

SALVATION FROM DESPAIR AND ESTRANGEMENT:
AN ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS EXISTENTIALISM AS FOUND IN
SØREN KIERKEGAARD AND PAUL TILLICH

A Thesis

by

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Submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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August 2014

Major Subject: Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the causes and effects of existential despair and estrangement on man, and additionally the methods in which man can be saved from them by Christ, as found in seminal works of Søren Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death* and Paul Tillich's *Systematic Theology Vol. II*. In-depth analysis will be given to these two works in order to show how traditional existential concepts of despair and alienation are understood within a heavily Christian framework. Within Christianity, these two authors will show the theological import of despair and estrangement on the soul of man. Both conclude that these aspects of existence are a terrible burden on the soul and, ultimately, constitute a unique interpretation of sin outside of the traditional ethical framework.

Kierkegaard builds up a unique ontology of man as dialectical politics of multiple syntheses and showing how despair is actually the result of misrelations within these synthetic relationships. He also examines the consequences of conscious and unconscious despair. Tillich, on the other hand, believes that estrangement is related to the separation of man from God as a result of vices. Conscious that we are separated from God and desiring salvation, man seeks various methods of self-salvation that Tillich believes unilaterally fail. After analyzing the theology of atonement, Tillich ultimately agrees with Kierkegaard. The only thing that saves us from our despair and

estrangement, which constitute sin, is the individual's acceptance of the saving grace of Christ's forgiveness.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Existentialism has been a discipline dominated by atheist and agnostic perspectives. The point of departure for many existentialists is the “God is dead” pronouncement. Now that God is dead, wherefrom and wherefore do we now exist? How do we shape our existence in a world where God is no longer given as the antecedent for our living? People neglect, however, that these same questions are just as important to investigate within the framework of religion. Given that there is a God, wherefrom and wherefore do we now exist? How do we shape our existence in a world where God is the antecedent to our living? The same methods, concepts, and themes used to answer the questions for a world without God can be used to breathe new life into the questions for a world with God. Furthermore, religious existentialism offers a unique arena of discussion between atheist existentialists and theologians in order to further interpret man’s understanding of his place in the universe.

Existentialism has several motifs that run throughout it in both religious and atheist perspectives. Analysis of man’s presence in the world and how he perceives his place in it allows us the ability to understand his predispositions and biases in terms of his relationship to others, society, experience, and himself.¹ This analysis can inform us

¹ Throughout this thesis, everything is gendered as “man”, “he” and “his. It should not be mistaken that this thesis is gendered to talk about male experience. Rather, this was opted for in respect for the gendered

on multiple aspects – whether or not the individual is living authentically; whether or not he is living in Sartre’s “bad faith”; whether or not he is conscious of Camus’ “absurd”; whether he is living within Kierkegaard’s aesthetic, ethical, or religious spheres; whether or not he is conscious of his despair and anxiety; whether or not he is alienated from either himself or from society (because of himself or society); whether or not he has made the all-important qualitative leap of faith and determined himself towards one path or another in life; etc.

Religious existentialism, in particular, focuses on analyzing man’s state in relation to sin and salvation and man’s ongoing relationship to the divine. The quality of man’s relationship with the divine determines how he proceeds in life. Does he despair over himself when confronted by the magnitude of his weakness in the face of God (which will be discussed in the chapter on Kierkegaard)? Does he pursue alienating forms of self-salvation (which will be discussed in the chapter on Tillich)? What are the means of reassuring himself that he is loved and forgiven by God? In what ways are anxiety, despair, and other forms of alienation precluding him from forming a better relationship with the divine?

The point of departure for atheist/agnostic perspectives on existentialism is the “God is dead” pronouncement. According to these perspectives, life has no antecedent purpose or meaning. This existentialist angle then concludes that it is wholly the individual’s responsibility to determine his own purpose and find his own meaning in life. With no set criteria for determining which way is the best or right way, the

tone of the authors of the works cited and to avoid dissonance between the author of the thesis and the quoted work.

individual is supposed to succumb to anxiety and despair until he, upon deliberation, makes the qualitative leap of faith and set his own goals and methods for finding meaning in a vacuous world. This has lead existentialism to be characterized as a philosophy of anxiety, despair, and pessimism because of the absence of God. As will be shown in this thesis, this is an error. Even within a religious framework, existentialism is fraught with despair throughout. With or without God, taking an existential approach to life leads one to powerful contemplations of despair. Despair in the religious framework will be thoroughly reviewed through my analysis of Søren Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death*. It involves an ontological study of the dialectical syntheses that constitute man and the misrelations that emerge when these syntheses inevitably fail and fall into imbalance.

Alienation is also another major motif in existentialism. In atheist perspectives of existentialism, alienation is characterized as the separation of man from society or from himself either because of himself or because of society. Man alienates himself from society and others insofar as he is drawn up within himself and ceases to relate to others or his place in society. Dostoevsky's protagonist in *Notes from the Underground*, Camus' protagonists in *The Fall* and *The Stranger* exemplify this form of alienation. Society alienates man from himself insofar as consumerism and the struggle for conformity lead man away from authentically contemplating his own, true self. One need only consider the philosophy that has come out of the Frankfurt school of Critical Theory or the dystopian literature of Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, Orwell's *1984*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, etc. to see how society can alienate man from his true self.

