is the little 'or' that splits Rancière's definition of dissensus in two. If what I call tension designates the conflict between a sensory presentation and a way of making sense of it, the affective dissonance discussed in the present section is a conflict between several sensory regimes, according to Rancière a rupture in the 'common *aisthesis*' – that is, the collective sensorium which he terms the distribution of the sensible.[213]

In *Fear and Trembling*, the relation between Rancière's two kinds of dissensus is not one of identity but of causality. It is *because* Abraham feels two things at the same time that he is unable to talk. Affective dissonance blocks the *Aufhebung*, the sublation from sensuous sense to intelligible sense. In the aesthete's dissertation on Mozart, the opera's 'unity in the mood' is pre-rational and prelinguistic: 'Words cannot express the mood in itself, for it is too heavy and dense to be borne by words – only music can render it.'[214] To sum up, Kierkegaard analyses affective dissonances as instances where the truth/noise and the unity/fragmentation oppositions are out of alignment. Affects in 'the form of contrast' resist articulation in propositional language; yet in certain aesthetic and religious experiences, these heavy and dense affects can themselves generate unity.

4 Sovereignty and Insurgency

The disjunction between two regimes of affect – baptisable and non-baptisable – is, finally, a matter of the sovereign subject's rational control of the affects. Baptisable affects are subjugated affectivity insofar as they are governed by reason's intentions. At the opposite pole, non-baptisable affects threaten to undermine reason's mastery and usurp power. Among the philosophers whom Kierkegaard studied closely, the fear of being overcome by ungovernable affects is most salient in Kant's writings. In *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798), for example, he warns against both affect (a tempest that quickly subsides) and passion (a lasting inclination):

[212] Rancière 2009: 139.
[213] Rancière 2009: 38.
[214] SKS 2,83/KW 3,78.

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> Affect does a momentary damage to freedom and dominion over oneself. Passion abandons them and finds its pleasure and satisfaction in a slavish mind. But because reason still does not ease off with its summons to inner freedom, the unhappy man groans in his chains, which he nevertheless cannot break away from because they have already grown together with his limbs, so to speak.[215]

So to speak: Kant figures the blurring of the distinction between the intelligible and the sensible as a kind of cyborg-like growing together of limbs and chains.

Behind Kant's and Kierkegaard's ideals of mastering the affects lies, as one commentator has noted, 'the remarkable success of what we might call low-level, everyday Stoicism in all later European culture'.[216] According to the Stoics, control is obtained, in Kant's image, by drawing a sharp line between the limbs of reason and the chains of passions. If having an emotion means not acting but being acted upon by what lies outside our control, the Stoic solution is to sever attachments to unstable external things and adhere instead to thoughts we can govern like we can control our limbs. According to the early Stoic philosopher Chrysippus, for example, passions have in their very nature a propensity for ungovernable excess. In Chrysippus's analogy, the judgments of reason are governable by our will – like when a person is walking and is able to control his or her limbs. By contrast, passions like anger, fear, and love cannot be stopped at will – like when a person is running and the movement carries on by itself, by its own impetus, and can no longer be governed.[217]

The discussion of the voluntary character of the emotions continues into the contemporary debates between cognitive theories and the so-called *feeling theories* that conceive of affects as irrational, noncognitive bodily forces. Since the Stoics, the underlying assumption is that emancipation is achieved through rationality's dominion over affectivity. In *Theorie der Befreiung* (theory of emancipation) (2022), however, the German philosopher Christoph Menke challenges this prevalent understanding by proposing the concept of 'radical emancipation'. While the conventional (or 'Greek') model of emancipation depends on the sovereign subject's self-consciousness, radical emancipation, exemplified in the Biblical story of the Exodus, relies on a strong concept of experience – understood as an overwhelming event that exceeds the subject's cognitive faculties and consequently desubjectifies and desocialises it. Drawing on Gershom

[215] Kant 2006: 7,267.
[216] Fisher 2002: 6.
[217] Chrysippus's metaphor is cited by Galen and re-narrated by Nussbaum (1994: 396).

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Scholem, Franz Rosenzweig, and Emmanuel Levinas, Menke characterises the religious experience – such as Moses at the burning bush – as a retrograde movement from form to formlessness, from law to force, from the existing symbolic order to the process of positing the order. In such experience, Menke writes, the subject acknowledges that it is moved 'by a drive or a force to transcend all given determinations, to hollow them out, and thereby to become responsive to a determination of an entirely different kind'.[218] Affects, according to this model of emancipation, are not bodily forces which the sovereign subject must domesticate conceptually. Rather, they constitute an integral part of a transformative loss of control – for example, in the pleasure experienced in moments of violent self-annihilation and the shame directed at one's former self.[219]

Excessive, Objectless, A-teleological

The philosopher David Kangas offers a distinctive interpretation of Kierkegaard's treatment of the affects that aligns with Christoph Menke's concept of radical emancipation. In a chapter on Kierkegaard published in a 2004 lexicon on religion and emotion, Kangas challenges the Stoic conception of rational mastery over affectivity. While the affects play an extraordinary role in Kierkegaard's analysis of human existence,[220] he argues, this is not because they are subject to rational control, but precisely because they resist it. They involve an 'experience of *indetermination*' that reveals the subject's fundamental non-sovereignty.[221] In other words, according to Kangas, the emotions 'that really interest Kierkegaard are those that grant reality but not meaning – that is, those where the self is deprived of its power to act as a spontaneous (i.e., self-causing) origin of meaning'.[222]

Kangas illustrates how affects can deprive the subject of its power to act with the short story 'A Possibility', included in *Stages on Life's Way* (1845). The protagonist, a bookkeeper, visits a brothel during a night of drunken revelry and subsequently falls gravely ill. Upon recovering, he cannot relinquish the possibility 'that another being owed its life to him'.[223] Unable to recall the events of that night, he resigns from his job and undertakes a 'passionate investigation', studying children's

[218] Menke 2022: 552, my translation.
[219] Menke 2022: 179, 402–5.
[220] Kangas 2004: 380.
[221] Kangas 2004: 381, Kangas's italics.
[222] Kangas 2004: 387.
[223] SKS 6,264/KW 11,284.

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features in the streets of Copenhagen, reading scientific works on physiology, and sketching faces with a focus on family resemblance and the relation of generations. The affective dimension of the bookkeeper's life-changing experience consists in the feelings of 'concern' (*Bekymring*) and 'all too heavily brooding earnestness' (*altfor tungt rugende Alvor*).[224] Yet, as Kierkegaard notes, 'what made the mental disorder so dialectical was that he did not even know whether it was a result of the illness, a feverish hallucination, or whether death had actually come to the aid of his memory with a recollection of an actuality'.[225] According to Kangas, the story exemplifies how an affective experience can strip the subject of the power to act as a spontaneous origin of meaning and confront it with a reality devoid of meaning. As he writes, with an allusion to Herman Melville's famous short story 'Bartleby, the Scrivener': 'In the obsessive, interminable concern of the bookkeeper – perhaps like the infinite passivity of Bartleby – the difference between the real and the acts of self-consciousness that attend to the real "manifests" itself. A gap appears that cannot be closed in the form of a possibility that can neither be confirmed nor disconfirmed.'[226]

I shall return to the figure of the bookkeeper shortly. Before that, however, it is important to note that the affects described in 'A Possibility', and highlighted by Kangas, sit uneasily with the cognitive theory of emotion outlined in Section 2. Indeed, Kangas mounts a sustained critique of theories that take emotions to constitute 'a fundamental tie-in to reality'.[227] According to Martha Nussbaum, Robert Solomon, and Robert C. Roberts, in Kangas's summary, '[p]roper listening to emotions puts one in sync (though not infallibly, for emotions can deceive and can be manipulated) with *what is*; emotions attune one to the key of the world'.[228] The bookkeeper's affective experience, however, has the opposite effect. Rather than putting him in sync with *what is*, the affects confront him with an 'abyss of indetermination' where meaning-making 'bumps up against its own limit'.[229] In other words, Kangas acknowledges the boundary between two regimes of affectivity – the baptisable and the non-baptisable – while subverting their conventional hierarchy of values. According to cognitive theories of emotion, '[e]xcessive, objectless,

[224] SKS 6,264, 267/KW 11,284, 287.
[225] SKS 6,264/KW 11, 284, translation modified.
[226] Kangas 2004: 387.
[227] Kangas 2004: 385.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Kangas 2004: 385, 387.

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a-teleological emotion would prima facie indicate either moral aberration, an epistemic glitch, or a failure of will'.[230] Kangas, by contrast, locates precisely such discarded affects at the very core of Kierkegaard's thought. In other words, whereas cognitive theories tend to soften the tension between intelligibility and sensibility, Kangas insists on amplifying it.