In religious existentialism, alienation takes a different form insofar as alienation is analyzed in terms of how man is alienated from God. This issue will be taken up in this thesis by Paul Tillich—he terms it “estrangement”, however. He believes that man naturally becomes estranged from God through vices such as hubris and lust.

One concept absent from atheist existentialism that is present in religious existentialism is sin. Sin, as will be explicated in this thesis, is a complicated concept in religious existentialism that is strikingly different from the more typical notion that sin is an ethical transgression against God—such as stealing or committing adultery. As will be shown, sin is a state of diminished capacity or fractured relationship between man and God. Being in the state of sin is a terrible burden on man as it prevents him from true happiness and from seeking his full capacity of being.

Exactly how to rectify this macabre state of being is exceedingly difficult to explain. It involves heavy theology of atonement and salvation. Although briefly explained in the chapter on Kierkegaard’s *The Sickness unto Death*, thorough explication will be given in the chapter on Tillich’s *Systematic Theology Vol. II*. Both Kierkegaard and Tillich believe that the only salvation from sin is through acceptance of Christ’s forgiveness and the grace of God.²

² This is the view of the cited authors—not the author of this thesis. The author of the thesis believes there are multiple avenues of escaping despair and estrangement aside from the acceptance of Christianity and the grace of God. Christianity and acceptance of God’s grace is only a single plausible avenue of escaping despair and estrangement.

CHAPTER II

KIERKEGAARD'S DESPAIR AND SIN*

Søren Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death* is one of the most profound contributions to existentialism. In it, Kierkegaard creates a unique, systematic structure, allowing the positing of an existential metaphysics: an ontology of the self as spirit, the consequences of emergent, dialectical misrelations, and how the self grapples with them. Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death* ultimately concludes: despair is the consequence of a failed relationship within a larger framework of relations, and if despair is not resolved, the self has destined itself towards eternal death.

Using the miracle of Lazarus' resurrection by Christ as the prolegomena to the issue—the nature or possibility of death of the self as it relates to Lazarus, whose sickness was not unto death—Kierkegaard proposes that there must be a sickness that is unto death. This sickness is despair. It is pandemic, and its prognosis is macabre. Kierkegaard sets the foundation for a complex, relational structure serving for a unique account for the ontology of the self. Kierkegaard develops this postulation as he examines despair and its formations in despair's relation to the dialectical complex involving the finite/infinite and the necessary/possible syntheses. He examines the psychological implications of despair as it is found in conscious and unconscious

* Part of this chapter is reprinted with permission from *The Sickness Unto Death*, by Søren Kierkegaard, 1980. Princeton University Press, Princeton. Copyright 1980 by Princeton University Press

experience, and details the processes of despair in regards to the self's battle with despair. Finally, he examines despair as it relates to sin and sin's ontology as it relates to the self as spirit, including the necessary processes for redemption.

Before any analysis of *The Sickness unto Death* can begin, it is necessary to acknowledge Kierkegaard's dialectic in order to understand the complexities of his writing. Kierkegaard was a prolific author; yet, a good portion of his work was signed under various pseudonyms. From *Fear and Trembling's* Johannes De Silentio to *Repetition's* Constantin Constantius, each pseudonym hints at a personality or oblique point of view from which Kierkegaard deliberates. Johannes De Silentio was struck in awe of Abraham's silence as he undertook the will of God to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac. Constantin Constantius tried to understand the world as a constant set of repetitions. Kierkegaard writes *The Sickness unto Death* under the pseudonym of Anti-Climacus—possibly hinting at the abrupt resolution to an otherwise grim canvas of human existence. Therefore, when one says that Kierkegaard believes or proposes x or y , it is necessary to take into account that Kierkegaard never fully committed himself to such theories. Thus, when I say, "Kierkegaard believes/says x ", it is more appropriate to say, "Kierkegaard, as Anti-Climacus, believes/says x ". However, for simplicity, I will use the former expression.

Prolegomena: Lazarus' Sickness

Christ declared to his disciples that Lazarus' sickness "is not to end in death" (*NABRE*, John 11:4). Yet Lazarus did die. Christ eventually told his disciples flatly,

“Lazarus has died” (11:14), but only in order to show that this miracle was “for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it” (11:4). Even if Christ had not promised Lazarus' sickness would not be fatal, Kierkegaard supposes that “the fact that Christ exists, does it not mean that *this* sickness is not unto death! [. . .] Of what good would it have been to Lazarus if He were not He who is the resurrection and the life for everyone who believes in Him!” (p. 7). In this manner, Kierkegaard posits the problem for which he will try to solve.

Lazarus' sickness did kill him—albeit temporarily—yet Christ emphasized that this sickness was not unto death, from which Kierkegaard reads as Christ implying that there is a sickness, which is unto death. In Christianity, physical death is not finality. It is merely a stage. Therefore, death, to its fullest and absolute extent, must be total annihilation of a man—of his self—in respect to the eternal. If Christ is the resurrection and the life, and if corporeal sickness is not unto death, then there must be some sickness for which there is death to the fullest extent. Kierkegaard will ultimately decide that despair is this sickness unto death.

Despair is the Sickness unto Death

Kierkegaard carefully clarifies differences between the fundamental natures of corporeal sickness and spiritual sickness. Humanly speaking, death is the end of all. However, as noted before, death, as understood by Christianity, is by no means the final event. It is only a minor event in eternal life. In fact, “Christianly understood, death itself is a passing into life,” (p. 17) and, “Christianly understood, there is infinitely much more

hope in death than there is in life” (p. 8). If there is a sickness that means death to the fullest extent, it must be a sickness of spirit.

It remains to be seen how this sickness of spirit's consequence is death.

Kierkegaard terms it the inability to “die death”. The self is eternal, and yet there is a sickness unto death. As such, it is more appropriate to say that despair is the casting out forever onwards into oblivion—which is perhaps the worst fate of all. Kierkegaard says that when “death is the greatest danger, we hope for life; but when we learn to know the even greater danger, we hope for death. When the danger is so great that death becomes the hope, then despair is the hopelessness of not even being able to die” (p. 18). This sickness unto death is a “tormenting contradiction [. . .] perpetually to be dying, to die and yet not die, to die death”; worst still, “if this is experienced for one single moment, one thereby experiences it forever” (p. 18). The soul is eternal, and as such, despair is the disease, which, simultaneously with its dying, converts itself into living. The self consumes itself in an endless cycle of torment. And regardless if man is rich or poor, noble or plebian, famous or ordinary, religious or impious, benevolent or malicious, eternity asks one thing:

Whether you have lived in despair or not [. . .] And if so, if you have lived in despair, then, regardless of whatever else you won or lost, everything is lost for you, eternity does not acknowledge you, it never knew you—or, still more terrible, it knows you as you are known and it binds you to yourself in despair. (p. 27-8)

This sickness is damnation.

This sickness is pandemic, and no man is immune. Each and every individual is in despair, whether they know it or not. Insofar as man seeks life, he has the duty to overcome it.

The Ontology of the Self

In order to begin the technical analysis of despair, Kierkegaard posits an intricate ontology of man and the nature of his self. To do this, Kierkegaard expands on complex dialectics regarding a synthesis of two essential categorical relations—finite/infinite and necessary/possible. Kierkegaard states that man is a synthesis of these categorical relations. However, this synthesis is not enough. He says, “A synthesis is a relation between two. Considered in this way, a human being is still not a self” (p. 13). Man is a synthesis, but the self requires a more complex, Hegelian dialectic.

The self emerges as the outcome of more complex interrelations. In the “relation between two, the relation is the third as a negative unity, and the two relate to the relation and in the relation to the relation” (p. 13). The negative unity is insufficient to appropriate the self. In order to appropriate the self, Kierkegaard demands a positive unity, which can only be accomplished through second and third order syntheses. He clarifies through the complex relations of the psychical and the physical: “under the qualification of the psychical, the relation between the psychical and the physical is a relation. If, however, the relation relates itself to itself, this relation is the positive third, and this is the self” (p. 13). Further, this self must, “either have established itself or have been established by another” (p. 13). In the case of the self establishing itself, the self is

a culmination of the relation relating to itself. In the case of the self being established by another, the self is a culmination of the relation relating to itself that also includes its relating to another. If the self established itself, then the self is merely a psychical-physical being. If the self was established by another then the self must be qualified as something beyond that.

Kierkegaard maintains that the self is, in fact, established by another—established by God—and so is properly qualified as spirit. However, if man does not recognize that he is qualified as spirit, he is under the false impression that he is primarily a psychical-physical being. This either/or relation—either the self is established by another, or the self established itself—will be an important aspect of Kierkegaard's deliberation on the nature of despair.

Despair as an Emergent Misrelation

What is despair? Kierkegaard is specific: a misrelation within the dialectical relation framework. Kierkegaard states:

Despair is the misrelation in the relation of a synthesis that relates itself to itself. But the synthesis is not the misrelation; it is merely the possibility, or in the synthesis lies the possibility of the misrelation. If the synthesis were the misrelation then despair would not exist at all, then despair would be something that lies in human nature as such. [. . .] If [man] were not a synthesis, he could not despair at all; nor could he despair if the synthesis in its original state from the hand of God were not in the proper

relationship. Where, then, does despair come from? From the relation in which the synthesis relates itself to itself, inasmuch as God, who constituted man a relation, releases it from his hand, as it were—that is, inasmuch as the relation relates itself to itself. (p. 15-6)

This complexity of misrelations and relations might be better understood as a form of politics. That is, a conflict that attempts to resolve itself politically by negotiating back and forth between the fractured relations of the syntheses, attempting to correct the system error. The self cannot resolve the error; the system is one step away from succumbing to despair.