For example, Kangas and Roberts diverge in the interpretation of the mood of boredom. Kangas observes that cognitive theories of emotion typically downgrade moods to a secondary status because they lack clear intentional objects (*aboutness*). As objectless affects they 'don't provide us with the propositional content, the evaluative appraisals, or the teleological thrust that emotions do'.[231] Roberts makes a similar point in *Emotions* (2003), noting that moods can arise 'without being either elicited, structured by, or articulable in any declarative sentences'.[232] Yet this does not prevent him from attributing propositional content to the distinctly Kierkegaardian mood of boredom. Roberts writes: 'Let us say that the defining proposition for boredom is, *It is very important for me to be interested, absorbed, to have my attention engaged, but everything I currently behold, and everything I currently might do, is uninteresting; may I soon be free from this state of mind*.'[233] For Kangas, however, Roberts's account of boredom explains away the gap between meaning-making and meaninglessness. 'By allowing boredom to speak, as it were, he turns it into an interested, goal-directed subject.'[234] Like Vincent A. McCarthy, discussed in Section 1, Roberts employs here a prosopopoeia, the rhetorical trope in which an inanimate object or abstract concept is given a mask, a *prosopon*, in the form of a human voice or human attributes. This rhetorical move allows boredom to speak in the idiom of baptised reason. Against Roberts in particular and cognitive theories of emotion in general, Kangas argues that the non-baptisable regime of affectivity – as, for instance, boredom and the bookkeeper's deranged concern – might instead sabotage the meaning-making capacity of the sovereign subject. Following Kangas, one can only speculate what boredom would really 'say' or 'do' if we didn't put rational words in its mouth.

In the chapter on Kierkegaard's emotions as well as in two eye-opening monographs – *Kierkegaard's Instant* (2007) and *Errant Affirmations* (2018) – Kangas situates the affect theoretical disagreement that has just

[230] Kangas 2004: 386.
[231] Ibid.
[232] Roberts 2003: 112.
[233] Roberts 2003: 248, Roberts's italics.
[234] Kangas 2004: 389.

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been outlined in a wider philosophical framework. What is at stake is not only the nature of emotional life according to Kierkegaard but also the very foundation of human meaning-making. As Kangas observes, Kierkegaard's discussion of the self as a spontaneous origin of meaning depends on his complicated relationship with German Idealism. 'The core of the idealist notion of the self', he summarises, 'is that the self establishes or "posits" itself through its radical reflexivity'.[235] In the vocabulary of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, with whom Kierkegaard was deeply familiar, this metaphysics of an autonomous ego sets out 'to show how the ego, as spontaneous thetic power, constitutes the radical ground of experience'.[236] Idealist selfhood is self-creative.

On the one hand, Kierkegaard does clearly appropriate the Idealist notion that it is only in relating to itself that the self grounds its relation to reality. On the other hand, however, he contends that the self-positioning, autonomous subject is not able to spontaneously ground itself. Rather, in Kangas's phrasing, it has to 'refer to some *further condition* for its act of self-positioning'.[237] In the famous definition of the self that opens *The Sickness unto Death*, Kierkegaard, under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus, writes that the human self – understood as a relation that relates itself to itself – is not 'posited' (*sat*) by itself but 'posited by another'.[238] Diverging from Idealism, Kierkegaard argues for a position 'which finds self-consciousness enabled by an "other" it cannot control or integrate'.[239] Thus, according to Kangas, if the affects play an extraordinary role in Kierkegaard's thought, it is because they bring the self to 'an affection of itself as originally enabled by a factor it can never possess, catch sight of, bring under its reflective control, and so on'.[240] In Kierkegaard, affects are 'primordial' and 'fundamental' in the sense that they put the self in touch with a dimension of reality prior to the positing power of the meaning-making subject.[241] According to Kangas's provocative interpretation, the religious, in Kierkegaard, is a way of staying in touch with this dimension of reality through an act 'of releasing, of giving' – that is, 'a dispossession of everything that is "one's own" to a future beyond one's own project'.[242]

[235] Kangas 2004: 384.
[236] Kangas 2007b: 93. See also Kangas 2007a.
[237] Kangas 2004: 384, Kangas's italics.
[238] SKS 11/SUD, 129–30, translation modified.
[239] Kangas 2004: 384.
[240] Kangas 2004: 385.
[241] Kangas 2004: 386, 394.
[242] Kangas 2007b: 149, 43.

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I share Kangas's emphasis on the philosophical centrality of the non-baptisable flip side of affectivity, but I respectfully diverge from his proposal to identify the opposition between the baptisable and the non-baptisable with the distinction between emotions and moods. The difficulty, as I see it, can be detected in the designation 'objectless' in the aforementioned list of unshaven affective experiences – '[e]xcessive, objectless, a-teleological'.[243] According to Kangas, moods, by virtue of their lack of clear *aboutness*, are out of sync with *what is*. As we saw in Section 2, however, Kierkegaard does not position moods in this way along the axis between truth and noise. In the dense footnote in *The Concept of Anxiety*, Vigilius Haufniensis remarks that 'science, just as much as poetry and art, presupposes mood both in the producer and the recipient'.[244] Indeed, earnestness is objectless – it is a mood – but it would be misleading to describe it as excessive or a-teleological. In Haufniensis's account, earnestness is a 'true mood' and 'right mood' insofar as it serves as a presupposition for the understanding of sin.[245] More recently, as we also touched upon, Matthew Ratcliffe has argued that moods can serve as teleological 'background orientations through which experience as a whole is structured'.[246]

Kangas, despite provocatively inverting the evaluative hierarchy between baptisable and non-baptisable affectivity, ultimately attempts to resolve Kierkegaard's ambivalence towards affectivity by distinguishing between two kinds of affect. In his reading, world-directed emotions are baptisable – and therefore philosophically uninteresting – whereas objectless moods are non-baptisable and thus central to Kierkegaard's post-Idealist thinking. Yet this classificatory neatness forecloses the possibility of understanding Kierkegaard's ambivalence as dialectical – that is, as an irresolvable tension constitutive of his conception of affectivity itself. A dialectical approach would resist the temptation to divide affects into teleological and a-teleological varieties. Instead, it would recognise that both emotions and moods can belong to the baptisable as well as to the non-baptisable regime of affectivity. In this view, the task is not to distinguish among specific affects or types of affect but to describe the aporetic interdependence of baptisable and non-baptisable affects.

Among other things, an awareness of Kierkegaard's dialectic of affect would lead to an alternative reading of the bookkeeper's predicament in 'A Possibility'. Whereas Kangas argued that the bookkeeper's obsessive

[243] Kangas 2004: 386.
[244] SKS 4,322/KW 8,14.
[245] SKS 4,322, 323/KW 8,14, 15.
[246] Ratcliffe 2008: 2.

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concern and brooding earnestness are modes in which a meaningless reality 'manifests' itself, I propose instead to interpret his affective experience as dialectical. This is the term Kierkegaard himself employs: 'what made the mental disorder so dialectical', he writes, was that the bookkeeper could not determine whether the affectivity he experienced was merely 'a feverish hallucination' or a genuine 'recollection of an actuality'.[247]

Earnestness Can Never Become Habit

When Kant, in the passage cited at the beginning of Section 4, writes that man groans in his chains of affect, 'which he nevertheless cannot break away from because they have already grown together with his limbs, so to speak',[248] the fusion of limbs and chains – of spontaneous rationality and receptive affectivity – illustrates the process of habituation. Deeply suspicious of custom and habit, Kant emphasises that affects, reinforced by bad habits, do damage to freedom and dominion over oneself. Conversely, he gives little consideration to the possibility that good habits might support the effort to gain control over one's affects. Like Kant, Kierkegaard regards habit with suspicion; yet, in contrast to Kant, he presents passion as the antidote to the lukewarm routines of habit. Still, even if vehement affects can rescue us from the dullness and sluggishness of everyday life, they, too, must be brought under subjective control – chained, so to speak – through a form of habituation. In Young's colonial metaphor, this entails the laborious work of baptising and circumcising pagan affects so that their power may energise the formation of the self. The relation between affect and habit thus provides another instance of the way in which affect complicates Kierkegaard's notion of the sovereign subject.

Several commentators have noted the importance of the cultivation of affect in Kierkegaard's thought – for instance, as we saw in Section 2, Robert C. Roberts, who describes the task of becoming a subject as 'a matter of proper *passional* formation'.[249] Yet to my knowledge, no study has been devoted exclusively to this subject. Clare Carlisle, Kierkegaard scholar and biographer, offers one way of addressing this gap in *On Habit* (2014), a survey of philosophical accounts of habit ranging from Aristotle and Augustine through Hume and Hegel to Bergson and Deleuze.

[247] SKS 6,264/KW 11,284, translation modified.
[248] Kant 2006: 7:267.
[249] Roberts 1984: 74, Roberts's italics. See also Evans 1992: 134; Ferreira 2001: 196; and Furtak 2005: 135.

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Although Carlisle, in her brief chapter on Kierkegaard, does not adopt the conceptual framework of affect theory, she demonstrates that affectivity and habit are closely intertwined in his writings.