Despair Considered in Respect to the Syntheses

Man is a synthesis. He is a synthesis of the finite/infinite and the possible/necessary. These syntheses culminate into the establishment of man above both angels and beast. Neither angel nor beast can surpass the excellence of man—who has been made in God's image—because they lack the beauty of the dialectical syntheses. Within each singular synthesis, if man is not within the proper relation to either pole—if the self reaches too far into either end—then a misrelation emerges and this misrelation is despair. Since man is a synthesis, and there are two syntheses from which man must be in proper relation, there are two possible sources of despair. However, because each synthesis is bipolar, each synthesis must be misrelated in respect to one side or the other. Kierkegaard says that this is “due to the dialectic inherent in the self as a synthesis, and therefore each constituent is its opposite. No form of despair can be defined directly (that

is, undialectically), but only by reflecting upon its opposite” (p. 30). Therefore, despair formed by a misrelation in the synthesis must be considered in relation to the other pole. Each synthesis' possible despairing potentials must be termed as *x*'s lack of *y*, and so also *y*'s lack of *x*.

Formation Finite/Infinite

The first synthetic formation of despair Kierkegaard discusses is despair as a misrelation specified to the dialectical movement of the self as a synthesis between the finite and infinite. Despair in this formation is dependent on the misrelation resulting from the self's becoming as it transverses the finite and infinite. Consequently, “the progress of the becoming must be an infinite moving away from itself in the infinitizing of the self, and an infinite coming back to itself in the finitizing process” (p. 30). In accordance with the dialectical movement of emergent misrelations, infinitude's despair is to lack finitude, and finitude's despair is to lack infinitude.

Infinitude despairs because it lacks finitude. The infinite in the human is the fantastic—the imagination. What the self imagines it could become is the infinitizing pole of the synthesis. The fantastic in man allows the self to infinitely reach outwards from the self. It allows man to imagine countless possibilities. However, if the self extends itself too far in its imagining, it loses its foothold in the proper relational structure in the synthesis between the two. If man loses himself in the infinite, and never becomes himself in the finitizing process—actualizes the infinite into becoming—then a misrelation emerges, and this misrelation is despair.

Finitude despairs because it lacks infinitude. Finitude draws the infinite—the fantastic—into actualization of becoming. What infinitude reaches outwards for, finitude draws it backwards and pushes the self forward to the point beyond itself without losing itself. The finite in man is what brings him back to the corporeal—to actuality. Finitude is the awareness of what is concrete. However, when the self does not utilize all the benefits the infinite has to offer, finitude becomes consumed with the secular—without regard to the innate, spiritual qualification in man. It does not actualize the potentiality of infinitude, and so the self never moves beyond itself—it is stagnant. If man fails to actualize the synthesis in its proper respects, then a misrelation emerges, and this misrelation is despair.

Formation Possible/Necessary

The second synthetic formation of despair Kierkegaard discusses is despair as a misrelation specified to the dialectical movement of the self as a synthesis between the possible and the necessary. Kierkegaard says, “The self is potentially just as possible as it is necessary, for it is indeed itself, but it has the task of becoming itself. Insofar as it is itself, it is the necessary, and insofar as it has the task of becoming itself, it is a possibility” (p. 35). In accordance with the dialectical movement of emergent misrelations, possibility's despair is to lack necessity, and necessity's despair is to lack possibility.

Possibility's despair is to lack necessity. Man's constraint in infinitizing is the finite. Similarly, man's constraint in moving beyond—accessing—the possible is the

limitations of the necessary. Therefore, “if possibility outruns necessity so that the self runs away from itself in possibility, it has no necessity to which it is to return; this is possibility's despair” (p. 36). The self must balance the task of becoming what is possible with what is also necessary. If the self jumps from one possibility to another incessantly without fully actualizing each one to the fullest—matching the self up to that which is necessary—then this is exactly the point at which the self is swallowed up by the abyss. This incessant leaping from one possibility to the next becomes too much to bear and finally, “these phantasmagoria follow one another in such rapid succession that it seems as if everything were possible, and this is the final moment, the point at which the individual himself becomes a mirage” (p. 37). This final moment is the point at which a misrelation emerges, and this misrelation is despair.

Necessity's despair is to lack possibility. Necessity is the finitized infinite—the eternalized moment at which this possibility or that possibility is annihilated and one single possibility is actualized into necessity. The self moves towards one singular possibility as if it always had to be necessary as such. Kierkegaard compares the possible/necessary synthesis to breathing, “[Personhood's] continued existence is like breathing (respiration), which is an inhaling and exhaling. The self of the determinist cannot breathe, for it is impossible to breathe necessity exclusively [. . .]” (p. 40). Man must balance the determinants that control the corporeal as well as recognize the freedom of will endowed to him by God. Therefore, if the necessary fails to actualize or acknowledge the possible, then man has cheapened himself out of the divine order wherein he properly belongs, and ultimately resigns his self to terminal life. Without

actualizing or acknowledging the possible, the necessary loses itself in itself. A misrelation emerges, and this misrelation is despair.

Man is a dual synthesis of the finite and infinite, and the necessary and possible. If man only recognizes or utilizes one side in each of the syntheses, that side lacks its counterpart and forms a misrelation. Whether a man only acknowledges the finite and necessary, or only the infinite and possible, he has upset the balance of the relational structure. Insofar as man is a synthesis, if the self fails to relate itself to itself in its synthetic relations, man has lost himself in an emergent misrelation. This misrelation is despair, and despair is man's sickness unto death.

Despair as Conscious or Unconscious

The self is in despair, but does it know that it is itself afflicted with despair? Despair can manifest itself dialectically in relation to its level of consciousness. Those who are conscious of being in despair are indeed despairing. However, those who do not feel its tormenting affliction are nevertheless just as susceptible to the disease metastasizing—that point at which despair consumes itself, irrevocably.

Unconscious Despair

The self unconscious of being in despair, is nevertheless in despair. Any man that disregards himself as a relation relating itself to itself as a consequence of the synthetic relations is either naïve or willfully ignorant that he has a self that is qualified as spirit and, as such, is eternal. This is a chink in the relational structure and it collapses into

despair. Worst of all, it does not know that it is in despair—worse because the self unknowingly in despair has no way out of being in despair, which is unilaterally incurable. Kierkegaard compares willful ignorance of despair to truth and man's obstinacy towards it:

But this obstinacy of truth certainly is not respected; likewise, it is far from being the case that men regard the relationship to truth, relating themselves to the truth, as the highest good, and it is very far from being the case that they Socratically regard being in error in this manner as the worst misfortune—the sensate in them usually far outweighs their intellectuality. (p. 43)

Man that is happy in himself, although he is in error and often has a faint suspicion of it, is hostile towards anything that threatens to break the illusion. Similarly, those who are willfully ignorant of their despair, have an inkling of it, but at the slightest hint of it, flee.

Then there are those, innocent in their unconscious despair, which seem to tremble before it—anxious of this unknowing force that pulls at their feet. They sit in anxiety and only break free from it incidentally. Relating himself as Anti-Climacus to himself as Vigilius Haufniensus, the pseudonym used for *The Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard says,

The relation between ignorance and despair is similar to that between ignorance and anxiety (see *The Concept of Anxiety* by Vigilius Haufniensus); the anxiety that characterizes spiritlessness is recognized

precisely by its spiritless sense of security. Nevertheless, anxiety lies underneath; likewise, despair also runs underneath, and when the enchantment of illusion is over, when existence begins to totter, then despair, too, immediately appears as that which lay underneath. (p. 44)

In this sense, unconscious despair is also unconscious anxiety. The formulation of unconscious despair necessarily entails anxiety.³ This anxious self wavers at the precipice—ignorant that it is on a precipice—and, at the softest touch, plunges into a more horrible and tormenting despair.

Unconscious despair, the ignorance of being afflicted with it, is perhaps the most common throughout the world. Kierkegaard says,

This form of despair (ignorance of it) is the most common in the world; indeed, what we call the world, or, more exactly, what Christianity calls the world—paganism and the natural man in Christendom, paganism as it was historically and is (and paganism in Christendom is precisely this kind of despair) is despair but is ignorant of the fact. (p. 45)

Paganism—anything outside of Christianity—does not have the fullest conception of the self. It does not recognize or understand the self as spirit. Only the correct conception of the self allows the possibility of redemption from despair. Not only is the correct conception of the self required, but also the correct conception of what despair is and what it means to be in despair is required.

³ Despair, in all of its formations, presupposes anxiety (cf. pages xi-xii in the “Historical Introduction”).

Epistemologically speaking, we say of a man that is right for believing proposition x has knowledge if and only if his reason for believing proposition x is, in fact, why proposition x is true. Otherwise, it is happenstance or incidental and thus intuitively wrong to declare that the man actually knows proposition x . It is the same with despair; “the true conception of despair is indispensable for conscious despair” (p.47). If a man believes he is in despair, he most certainly is, but if it is a result from the wrong conception of despair, he is ignorant, and as such, his despair is unconscious of itself.

Conscious Despair

The self that is conscious of being in despair, is indeed in despair, and this despairing self is perpetually afflicted with it. The self suffers the symptoms and knows the ailment. Yet, it remains sick because this sickness is terminal and has little hope of redemption. This self, conscious of its ailment, is unable to accept itself. It either wills to do away with itself or wills to move to become itself and embrace itself. Therefore, this despair manifests itself in two main formations: despair in which the self wills not to be itself and despair in which the self wills to be itself.

The self whose despair is to will not to be itself, is the self who ardently wishes to be other than itself—to be any other but the present. This despair often finds the man who defines himself in immediacy, or the secular and worldly matters. Something topples this person's worldly concept of self and plummets him into despair. This

formation of despair can also move beyond itself into an ailment that consumes itself in respect to the eternal (rather than the worldly) and despairs over itself in its weakness.

The man of immediacy understands himself more psychically than spiritually. Therefore, his self is “an accompanying something within the dimensions of temporality and secularity, in immediate connection with “the other”, and has but an illusory appearance of having anything eternal in it” (p. 51). Further, this self is “bound up in immediacy with the other in desiring, craving, enjoying, etc., yet passively; in its craving, this self is a dative, like the “me” of a child. Its dialectic is: the pleasant and the unpleasant; its concepts are: good luck, bad luck, fate” (p. 51). In his immediacy and psychical qualities, he has little reflection on his self. This man of immediacy “does not know himself, he quite literally identifies himself only by the clothes he wears, he identifies having a self by externalities”, which is “infinitely comical” (p. 53). Consumed with the secular and worldly, the man of immediacy is ignorant of himself beyond his immediacy. Thus, his despair manifests itself—or rather, becomes conscious of itself—spontaneously.