Carlisle begins by noting that Hegel, seeking to overcome Kantian dualisms, describes custom 'as the embodied and institutional expression of human "spirit"'.[250] As discussed in Section 2, Hegel's theory of *Sittlichkeit* (ethical substance) maintains that the constitution 'had entered into the blood and life of the community' of the Greek city-state and had 'become the habit of moral and civil existence'.[251] Likewise, Carlisle observes, Hegel suggests that in the modern world 'spirituality should be appropriated through custom and socialization; that the spiritual should be made habitual'.[252] Hans Lassen Martensen, a prominent Danish Hegelian theologian who later became bishop of Zealand, echoed this view in 1843, writing that 'when the Church had put out its firm roots in the world, God's kingdom had become just like nature'.[253] In Kant's image, the Hegelian idea of second nature denotes a benign form of limbs and chains growing together.

Kierkegaard vehemently rejects this conception of religion as second nature. As Johannes Climacus remarks in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 'the most ludicrous thing Christianity can ever become is what is called custom and habit in the banal sense'.[254] In a late newspaper article from 1851, Kierkegaard makes the point even clearer: 'I hate habitual Christianity [*Vane-Christendommen*] in whatever form it appears.'[255] Habit turns Christianity into 'a secular-minded thoughtlessness that nonchalantly goes on living in the illusion of being Christian'.[256] The Danish *letsindig* – translated here as 'nonchalantly', though more literally as 'light-mindedly' – conveys a mood in which things are taken easily. Against this light-mindedness Kierkegaard sets the strong affects of anxiety and paradox, fear and trembling.

Carlisle observes, however, that Kierkegaard does not merely condemn the deadening repetitions of routine; he also places a different kind of repetition – a 'non-habitual repetition' – at the very heart of the Christian life.[257] To become a subject is to bring one's affective life under a certain

[250] Carlisle 2014: 121.
[251] Hegel 1991: 277.
[252] Carlisle 2014: 122.
[253] Quoted from Carlisle 2014: 123.
[254] SKS 7,331/KW 12.1, 364.
[255] SKS 14,111/KW 13,52.
[256] Ibid.
[257] Carlisle 2014: 127.

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measure of control. In Kierkegaard's vocabulary, earnestness (*Alvor*) designates a disposition that renews and refreshes affectivity, even in the face of the trite repetitions of everyday life. Not everything we call earnestness is truly earnest, Kierkegaard writes in his notebook. Rather, there is 'much that is simply darkened gloom, the irritation of a heart burdened by worldliness, the embittered mind that doesn't lament before God but against God'.[258] True earnestness, on the other hand, is a mood that enables control over other moods. Like Kant's notion of the beautiful and Kierkegaard's notion of the interesting, discussed in Section 2, earnestness is a second-order affect that concerns how first-order affects relate to one another – in light of the task of becoming a subject.

In the introduction to *The Concept of Anxiety*, as we saw in Section 2, Haufniensis describes earnestness as the mood that corresponds to sin.[259] When sin is treated in the discipline of aesthetics, he writes that 'the mood becomes either light-minded or melancholic' (*letsindig eller tungsindig*). This, however, represents an error in the modulation, since one must relate affectively to sin as something that is 'to be overcome' again and again.[260] In a later chapter, Haufniensis develops his concept of earnestness in dialogue with the Hegelian philosopher Karl Rosenkranz's concept of *Gemüt* (disposition or temperament), discussed in his *Psychologie* (1843). Drawing on Hegel's account of habit in *Philosophy of Mind*,[261] Rosenkranz defines disposition as the unity of self-consciousness and feeling, a synthesis of 'the clarity of cognition' and 'the turgidity of immediacy' – 'turgidity' (*Turgor*) meaning swollenness or congestion.[262] Earnestness is a similar synthesis – or growing together – of the intelligible and the sensible, yet it operates at a higher level:

> Earnestness and disposition [*Alvor og Gemyt*] correspond to each other in such a way that earnestness is a higher as well as the deepest expression for what disposition is. The disposition is an immediate property, while earnestness, on the other hand, is the acquired originality of disposition, its originality preserved in the responsibility of freedom and its originality affirmed in the enjoyment of blessedness.[263]

Disposition is original (*oprindelig*) because it is a synthesis of intelligibility and sensibility given by our nature. Earnestness, by contrast, is not just

[258] SKS 20/KNJ 4: NB4:117, translation modified.
[259] SKS 4,322/KW 8,14.
[260] The repetitive nature of the overcoming of sin is emphasised in Hanson 2017: 8–9.
[261] Hegel 2007: 130–5.
[262] Rosenkranz 1843: 342.
[263] SKS 4,448/KW 8,148–9, translation modified.

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originality but '*acquired* originality', a form of affective immediacy which is somehow revivified and integrated into existential coherence. Therefore, the object of earnestness is the very human being who experiences it.[264] As one commentator aptly puts it, earnestness is 'commitment in the sense of staying-power'.[265] According to Haufniensis, it is this affective staying-power – this sustained, undiminished originality – which 'marks precisely the eternal in earnestness' and prevents earnestness from ever hardening into mechanical habit.

Very appropriately for this Element, Haufniensis's example, commented on by Carlisle, is the Christian ritual of baptism. A clergyman who baptises several children every Sunday must be 'enthusiastic, etc.',[266] seeking to stir and move the congregation. According to Kierkegaard's pseudonymous author, baptising is a form of affective labour. The difficulty, however, is that such fire inevitably burns out or fluctuates from week to week. As Haufniensis explains, 'the inwardness of feeling is a fire that may cool as soon as earnestness no longer attends to it'.[267] Moreover, affective inwardness is 'uncertain in its mood, that is, at one time it is more inward than at another'.[268] In the vocabulary of *The Concept of Anxiety*, to control one's affects is to be 'certain' or 'secure' (*sikker*) in one's mood, a certainty that the earnest person can attain only 'through the originality with which he returns in repetition'.[269] Thus, in order to properly baptise children, the clergyman must baptise their own affects without letting them degenerate into dull and soulless habit.

This is, of course, what we all seek to accomplish in our everyday life with partners, children, friends, jobs, political commitments, and so on – and it is a familiar problem that cannot be solved simply by asserting that 'earnestness can never become habit'. Carlisle deepens Kierkegaard's concept of earnestness by situating it within the theological discussion of habit and grace. After his conversion, Augustine writes, habits kept him stuck in his pagan way of life, 'bound as I was not by another's chains but by chains of my own making. The enemy had seized my will and had made a chain of it, binding me.'[270] His only way to escape this bondage was through God's grace – not by his own power. Following Augustine's

[264] SKS 4,449/KW 8,150.
[265] Davenport 2014: 225.
[266] SKS 4,448/KW 8,149; Carlisle 2014: 128–9.
[267] Ibid.
[268] Ibid., translation modified.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Carlisle 2014: 114–5; Augustine 2018: 147.

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negative account of habit, Luther maintains that righteousness does not come from us or grow in us like a habit we cultivate, but 'comes completely from the outside and is foreign'.[271] In Carlisle's words, grace is a divine gift that slips through our fingers as soon as we receive it.[272] Like Luther, Kierkegaard argues that grace must be repeatedly given, 'as a blessing that the soul is constantly losing'.[273] Grace must continually renew itself precisely because it is continually lost.

This all-too-brief theological digression shows that the question of habit – and of emancipating oneself from the spiritlessness of everyday routine – is central to Kierkegaard's theology. When Haufniensis writes that the earnest person attains affective certainty 'through the originality with which he returns in repetition',[274] he employs the theological notion of repetition examined in *Repetition* and *Fear and Trembling*, two works published on the same day in October 1843. In a draft of *The Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard notes that 'repetition is really – earnestness'.[275] Carlisle clarifies the complicated theological notion of repetition with a passage from the opening of the 'Tuning Up' chapter of *Fear and Trembling* discussed earlier. Here Johannes de silentio summarises the story of Abraham and Isaac by noting that Abraham 'withstood the temptation, kept the faith, and contrary to expectation, received a son a second time'.[276] What is, for de silentio, the most difficult task is, miraculously, the easiest for Abraham – 'to be once again joyful with Isaac!'[277] The repetition, then, should be understood as the second movement of the double movement of faith: after Abraham has accepted the loss of everything, he gets everything back – receives his son 'a second time' – by the force of the absurd.[278] In this sense, one can escape the triteness of everyday routine only through an act of grace which enables one to 'once again' experience the original feeling.

Existing English translations of *Fear and Trembling* obscure the central notion of *Kraft* (power or force) by rendering it sometimes as the 'strength' of the human subject and sometimes as the 'virtue' of the absurd. In both cases, however, de silentio uses the word *Kraft*: 'By my own *Kraft* I can give up the princess, and I will not sulk but will find

[271] Luther 1955: 136; Carlisle 2014: 119.
[272] Carlisle 2014: 120.
[273] Carlisle 2014: 126.
[274] SKS 4,448/KW 8,149.
[275] Pap. V B 69/KW 8,210.
[276] SKS 4/FT, 105.
[277] SKS 4/FT, 130.
[278] SKS 4/FT, 105.