The manifestation of despair occurs after an event. Kierkegaard refers to this event as something that “*happens* that impinges (*upon + to strike*) upon this immediate self” (p. 51), thereby stressing that this event happens spontaneously. It strikes the man with force and topples his understanding of his self as it relates to his appropriation within the world, and as such, leads to conscious despair. The tragedy of this formation: if the event were to reverse itself, he would reverse being conscious of his despair.

After the event, the man becomes conscious of his despair, and “regards himself as dead, as a shadow of himself” (p. 52). Desperate to escape, the man of immediacy ardently wishes to return to his former self, become another, or worse: become nothing at all—nihilation. His whole concept of the world and his place in it is demolished, and so his despair is that he cannot return to his former understanding of it. He is finally himself, and he cannot bear it.

One step more and the man's despair moves beyond the worldly and approaches the eternal. No longer intimately tied down to the worldly, which kept him in ignorance of his despair, this self can move beyond the fascination of it and become familiar with the eternal within him. When this happens, the despair becomes all the more horrible.

Kierkegaard refers to the first step as “despair in weakness”, and this second step as “despair over this weakness” (p. 61). The first step: his world shatters and he sorrows over the loss. The second step: his sorrow moves beyond the loss and sorrows over the sorrow—that he sorrowed in the first place. Kierkegaard clarifies the distinction:

When the world is taken away from the self and one despairs, the despair seems to come from the outside, even though it always comes from the self; but when the self despairs over its despair, this new despair comes from the self, indirectly-directly from the self, as the counter-pressure (reaction) and it thereby differs from defiance, which comes directly from the self. (p. 62)

Despair's movement redirects the self. With the mirage gone, man is left to himself to contemplate himself in weakness. Seeing that he was in weakness, man no longer

despairs over the fractured image, but rather that he had left himself vulnerable in the first place. Thus, this second movement is a higher formation and, therefore, one step closer to salvation.

The man who has, in despair, willed to not be himself—to will to be other than himself or to be nothing at all—is potentially one step away from the formation of despair in which he reverses the position. In defiance to his weakness, he wills to become himself. His despair is that, despite his revolt, he is unable to become himself, or, worse yet, wills to remain in despair as a rebellion against all existence.

The man unable to become himself has the higher consciousness that he is indeed eternal, and as such, does not rely on the state of the world in order to justify himself or be content. The higher awareness of the eternal has enabled the man to loosen the ties of the former world, which, after its image shattered, left himself to himself in weakness. The higher awareness has left the man to his own devices to decide his own concept of self, which will no longer be stuck in weakness. However, his despair is precisely such that he cannot move towards himself. Despite the strength in his will, he cannot yet match the critical movement to be rid of his despair.

One step further and despair has consumed itself in fire. The self in this final stage has lost hope for itself and devoted itself to its despair. His despair is his rebellion against existence. Kierkegaard calls this final step “demonic despair” (p. 73). Taken to this extreme, despair becomes the self’s anchor, and the self becomes masochistic. In the former steps, the man wished for respite and for salvation. This final step has taken despair to a new level in which help is no longer sought. He wants to be himself “with

all the agonies of hell” (p. 71). To describe this rebellion, Kierkegaard makes an astute analogy between the writer and his error,

Figuratively speaking, it is as if an error slipped into an author's writing and the error became conscious of itself as an error [. . .] and now this error wants to mutiny against the author, out of hatred toward him, forbidding him to correct it and in maniacal defiance saying to him: No, I refuse to be erased; I will stand as a witness against you, a witness that you are a second-rate author. (p. 74)

The despairing man's infatuation with his own suffering rebels against the universe and against God. His rebellion is “against all existence, it feels that it has obtained evidence against it, against goodness. The person in despair believes that he himself is the evidence [. . .] and therefore wants to be himself, himself in his torment, in order to protest against all existence with this torment” (p. 73-4). He is complicit with his despair as a testament against God. This man has succumbed to despair and relishes in it as a flaw in God's perfection.

Despair is Sin

Kierkegaard's final deliberation on despair is despair's relation to sin and that despair is, in fact, sin itself. Moving beyond the self's relation to itself and its relation to its sickness, this final part turns towards the self's relation to God and how its sickness presents itself before God as an offense.

Determining what sin is—its essential nature—proves to be difficult. However, Kierkegaard presents a precise definition:

Sin is: before God, or with the conception of God, in despair not to will to be oneself, or in despair to will to be oneself. Thus sin is intensified weakness or intensified defiance: sin is the intensification of despair. The emphasis is on before God, or with a conception of God; it is the conception of God that makes sin dialectically, ethically, and religiously what lawyers call “aggravated” despair. (p. 77)

The intensification of despair precipitates sin when it is in consideration of the relationship between man and God, insofar as man stands before God. The presence of God, from the perspective of despair, intensifies despair and places it in respect to the ethical and religious—which before now had not been considered—and therefore, despair is sin.

How man situates himself as to be before God is in direct relation to the emergence of despair and its relation to the man's advancement of the consciousness of his despair. As man becomes conscious of his despair, the profundity of his existence also becomes conscious. A man in unconscious despair has not yet acknowledged the status of his ontic qualification of self as spirit. However, as soon as the event occurs that topples the man from his ignorance of the eternal and plummets him into the depths of conscious despair, a procession of stages elevates the understanding of self. The man who despaired in weakness begins to despair of his weakness, acknowledging the eternal. When he acknowledges the eternal, he is removed from his preoccupation of

being in the world and is now aware of being in eternity—aware of his self as it is before God.

That is not to say that the man ignorant of his despair is not in sin. Kierkegaard acknowledges the Socratic definition of sin as the act which is done in ignorance. Ignorance of the eternal relation between the self before God does not negate the fact that man is before God. This ignorance is his sin as he does not recognize God—fracturing the vital relationship. It precludes him from accessing the eternal, and as such, is his sickness unto death.

However, Kierkegaard detracts from the Socratic definition of sin because it ultimately amounts to a negation. Kierkegaard ardently believes that, in order for sin to carry the full weight of its offense, it must be a positive force—an action that violently fractures man's relation to God. Additionally, the concept of sin as a negation is too weak to place it in the terms of the ethical, which is essential to the notion of sin. Therefore, Kierkegaard posits the ethical relation when despair escalates into the conscious, which encapsulates both the will to not be oneself and the will to be oneself. A man that, in despair, wills to not be himself—either in weakness or of his weakness—commits an offense as he wishes to do away with himself, which is the gift from God. A man, who wills to be himself in his despair but fails to escape it, offends God through his weakness. A man that wills to be himself alone in his despair has rebelled against God.

When the man in despair is put face to face with God, he is struck with the horror of his offense. This horror is his intensification of despair; worse yet, the continuance and intensification of despair intensifies the sin. Sin is an offense and needs to be

rectified so that man can embrace God and be cured of his terminal illness. Each sin necessitates repentance. For in repentance, man acknowledges his sin and sees—in order to move past it—that he must negate it. As Kierkegaard points out, “every unrepented sin is a new sin and every moment that it remains unrepented is also a new sin” (p. 105), which counters the popular idea that sin is a singular act and that each consequent sin is an altogether new and separate sin. This concept only considers the ethical, and, for the most part, ignores the religious (which is all too necessary for the concept). This may be due to the discontinuity of consciousness of self. Kierkegaard comments that,

How rare is the person who has continuity of himself! As a rule, men are conscious only momentarily, conscious in the midst of big decisions, but do not take the daily everyday into account at all [. . .] But eternity is the essential continuity and demands this of a person or that he be conscious as spirit and have faith. (p. 105)

Being in the world often forestalls the man of being conscious of the eternal. At any moment that he sins, it must be instantly annihilated, or risk an ever increasing tally of crimes. As Kierkegaard notes, the “sinner, however, is so much in power of sin that he has no idea of its wholly encompassing nature, that he is lost and on the way to destruction” (p. 105). The sinner disregards the full effect of his crimes.

The consequence of repentance often precipitates an intensification of despair—as repentance often loses itself to despair over the sin. When repentance despairs over sin, it “indicates that sin has become or wants to be internally consistent”; that it “insists on listening only to itself” and “closes itself up within itself” (p. 109). Repentance has

gone insane and instead of canceling sin, it sins even more as it loses itself in despair.⁴
The tragedy of despair: despair is sin, sin requires repentance, and repentance leads to despair.

In order for sin to be canceled, it must be repented, and in order for repentance to not fall deeper into despair, man must also accept his place before Christ. Just as Christ resurrected Lazarus, so does He have the ultimate gift to resurrect man out of his despair—forgiveness. Man is before God, but he must know that he is also in front of Christ, who offers the ultimate gift of forgiveness. Only forgiveness finally cancels sin. Man sins and repents, and Christ forgives. However, man must do one more thing: accept forgiveness. If man is too far gone in his despair over his sin, he will refuse forgiveness because he ardently believes that he does not deserve it. If he cannot forgive himself, how could the ultimate, supreme, and perfect Being want to forgive a wretch like him? All the same, Christ, as the son of God, offers complete forgiveness to a wretch who is willing to go so far as to simply accept it. If he accepts forgiveness, man is finally saved from his despair, which was his sickness unto death.

⁴ Cf. p. 115-6 in: Kierkegaard, Søren. *The Concept of Anxiety*. Ed and Trans. Reidar Thomte Princeton University Press, 1980.

CHAPTER III

TILLICH'S ESTRANGEMENT AND SALVATION*

In *Systematic Theology Volume II*, Paul Tillich details three major characteristics of man's place towards salvation. First, he details the source and nature of the problem—estrangement. He discusses the manners in which man has estranged himself from God and why estrangement is a terrible curse on man as it leads to horror of death and despair. Second, he describes the various ways man has sought to save himself. Each of these methods of self-salvation tends towards failure—man fails to rectify or heal his estrangement. Third, he discusses the ways in which the divine—the Son and the Father—rectify estrangement.