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joy and peace and repose in my pain, but by my own *Kraft* I cannot get her back again.' Yet 'by faith you shall get her by the *Kraft* of the absurd'.[279] Escaping the chains of habit is therefore not something the subject can accomplish by its own power, as Augustine also argued. It is not a matter of human agency but of divine power, which strikes the subject completely from the outside.

Returning to Kierkegaard's treatment of the affects, the relation between habit and grace – between routine and repetition – complicates the notion of the subject's sovereignty. For Kierkegaard, in contrast to the Stoics, the question is not whether the rational subject can or cannot control the affects. Rather, the earnest person attains certainty through a power he or she cannot control. Earnestness is a decentred affect, insofar as it is dependent on a force outside the subject. Here we are close to Kangas's account of the role of wild, non-baptisable affectivity which the autonomous subject is unable to bring under reflective control and which thereby leads to 'a dispossession of everything that is "one's own"'.[280] According to Carlisle, however, the double movement entails that this religious dispossession is the condition of possibility for the earnest person's true possession of his or her self.

Subjectively, Inwardly Wounded

My first textual example of the sovereignty/insurgency dichotomy is drawn from *The Book on Adler*, begun in September 1846. As noted in Section 1, Kierkegaard never wrote a philosophical treatise on the affects, yet the Adler book comes closest. Adolph Peter Adler, an old schoolmate and acquaintance of Kierkegaard, was a gifted Hegelian theology student who became a pastor on the island of Bornholm. In 1842, however, he claimed to have received a personal revelation in which the Saviour ordered him to rise from his bed and write down the words later published as *Some Sermons* (1843). Because of the controversial ideas expressed in these sermons, the ecclesiastical authorities initiated an investigation that led to Adler's suspension in 1844 and his dismissal in 1845. Then, in June 1846, Adler published four books in a single day. Kierkegaard bought all of them on the day of publication and soon afterwards began writing a book of his own – a project he continued to revise until his death but never published. The so-called *Book on Adler* – which, strictly speaking, was never a book – is a searching examination

[279] SKS 4/FT, 143.
[280] Kangas 2007b: 143.

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of Adler's case, focusing above all on his affective experience of 1842. Surprisingly, Kierkegaard offers a relatively positive evaluation of the pastor's experience. He rejects Adler's claim to have received a revelation, yet he nonetheless takes the pastor's affective experience seriously. He describes it as 'the extraordinary', as an 'awakening', as *Grebethed* and *Rystelse* – terms that are difficult to render in English but roughly correspond to 'being gripped' and 'being shaken'. Kierkegaard thus concedes that Adler's affective experience is, if not a revelation, then at least a 'powerful religious impression'.[281]

In a journal entry from 1843, Kierkegaard challenges the Stoic Chrysippus's view that 'proneness to passion' constitutes an illness: 'That's what I wish to see in a pers. [person], what the Stoic uses in a bad sense: ευκαταφορια εις παθος.'[282] According to Kierkegaard, however, such a proneness to passion is not just a hindrance but also an asset. This is precisely what he later sees in Adler. To be vulnerable to affect in this way, Kierkegaard writes in *The Book on Adler* – employing a somewhat infelicitous economic metaphor – is 'the true working capital and the true wealth'.[283]

In the paragraph 'Magister Adler's Merits', Kierkegaard claims that the power of the pastor's affective experience is salutary as a counterpoint to the lukewarmness of what he in the Adler book calls 'geographical Christendom'.[284] In a merely geographically Christian society, he observes, most people do have religiousness, 'but inwardly they have not made up their minds about when it is to be used, what it is, how it is to be used'.[285] In this respect, Adler stands out:

> So it is with most people, but not so with Magister Adler. He is truly shaken; he is in mortal danger. To use one of my favourite expressions, which is attributed to another author: he is out on 70,000 fathoms of water. What he finds out must be used immediately, the help he calls out for must be used immediately – or he sinks in that very second; he is absolute subjectively, inwardly wounded, and therefore must be present to himself in the need. Yes, Magister Adler is so far removed from the secure ground of sluggishness and sense illusion that instead he is thrown out into extreme mortal danger in such a way that this is about to annihilate him 'this very day', 'tonight', 'at this moment'. Thus in the momentary situation of mortal danger he is struggling near the outer edge between the self-defence of overexertion and the surrender of inwardness.

[281] SKS 15,271/KW 24,115.
[282] SKS 18/KJN 2: JJ:55. See Tennemann 1798–1819: 4,129.
[283] SKS 15,263/KW 24,108.
[284] SKS 15,211, 264/KW 24,84, 114.
[285] SKS 15,263/KW 24,107.

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> But Magister Adler has a merit in being shaken this way, a qualitative merit, and I certainly will not begrudgingly disparage the worth of this merit. Just as it is a merit to be truly in love, truly enthusiastic, so it is also a merit, in the religious sense, to be shaken and thereby to have found the place of which it is said: *Hic Rhodus hic salta* [Here is Rhodes; leap here]. Religiously understood, where is this place? It is neither on Gerizim nor in Jerusalem, neither in thinking nor in science, but at the most sensitive and most subjective point of inwardness. When one is gripped there, one is properly positioned and in place. And this being gripped is in turn the true working capital and the true wealth.[286]

Far removed from the secure ground of complacent Christendom, Adler experiences, with a formulation borrowed from the pseudonymous author of *Stages on Life's Way*, the extreme mortal danger of being out on 70,000 fathoms of water. In contemporary psychopathological terms, to be 'inwardly wounded' is to be traumatised. In a traumatic experience – the original Greek term *trauma* means 'wound' – affective force cannot be fully assimilated or experienced by the subject, but remains, in Sigmund Freud's words, lodged in the psyche 'like a foreign body'.[287] According to Kierkegaard, Adler is 'coming too close to actuality in the alarming sense'.[288] Yet it is crucial to note that this inward woundedness is also an awareness – not mere blind affectivity. Adler's affective experience is cognitive: the religious subject is not simply shaken and gripped by nonthinking forces, but '*gripped by* something higher, something eternal, an idea'.[289]

In this sense, Kierkegaard's book about the deranged pastor resembles his short story about the deranged bookkeeper discussed earlier in this section. 'A Possibility' was published in 1845, two years after the publication of Adler's *Some Sermons* and a little more than one year before Kierkegaard began working on *The Book on Adler*. In both life stories, an affective experience during an illness initiates a 'passionate investigation' that leads the protagonist either to quit his position or lose it. The bookkeeper has developed a habit of walking mechanically back and forth in a specific street in Copenhagen.[290] Similarly, Kierkegaard imagines Adler 'pacing back and forth and continually repeating the same

[286] SKS 15,263–4/KW 24,107–8, translation modified.
[287] Freud and Breuer 1981: 6.
[288] SKS 15,266/KW 24,110.
[289] SKS 15,268/KW 24,113, my italics.
[290] SKS 6,259/KW 11,278.

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simple clause'.[291] For both men, the life-changing affective experience is 'dialectical' insofar as it is impossible to decide whether it should be acknowledged as a valid insight or dismissed as a feverish illusion.[292]

There are two reasons that Kierkegaard 'will not begrudgingly disparage the worth' of Adler's merit – one polemical and one biographical. The polemical reason is suggested by the Danish word *Fortrin*, which means merit in comparison with others, that is, 'advantage'. Adler has an advantage over his fellow Danish Christians in that he – like one who is truly in love or truly enthusiastic – is 'far removed from the secure ground of sluggishness and sense illusion'. In other words, the vehemence of his affects is a resource because it serves as an antidote to the dullness and apathy of 'habitual Christianity'.[293] Kierkegaard opens the paragraph 'Magister Adler's Merits' by asserting that the 'good, the meritorious in Magister Adler is that he is shaken, is gripped, that his life has thereby acquired a rhythm very different from the cab-horse trot in which most people, in the religious sense, dawdle through life'.[294] One might be sympathetic to this idea of a kind of affective shock therapy as a corrective to mechanical habit, but Kierkegaard goes further. He writes that he prefers the 'wildness' and formlessness of Adler's affect to social form as such:[295] 'culture and education and sensibleness and social life' render people, 'in the religious sense, absentminded, spiritually abstracted'.[296] According to Kierkegaard's radical polemics against geographical Christendom, even culture and education are nothing but cab-horse trot.

The biographical reason for Kierkegaard's positive evaluation of Adler's affective experience is intimated by the recurring word *Rystelse* (being shaken). In the famous undated journal entry about 'the great earthquake', written sometime between 1839 and 1845, Kierkegaard famously describes a such a shaking experience in his own life. The old Danish word he uses for 'earthquake' is *Jordrystelse*: 'It was then the great earthquake occurred, the terrible upheaval that suddenly thrust upon me a new infallible interpretive law for all phenomena.'[297] This is not the place to probe the biographical mystery that Kierkegaard both

[291] SKS 15,241/KW 24,295.
[292] SKS 6,264/KW 24,284, translation modified.
[293] SKS 14,111/KW 13,52.
[294] SKS 15,259/KW 24,103, translation modified.
[295] SKS 15,266/KW 24,110, translation modified.
[296] SKS 15,265/KW 24,109.
[297] SKS 27/KJN 11,2: Paper 305:3.

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disclosed – and then carefully concealed – in this journal entry and in a handful of parallel passages. Despite considerable scholarly effort, the enigmatic event that hides behind the metaphors of the great earthquake and the terrible upheaval remains unresolved.[298] What matters in this context is that in discussing Adler's life-changing affective experience, Kierkegaard is also, in a sense, discussing his own.[299] The difference between the two philosophically minded theologians does not lie in the fact of being shaken but in their ways of responding to and writing about it. On this background, one might also interpret the short story of the deranged bookkeeper's 'passionate investigation' as, among other things, an allegory of Kierkegaard's own life.

From the perspective of affect theory, Kierkegaard's partial justification of Adler's life-changing and career-ending experience underscores the central role of affect in his religious thought. In the passage where Adler is described as being in mortal danger, Kierkegaard praises him for having found the place where the religious decision must be made. Contrary to the Danish Hegelians, this place is located not in rationality but in affectivity: 'neither in thinking nor in science, but at the most sensitive and most subjective point of inwardness'. In the Danish original, Kierkegaard writes *Inderlighedens ømmeste og subjektiveste Punkt*. Whereas the neologism *det subjektiveste* (the 'most subjective') marks the place of affective life, the word *ømmeste* denotes the ambivalent nature of this place, given that this word carries two distinct meanings in Danish. On the one hand, it can mean 'most tender' – as, for instance, when Kierkegaard, a couple of months after completing the first draft of *The Book on Adler*, speaks of 'love's innermost and tender relation between human beings'.[300] This is the rendering adopted in the English edition. On the other hand, *ømmeste* can also mean 'the most sensitive' or 'the sorest' – as when Kierkegaard, in a letter to his friend Emil Boesen, confides that he will let his 'hypochondria be the surly coachman who always cries "giddyap" and strikes the sorest spots with his whip'.[301] On a horse, the spots most susceptible to pain when struck by a whip are the thin, sensitive patches of skin on the flank and abdomen, not some hidden core of inwardness.

[298] For a detailed overview of the research in the journal entry, see Behrendt 2003. See also Holm 2022: chapter 4.

[299] For the uncanny resemblance between Adler and Kierkegaard, see Garff 2005: 453–62; Furtak 2025: 23–7.

[300] SKS 8,363/KW 15,266, translation modified.

[301] SKS 28,148/KW 25,94.

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Given Kierkegaard's extraordinary command of the Danish language, it is difficult to imagine that he was not attuned to the double meaning of the word *ømmeste*: the place of religious self-consciousness is the most tender *and* the most sore spot – simultaneously the site of loving and of being lashed. In other words, Kierkegaard's untranslatable wordplay exemplifies what I have called the dialectic of affect. Whereas the most tender point designates the site of baptisable affects directed towards fellow human beings, the sorest point marks the locus of the non-baptisable side of affectivity that transcends the human world and opens up the subject to a divine outside.

A few pages earlier in the Adler book, Kierkegaard characterises the religious experience with a similar ambivalence of interiority and exteriority: 'All religiousness lies in subjectivity, in inwardness, in being gripped, in being shaken, in the qualitative pressure on the spring of subjectivity.'[302] Religiousness is thus said to reside in inwardness; yet the metaphor of the spring (*Fjeder*) suggests that subjectivity does not act spontaneously. A spring responds to pressure, and such pressure must come from the outside. In a similar way, the notions of being gripped and being shaken emphasise the receptivity of the religious subject. As Kierkegaard writes in the passage just cited, Adler is 'thrown out' (*vippet … ud*) into extreme mortal danger.

Before the long quote at the beginning of this subsection, Kierkegaard remarks that in the lukewarm geographical Christendom, people are too sovereign and too autonomous to be genuinely religious. As we have seen, most people do have religiousness, but they have not made up their minds about how it is to be used. Kierkegaard continues:

> They *have* religiousness, but they are not *had* by it. Yet it holds true only in a worldly way, in connection with egotistic self-assertion, that it is correct to say: I have a mistress, but I am not had by her, that it is correct to say: *res sibi non se subjicere rebus*. In the godly sense, in the relation of the religious person to God, the opposite holds true, if religiousness is to be the one thing true, the one thing needful, the one thing blessed.[303]

In a patriarchal society, apparently, it is correct for a man to say 'I have a mistress' and absurd to say that she is the proprietor and I the property. In his *Epistles* – from which Kierkegaard quotes freely here – Horace declares that he seeks to subordinate things to himself, not himself to things. Yet

[302] SKS 15,260/KW 24,104, translation modified.
[303] SKS 15,263/KW 24,107, translation modified.

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such propositions hold only in the secular world, not in the world of faith, where the property relation is inverted: the true Christian is *had* by religiousness, but he or she does not *have* it.

We have already encountered this wordplay on having and being had in Section 3, in connection with Judge Wilhelm's notion of becoming 'the master of the mood'. In part two of *Either/Or* the judge argues that whereas the mood of the person who lives aesthetically is always eccentric, the mood of the person who lives ethically is centralised. The ethical person is master and proprietor of his affects: 'he is not in the mood, he *is* not mood, but he *has* mood and has the mood within himself'.[304] In Judge Wilhelm's vocabulary, then, the religious person described in the Adler book must be deemed eccentric. In being gripped and being shaken, the pastor relinquishes sovereign control over the affects and recognises his dependency on a foreign power. If the judge envisions an alignment of the sovereignty/insurgency and the unity/fragmentation dichotomies – being 'master of the mood' is a prerequisite of obtaining ethical 'continuousness' – Kierkegaard, in *The Book on Adler*, explores how they fall out of alignment. Only by releasing mastery and egotistic self-assertion when being gripped by an affective experience does the religious subject attain existential wholeness. In other words, Kierkegaard's careful exploration of the aesthete's separation of affective force from affective cognition – the 'sentimental' severance of raw feeling from meaningful judgment discussed by Rick Anthony Furtak – prepares the ground for the description of religious experience in the Adler book. If subjectivity is to be understood as a capacity to pass judgment according to a repertoire of social norms, the separation of feeling from judgment is desubjectifying. And in a religious sense, this decentring of affect is not an obstacle but a resource.

Love Forms the Heart

The final textual example in this Element is drawn from *Works of Love* (1847), where Kierkegaard pushes the dialectic of affect to its limit. 'Love is an emotion-laden passion' (or 'an emotional passion'),[305] he asserts, yet he contradicts this assertion thirty pages later: '*Love is a matter of conscience and thus is not a matter of instinct and inclination or of feeling or of intellectual calculation*.'[306] On the one hand, *Works of Love* urges the

[304] SKS 3,221/KW 4,230, translation modified, my italics.
[305] SKS 9/WL, 116.
[306] SKS 9/WL, 145, Kierkegaard's italics.

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reader not to be ashamed of the feelings of love and not to hide the visible, tender emotions if they are genuine: 'When your heart is full, you must not enviously, haughtily cheat the other person, affronting him silently by pressing your lips together. You should let the mouth speak out of the abundance of the heart.'[307] On the other hand, Kierkegaard repeatedly underscores the vast difference between the earnestness of the commandment to love one's neighbour and 'that play of the forces for feeling, instinct, inclination, and passions – in short […] that play of the forces of immediacy'.[308] Immediately after exhorting the reader to let the mouth speak the abundance of the heart, he introduces a horticultural image to illustrate the relation between Christian love and immediate affects:

> In relation to some plants, it is said that they have to form a heart. In similar fashion, this can also be said of a person's love, that if it is actually to bear fruit, and thus be recognizable by its fruit, it must first *form a heart*. For it is certainly true that love goes forth from the heart, but in our haste over this let us not forget this eternal truth: that love forms the heart. The fleeting movements of an uncertain heart are indeed something every person has, but having a heart from nature in that sense is infinitely different from forming a heart in the eternal sense. And how rarely, perhaps, is it precisely the case that the eternal gains so much mastery over a person that the love in him comes to fortify itself eternally or to form a heart. Yet this is the essential condition for bearing love's *own* fruit, by which it is known.[309]

Kierkegaard's distinction between 'having a heart from nature' and 'forming a heart in the eternal sense' echoes Haufniensis's dichotomy, discussed in the subsection 'Earnestness Can Never Become Habit', between disposition and earnestness. As Kierkegaard's pseudonymous author observes, 'one may be born with disposition, but no one is born with earnestness', since earnestness is an 'acquired originality'.[310] In the same way, one may possess a heart from nature, but the heart that becomes the seat of neighbourly love is formed later, if it is formed at all. The question, then, is how we are to understand the process by which the heart is formed.

In a notebook entry from 1846, the year Kierkegaard was working on *Works of Love*, we learn that the image is borrowed from the cultivation of lettuce: 'One can certainly eat lettuce before the heart of the plant has formed; but nonetheless the fine crispness and delightful ruffles found

[307] SKS 9/WL, 20.
[308] SKS 9/WL, 33.
[309] SKS 9/WL, 20, Kierkegaard's italics.
[310] SKS 4,448-449/KW 8,149–150.

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at the heart are something very different from the leaves. It is also like this in the world of the spirit.'[311] The Danish expression *at sætte Hjerte* (to form a heart) can be transferred from the world of lettuce to the world of the spirit because the verb carries a distinct philosophical resonance. As we have seen, *setzen* – the German equivalent of *at sætte* – was the term employed by the Idealists to denote the spontaneous act through which the autonomous subject constitutes the ground of its own experience. What is at stake, then, is the thetic power that produces the fine crispness of the salad and, by analogy, the earnest character of the human being.

In other words, the image of forming a heart is an argument in Kierkegaard's ongoing dialogue with German Idealism. On the one hand, as Kangas observed, Kierkegaard appropriates the Fichtean and Hegelian idea of the act of positing as the ground of reality. On the other hand, he reworks this notion by insisting that it is not the autonomous subject that performs the act of self-founding; rather, as Anti-Climacus writes in *The Sickness unto Death*, the self is 'posited' or 'established' (*sat*) by another.[312] To be sure, love 'goes forth' or 'proceeds' (*udgaar*) from the heart, but the heart, understood as the origin of love, is not posited by the subject itself – it is posited by love. Here, as throughout *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard distinguishes between two meanings of 'love'. There are the concrete manifestations of love that goes forth from the heart, and there is the mysterious power that grounds the manifestations of love by forming the heart.[313] Whereas the Idealists located the foundation of reality in the self-reflexive subject's mastery of itself, Kierkegaard places non-sovereignty at the very core of neighbourly love. In the passage about the forming of the heart, he ponders how rarely the eternal gets 'so much mastery over a person'. At stake is not the person's mastery (*Raadighed*) over the self, but a foreign power's mastery over it.

Earnestness, as described in *Works of Love*, entails an awareness of this foundational non-sovereignty. Like Haufniensis in *The Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard here prescribes earnestness as a remedy for the immediate inwardness of feeling that waxes and wanes and is 'uncertain in its mood'.[314] Shifting from horticultural to equestrian imagery, he writes that in the merely human view, 'love is like the fiery, snorting steed which quickly exhausts its rider instead of the rider being capable, when

[311] SKS 20/KJN 3: NB:92.
[312] SKS 11/SUD, 129–30.
[313] For a useful distinction between the various meanings of the term 'love' in *Works of Love*, see Krishek 2009: 111.
[314] SKS 4,448/KW 8,149, translation modified.

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needed, of riding the steed to exhaustion. And this is what Christianity is able to do.'[315] This is clearly an image of sovereign control over affective force. 'The tough-as-steel riding master, who knows that he can manage the horse, does not admire its fiery disposition but says that it ought to be fiery, for he does not take the fieriness from the horse: in constraining the fieriness, he only ennobles it.'[316] Yet it is important to note that in Kierkegaard's image the tough-as-steel riding master is not the rational person but, rather, 'Christianity'. As a skilled riding master, 'Christianity knows how to constrain love and teach it that there is a task at every instant'. Seen from the perspective of the person, by contrast, earnestness entails a 'humiliation' of the kind of love that goes forth from the natural heart, and this humiliation lies in the person's non-sovereignty in relation to the power that posits its love. Thus, if earnestness entails certainty in mood, it is a certainty that presupposes self-denial or 'annihilation before God',[317] akin to the movement of resignation analysed in *Fear and Trembling*. According to *Works of Love*, the only earnest thing is 'to relate yourself to God, to become nothing'.[318]

In Young's metaphor of baptised reason and pagan passion, forming a heart can be compared to the baptism of the affects, since it transforms the 'fleeting movements [*flygtige Rørelser*] of an uncertain heart' into the certain emotions of the Christian lover. The crucial difference, however, is that in *Works of Love* it is not the person who performs the act of baptising. Like God's grace, the transformation is not grounded in the person's own power but comes completely from the outside. Kierkegaard describes the forming of the heart as a violent event in which the subject is broken. It is a 'halt' or a 'stoppage' (*Standsning*) 'in which everything seems to be taken away' from the person and his or her selfishness is broken;[319] and it is a 'revolution' or 'upheaval' (*Omvæltning*), which causes a blissful confusion of the 'difference between *mine* and *yours*'.[320] Interestingly, Kierkegaard also uses the word 'stoppage' (*Standsning*) in *The Book on Adler* to describe the pastor's catastrophic religious experience.[321] In light of such a life-changing experience, it makes no sense to develop a method for distinguishing between baptisable and

[315] SKS 9/WL, 188.
[316] Ibid.
[317] SKS 9/WL, 107.
[318] Ibid.
[319] SKS 9/WL, 356.
[320] SKS 9/WL, 265.
[321] SKS 15,290/KW 24,137, translation modified.

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non-baptisable affects, since such an affective dietetics would return power to the rational subject that draws the distinction – and it is precisely this capable and sovereign subject which is annihilated in the religious experience.

Kierkegaard scholars have often interpreted the self-denial in *Works of Love* and the resignation in *Fear and Trembling* as a dispossession or a decentring in which the sovereign subject releases its hold on what it most cherishes in the finite world. Rather than seeing things as its property, as something it has a claim to or right over, the resigning subject comes to regard them as gifts from God, recognising that their value is independent of their relation to the subject. As one commentator observes, the young lad who resigns in his love for the princess, as discussed in Section 3, comes to realise that the princess 'does not really belong to him – he discovers her radical apartness, her radical alterity, and understands that she "belongs" to a greater power that transcends his will and intentions'.[322] I fully agree with this reading, which discloses the existential and psychological depths behind the seemingly forbidding Christian concepts of self-denial and self-annihilation. Yet, shifting from an ethical to an affect theoretical perspective, one may add that the sovereign subject is dispossessed not only of a cherished object but also of a cherished affect.

The young lad recognises that the princess does not belong to him, but he also discovers that his tender feelings for her are not his own. To acknowledge that the heart is posited by divine love is to become aware of the radical alterity of affectivity. As Kierkegaard writes in the opening chapter of *Works of Love*, when the heart is full, one should not silently affront the other person by pressing one's lips together, because this emotion 'is not your property, but it is the other person's – your speaking it is something you owe him, for indeed, in being moved, you belong to him who moves you, and you become aware that you belong to him'.[323] From Kierkegaard's Christian perspective, our emotions are not ours. In the vocabulary of Judge Wilhelm and part two of *Either/Or*, the Christian lover is eccentric rather than centralised. Thus, in *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard explores the divergence of the sovereignty/insurgency and the unity/fragmentation oppositions: only by relinquishing its claim to being the 'master of the mood' can the religious subject obtain existential wholeness.

[322] Krishek 2009: 70; see also Mooney 1991: 53 and Ferreira 2001: 135.
[323] SKS 9/WL, 20.

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5 Conclusion: The Most Incalculable Mood

In *Repetition*, the protagonist Constantin Constantius returns to Berlin to determine whether it is possible to repeat the aesthetic experience he had earlier of the farce (*der Posse*) performed at the Königstädter theatre. One might say that Constantius here reveals a guilty pleasure: the farce in no way lives up to the standards of the theatres frequented by a cultivated audience, 'the theatres that exist not only for entertainment'.[324] Rather, it is precisely in the transgression of the rules of art that it yields the intense aesthetic experience Constantius seeks to repeat:

> Every general aesthetic category runs aground on farce; nor does farce succeed in producing a uniformity of mood among the more cultivated audience. For since its effect depends in large part on self-activity and the spectator's productivity, the particular individuality comes to assert itself in a quite different sense and in his enjoyment is emancipated from all aesthetic obligations to admire, to laugh, to be moved, etc. in the traditional fashion. To see a farce is, for the cultivated person, like playing the lottery, except that one is spared the unpleasantness of winning money. But such uncertainty does not suit the general theatregoing audience, which therefore gladly neglects farce or snobbishly looks down upon it, all the worse for itself. A proper theatre audience generally has a certain narrow earnestness; it wishes – or at least imagines – that it is ennobled and educated in the theatre; it wishes to have had – or at least imagines that it has had – a rare artistic enjoyment; it wishes, as soon as it has read the playbill, to be able to know in advance how it is to spend that evening. Such agreement cannot be established with a farce, for the same farce can produce highly different impressions, and it may occur, strangely enough, that the occasion on which it made the least impression was the one on which it was best performed. One cannot therefore rely on neighbours, on those across the street, or on the pronouncements of the newspapers to determine whether one has enjoyed oneself or not. That matter each individual must decide for himself.[325]

Constantius's detailed description of the aesthetic experience of the farce is one of the most elaborate analyses of a non-baptisable affect in Kierkegaard's authorship. Proper theatres generate affects that conform to 'all aesthetic obligations to admire, to laugh, to be moved, etc. in the traditional fashion'. The cultivated audience at such theatres, Constantius observes, 'generally has a certain narrow earnestness', and the original Danish adjective, significantly, is of French origin:

[324] SKS 4,37/KW 6,162.
[325] SKS 4,34/KW 6,159–160, translation modified.

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borneret – 'narrow-minded', or 'borné' – deriving from *borner*, 'to limit'. This conventional aesthetic sensibility is limited by the audience's prior expectations of what they ought to feel. Further on, Constantius employs another French term, arguing that such theatres establish a '*bon ton*'.[326] In the terms of this study, the affective tone is '*bon*' when it is baptised by the theatre reviewers – that is, when it can be integrated into the existing notions of aesthetics. Where this occurs, one can be confident that one has 'conducted oneself in the theatre as a worthy member of society, who has laughed and cried at the proper places'.[327] This *bon ton* is, in Jacques Rancière's terms, a decorum demanded by the reigning distribution of the sensible.[328]

When it comes to farce, however, 'no *bon ton* can be established'. In this mode of aesthetic experience, Constantius argues, the theatregoer is 'emancipated' from the aesthetic obligations to feel 'in the traditional fashion'. In the journal entry with which this Element opened, Kierkegaard used the ritual of *at lyse i Hævd* – of publicly acknowledging a child's paternity – as a metaphor for the acceptance of certain passions. In *Repetition*, Constantius similarly invokes the idea of ceremony – a ritual exhibiting sanctity and veneration – to describe the process by which certain aesthetic affects come to be acknowledged as *bon ton*. In the case of farce, however, the valuation is inverted, since its effect depends precisely on the absence of such a ceremonial: 'scarcely any reviewer has succeeded in prescribing a ceremonial [*et Ceremoniel*] for a cultivated theatre audience on seeing a farce'.[329] Instead, the theatregoer is confronted with a presocial force, which Constantius describes as 'the Cimbrian–Teutonic vulgar hooting', 'the natural power of laughter', 'the abyss of laughter', the 'volcanic power' of laughter, and 'the nature sound in the gallery'.[330] Exposure to this uncultivated force gives rise to an aesthetic experience that is emancipated in the sense that it is 'untainted by the sweat of an art-sensitive audience, or by the exhalations of an art-enthusiastic audience'.[331]

Constantius's theoretical sketch of the non-baptisable affect evoked by farce can serve to summarise the three versions of the opposition between baptisable and non-baptisable affectivity that have structured

[326] SKS 4,35/KW 6,160.
[327] Ibid.
[328] Rancière 2011: 97; for a discussion of *bon ton* and decorum, see Panagia 2018: 57–79.
[329] SKS 4,35/KW 6,160, translation modified.
[330] SKS 4,34, 36, 40/KW 6,159, 161, 165.
[331] SKS 4,39, 36/KW 6,165, 161, translation modified.

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this Element – those between truth and noise, unity and fragmentation, and sovereignty and insurgency.

First, the affective impact of farce is a question of knowledge. In the proper theatres frequented by a cultivated audience, Constantius writes, the representation of a person requires 'a concrete being absolutely worked through by ideality'.[332] By contrast, farce is characterised by a lack of correspondence between intelligibility and sensibility, between abstract ideal and concrete form. In this mode of aesthetic experience, 'the whole thing is achieved by contrast, namely, by an accidental concretion'.[333] If Hegel celebrated the 'perfect interpenetration' of spirit and sensuous form in the beautiful artwork,[334] Constantius diagnoses the dissonance between idea and form. This also explains why one cannot know, in advance, what one will in fact feel in the evening by reading the playbill.

Second, the affective experience of farce raises a question of unity. As we saw in Section 3, drawing on Friedrich Schlegel's notion of 'the unity of the mood',[335] aesthete 'A' (in his Mozart dissertation in Part One of *Either/Or*) celebrates the opera's 'unity in the mood' (*Eenhed i Stemningen*).[336] By contrast, as Constantius observes in the passage just cited, farce fails to produce 'a uniformity of mood [*Uniformitet i Stemning*] among the more cultivated audience'. If Mozart's opera is characterised by an aesthetic totality that differs from that of traditional drama in being affective rather than rational, farce is marked by its radical lack of unity.

Third, and finally, the non-baptisable affect generated by farce concerns the question of the sovereign subject's rational control over affectivity. In the passage cited earlier, Constantius – like Vigilius Haufniensis in his account of seriousness – speaks of an 'uncertainty' (*Usikkerhed*) in the affective experience. This lack of certainty 'does not suit the general theatregoing audience', and in a clause omitted in the existing English translation of *Repetition*, he adds that 'one may be brought into the most incalculable mood by seeing a farce'.[337] The most incalculable mood (*den uberegneligste Stemning*) is a form of affect that cannot be anticipated in advance by rational thinking. This lack of control explains why, for the cultivated person, seeing a farce is 'similar to playing the lottery'.

[332] SKS 4,37/KW 6,162, translation modified.
[333] SKS 4,33/KW 6,158.
[334] See for instance Hegel 1975: 1,115.
[335] Schlegel 2001: 241.
[336] SKS 2,120/KW 3,118, translation modified.
[337] SKS 4,35/KW 6,160, translation modified.

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In this Element, I have examined the dialectic of affect through the analysis of these three versions of the opposition between baptisable and non-baptisable affectivity. If we regard this opposition as a question of knowledge, the non-baptisable regime of affectivity emerges as opaque – as untranslatable into linguistic and propositional knowledge. If the dichotomy is considered in terms of wholeness, then non-baptisable affectivity appears as chaotic – as impossible to organise into a meaningful order. And finally, if we conceive of it as a power struggle, non-baptisable affectivity is revealed as rebellious – as resistant to rational control and calculation.

Thrown Away Like a Bather's Clothes

After his theoretical discussion of the relation between baptisable and non-baptisable affects, Constantius suddenly shifts into poetic diction and describes what the aesthetic experience does to his sense of self. Here the violent nature sound of laughter in the gallery is transformed into the quiet murmur of a brook, beside which he imagines himself lying stretched out: 'My unforgettable nursemaid, you fleeting nymph, who dwelled in the brook that ran past my father's farm and always in helpful spirit took part in the child's play, though you only tended to yourself!'[338] This childhood memory of consolation, repose, and purity suggests that Constantius is mistaken about the nature of his own quest for repetition. As it turns out, what he seeks in the Königstädter theatre is not repetition but its opposite – recollection. His pleasure is thus not only guilty but also misconceived.

Yet the non-baptisable affect generated by farce is not merely a symptom of Constantius's inability to leave the aesthetic stage of existence. Rather, the pages offer a careful analysis of the relation between subjectivity and affectivity. As argued in the Section 1, Kierkegaard's treatment of the affects is relevant to contemporary affect theory because it involves a reconfiguration of the network of foundational distinctions on which the concept of subjectivity depends. It does so in two ways.

The first concerns Kierkegaard's reevaluation of the tension between intelligibility and sensibility. Like an important strand in modern aesthetics – exemplified by Jean-Luc Nancy – he regards non-baptisable and 'unsublatable' sensibility not merely as an obstacle but also as a resource. Unlike contemporary theorists of art, however, he relocates the dialectical tension between intelligible and sensuous sense from the field of aesthetics to that of existence – that is, from art to life.

[338] SKS 4,40/KW 6,166, translation modified.

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At one level, the pages on farce address an aesthetic problem. At the same time, Constantius discusses more broadly the relation between subjectivity and affectivity. The passage that has just been cited opens with a striking claim: 'Every general aesthetic category runs aground [*strander*] on farce.'[339] This claim mirrors a central assertion of *Repetition*: 'Recollection is the ethnical view of life, repetition the modern; repetition is the interest of metaphysics; and also the interest upon which metaphysics runs aground [*strander*].'[340] In both cases, an abstract theoretical framework founders on what Constantius refers to as 'a tangible actuality'.[341] From this perspective, the analysis of farce may be read as a rehearsal, in miniature, of Kierkegaard's conception of existence. Thus, what Constantius writes about the theatregoer also applies to the existing individual: unable to rely on neighbours, on those across the street, or on the pronouncements of the newspapers, 'the individual has to decide that matter for himself'.[342]

According to Constantius, the non-baptisable affect experienced in the Berlin theatre activates the subject. As he observes in the quote discussed earlier, the effect of farce 'depends in large part on self-activity [*Selvvirksomhed*] and the spectator's productivity'.[343] Because there is no uniformity of mood, the theatregoer cannot arrive 'with a ready-made mood and make everything have an effect in relation to it'.[344] Rather, he or she must assume responsibility for producing unity out of affective heterogeneity. Here Kierkegaard anticipates what he later terms 'indirect communication'. As discussed in Section 3, the unresolvable formal tensions of *Fear and Trembling* – what Angela Jacobs calls its 'poetics of unrest' – function as a means of deceiving the reader into what is true.[345] In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Johannes Climacus uses the same term (*Selvvirksomhed*) to describe the 'indirect form' of his presentation, which provokes the reader into the 'self-activity of appropriation'.[346] Thus, the non-baptisable affect of farce is not just a hindrance but also an asset: it opens a path to authentic selfhood. One might even say that Kierkegaard's philosophical style is modelled on the farce performed at the Königstädter theatre.

[339] SKS 4,34/KW 6,159, translation modified.
[340] SKS 4,25/KW 6,149, translation modified.
[341] SKS 4,35/KW 6,161.
[342] SKS 4,35/KW 6,160.
[343] SKS 4,34/KW 6,159, translation modified.
[344] SKS 4,35/KW 6,161, translation modified.
[345] Jacobs 2013: 201, 16, 36.
[346] SKS 7,220/KW 12. 1,242.

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The second way in which Kierkegaard reconfigures the relation between subjectivity and affectivity is by deconstructing the distinction between inside and outside. Like certain strands of contemporary affect theory – exemplified by Lauren Berlant – Kierkegaard challenges the modern idea that affects are essentially interior. Unlike Berlant, however, he does not construe the exteriority of affect in terms of an opposition between the individual and the collective, between the solitary and the shared.[347] As has been shown, he instead relocates affective exteriority from the social to the religious.

In his poetic apostrophe to the fleeting nymph, Constantius describes how the non-baptisable affect generated by farce decentres the subject – that is, how he 'vanished' from himself and 'forgot' himself in the soothing murmur of the brook.[348] This decentring is further illustrated in the repetition of the apostrophe to the nymph, this time in the present tense:

> You, my happier self, you fleeting life that lives in the brook running past my father's farm, where I lie stretched out as though my form were a walking stick laid aside, but I am saved and set free in the melancholy murmur! – Thus did I lie in my theatre box, thrown away like a bather's clothes, stretched out beside the stream of laughter and frolic and exultation that ceaselessly rushed past me.[349]

Here Constantius affirms the decentring of subjectivity: it is 'laid aside' like a walking stick and 'thrown away' like a bather's clothes. No longer an autonomous centre governing affective life, the subject is reduced to a heap of clothes left at the periphery. In Judge Wilhelm's terms, this affective experience renders the subject 'eccentric'.[350] Affect is thereby exteriorised: it no longer resides within the subject but appears outside it, while the interior collapses like an empty set of garments.

Kierkegaard describes a comparable decentring of subjectivity and exteriorisation of affectivity in his account of religious affect. Section 4 showed how, in *The Book on Adler*, he presents Pastor Adler's violent religious experience as oscillating between inside and outside. In the passage discussed there, Kierkegaard writes that the pastor, in the moment of mortal danger, is 'struggling *near the outer edge* [*yderligt*] between the self-defence of overexertion and the surrender of inwardness [*Inderligheden*]'.[351] Adler's affective experience is thus both *inderlig*

[347] Berlant 2011: 15.
[348] SKS 4,40/KW 6,166.
[349] SKS 4,40/KW 6,166, translation modified.
[350] SKS 3,221/KW 4,230.
[351] SKS 15,264/KW 24,108, translation modified, my italics.

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and *yderlig*, situated simultaneously at the innermost core and the outermost edge. If Kierkegaard pushes the inwardness of affectivity to its limit, he reaches a point at which inwardness flips around and becomes outwardness. As in a Möbius strip, the innermost feelings paradoxically become the outermost. One might therefore describe Kierkegaard's religious self-consciousness as a form of introspection so intense that it passes through the self, throwing it away like a bather's clothes.

In *The Great Derangement* (2016), the novelist and essayist Amitav Ghosh argues that the realist bourgeois novel has largely failed to confront climate change. Adopting a stance reminiscent of Constantius, Ghosh satirises the 'art-sensitive' and 'art-enthusiastic' literary audience in the name of a more violent, less cultivated experience.[352] Paradoxically, he observes, it was during the very period in which human activity altered the earth's atmosphere that 'the literary imagination became radically centred on the human'.[353] By pushing the nonhuman world into the background and refining its techniques to depict the experiences of bourgeois everyday life, the novel expelled from its territory the violent phenomena associated with the Anthropocene. In doing so, it blinded itself to 'forces of unthinkable magnitude that create unbearably intimate connections over vast gaps in time and space'.[354]

Like Constantin, and like Kierkegaard, Ghosh argues that the experience of such forces requires a reevaluation of the tension between intelligibility and sensibility, as well as a deconstruction of the distinction between inside and outside. First, the climate catastrophe manifests itself in what Ghosh calls 'forces of *unthinkable* magnitude'. Drawing on Franco Moretti's account of the bourgeois novel, he observes that the novelistic techniques rationalised the universe, turning it into 'a world of few surprises, fewer adventures, and no miracles at all'.[355] A novelistic form oriented toward the regularities and probabilities of non-miraculous bourgeois life is ill-equipped to register what Constantius calls 'the most incalculable mood'.[356]

Second, these forces create '*unbearably intimate* connections' between human and nonhuman world. Drawing on Timothy Morton, Martin Heidegger, and Sigmund Freud, Ghosh introduces the notion of the *environmental uncanny* to describe the human subject's affective

[352] SKS 4,39/KW 6,165, translation modified.
[353] Ghosh 2016: 66.
[354] Ghosh 2016: 63.
[355] Moretti 2014: 42; Ghosh 2016: 19.
[356] SKS 4,35/KW 6,160, translation modified.

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response to the freakish events and objects of our era. 'Isn't it the case', Morton asks in the passage Ghosh cites, 'that the effect delivered to us in the [unaccustomed] rain, the weird cyclone, the oil slick is something uncanny?'[357] Such phenomena are *unheimlich*, Ghosh argues, because they unsettle the distinction between inside and outside, being at the same time intimately proximate and radically external.

Kierkegaard's treatment of the affects thus acquires renewed relevance under conditions of the environmental uncanny. The affective experiences he analyses are neither calculable within the regularities and probabilities of comfortable bourgeois life nor confined to the inner life of the human subject. Rather than remaining radically centred on the human, the affects decentre it, exposing its interiority to external forces of unthinkable magnitude.

[357] Ghosh 2016: 30, Ghosh's square brackets; Morton 2013: 50.

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Abbreviations

All references to Kierkegaard's works in Danish are to the 2021 edition of *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter* (SKS), cited by volume and page number. References to English translations are generally to the Princeton University Press edition of *Kierkegaard's Writings* (KW), also cited by volume and page number. For *Fear and Trembling*, *Works of Love*, and *The Sickness unto Death*, however, I cite Bruce H. Kirmmse's recent translations (abbreviated FT, WL, and SUD). Because these translations reproduce SKS pagination in square brackets in the text, only a single page number is given. Thus 'SKS 4,322/KW 8,14' refers to page 332 of volume 4 of *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter* and page 14 of volume 8 of *Kierkegaard's Writings*. Similarly, 'SKS 9/WL, 116' refers to page 116 of volume 9 of *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter* and to the corresponding SKS page number, reproduced in square brackets, of Kirmmse's translation of *Works of Love*.

FT Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, translated and introduced by Bruce H. Kirmmse (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2023).

KJN *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*, 11 vols., edited by Bruce H. Kirmmse, translated by Alastair Hannay *et al.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2007–2020).

KW *Kierkegaard's Writings*, 26 vols., edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, translated by Howard V. Hong, Edna H. Hong, Reidar Thomte, *et al.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1978–2000).

Pap *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*, 16 vols., edited by P. A. Heiberg, Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Niels Thulstrup, *et al.* (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1909–1978).

SKS *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, 28 vols., edited by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Joakim Garff, Johnny Kondrup, *et al.* (Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 1997–2013).

SUD Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, translated and introduced by Bruce H. Kirmmse (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2024).

WL Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, translated and introduced by Bruce H. Kirmmse (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2025).

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Acknowledgements

When your heart is full, Søren Kierkegaard writes in *Works of Love*, you must not cheat the other person by pressing your lips together, because this emotion 'is not your property, but it is the other person's – your speaking it is something you owe him, for indeed, in being moved, you belong to him who moves you, and you become aware that you belong to him'. In this sense, this book on emotion is not my property. My writing it is something I owe to the many interlocutors who have moved and shaped the way I think about Kierkegaard and about the affects.

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Disclaimer

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Cambridge Elements

Philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard

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Rick Anthony Furtak is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Colorado College and past President of the Søren Kierkegaard Society (for calendar years 2013–2014). He has published two books and over twenty essays on Kierkegaard's work, including *Wisdom in Love: Kierkegaard and the Ancient Quest for Emotional Integrity* (2005) and *Kierkegaard's 'Concluding Unscientific Postscript': A Critical Guide* (2010), along with the co-edited *Kierkegaard and the Poetry of the Gospel* (2025). He has contributed to each of the *Cambridge Critical Guides* on Kierkegaard's writings, and has dozens of other philosophical and poetic publications. He is also an Editorial Board Member for *New Kierkegaard Research* and founding Book Series Co-Editor for *Bloomsbury Studies in Philosophy and Poetry*. His other recent books include *Love, Subjectivity, and Truth* (2023).

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