The doctrine of salvation is critical for religion—especially the Abrahamic trio. Man has a certain intuition that he is separated from God. Man hopes he can find a way to mend that separation, but it is not immediately clear to him except through divine revelation. Moses revealed the Law to the Jews; Jesus and other saints revealed that the Law should be love to the Christians; Muhammad revealed what is supposedly a correction to both to the Muslims.

It is necessary to understand the nature of man's cursed existence and how it affects him, before we can begin to analyze the possibilities of salvation.

* Part of this chapter is reprinted with permission from *Systematic Theology Vol II: Existence and the Christ*, by Paul Tillich, 1957. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago. Copyright 1957 by the University of Chicago

Estrangement, Sin, Despair, and Self-destruction

Man's state of existence is that of estrangement. Man is estranged from the "ground of his being, from other beings, and from himself" (p. 44). Estrangement, although not a biblical term, is implied in many of the symbols. Tillich says,

It is implied in the symbols of the expulsion from paradise, the hostility between man and nature, in the deadly hostility of brother against brother, in the estrangement of nation from nation through the confusion of language, and in the continuous complaints of the prophets against their kings and people who turn to alien gods. (p. 45)

Estrangement is not sin, though. Sin expresses estrangement—an act of turning away, rather than the state of being. Man's estrangement is marked in three ways: unbelief, hubris, and concupiscence.

Unbelief is the opposite of faith, not belief. In unbelief, man is, in the totality of his being, turned away from God in knowledge, will, and emotion. It is not a denial of God, but a disruption in the cognitive participation of God. Unbelief is the separation of man's will from God's will, and, as such, any individual that needs the law to determine how to act is already in the estranged state of unbelief.

Hubris is the man's self-elevation into the sphere of the divine. This is expressed most clearly in the serpent's promise to Eve that eating the fruit will make man equal to God. For Tillich, hubris is distinct from pride, in that pride is a moral quality in opposition to humility. Hubris is the result of mistaking finitude for infinitude. The

hubris in man is that he believes that his goodness is infinite, his truth is infinite, and his life is infinite. Tillich says,

All men have the hidden desire to be like God, and they act accordingly in their self-evaluation and self-affirmation. No one is willing to acknowledge, in concrete terms, his finitude, his weakness and his errors, his ignorance and his insecurity, his loneliness and his anxiety. (p. 51)

In his hubris, man has estranged himself from God.

Related to hubris, concupiscence is the desire in man to become centered in himself. In this temptation, he wishes to draw the whole world into himself. He hopes to elevate himself above particularity and make himself universal. Man is in a state of poverty and so he wishes to fill himself with the world—to own it. Concupiscence refers to lust in all regards—hunger, sex, knowledge, power, and material wealth.

Unbelief, hubris, and concupiscence all exemplify the state of man's estrangement. Because of man's estrangement, he turns away from God, tries to elevate himself to be God, and in order to do so, lusts for objects in finitude. Man's estrangement, coupled with his nature as created by God, leads him into sin. Sin is a universal fact actualized by individual action. Sin is an act of freedom, responsibility, and guilt. Estrangement has tried to be explained away with determinism. Physical, biological, psychological, and sociological theories try to account for estrangement, but they do not explain the feeling of responsibility man has with his free acts of sin.

Man's essential being is his potency for goodness. In estrangement, his unbelief, hubris, and concupiscence contradict this. This is a self-contradiction that tends towards

self-destruction. Man is determined by finitude. Man is dust and to dust he shall return. Man's mortality results in anxiety and a terror of death. This anxiety pervades his whole temporal existence, and it is emblematic in the death of Christ. Tillich says,

Anxiety about non-being is present in everything finite. It is consciously or unconsciously effective in the whole process of living. Like the beating of the heart, it is always present, although one is not always aware of it. It belongs to the potential state of dreaming innocence, as well as to the contested and decided unity with God as expressed in the picture of Jesus as the Christ. The dramatic description of the anxiety of Jesus having to die confirms the universal character of the relation of finitude and anxiety. (p. 67)

This omnipresent anxiety is a condition of man's estrangement. The anxiety of having to die transforms to an anxiety of annihilation. Death, then, is an evil looming over man. Death is the absolute condition of finitude. In addition, man's estrangement and existence in finitude also leads to suffering, loneliness, doubt and meaninglessness. These consequences tend towards self-destruction and despair.

Tillich identifies despair and its consequence—suicide—as endemic to the problem of anxiety and estrangement. This link between anxiety and despair in the religious sense has been described in detail by Kierkegaard in *The Concept of Anxiety* and *The Sickness unto Death*. The latter appears to have the strongest influence on Tillich's description of despair. Despair is inescapable conflict. Despair is the dialectical friction between what one is, what one could potentially be, and what one ought to be.

The pain of despair is “the agony of being responsible for the loss of the meaning of one’s existence and of being unable to recover it” (p. 75). Despair is the inability of the individual to escape from himself even as he has consumed himself with his state of being. Despair then leads to suicidal ideation, since the self identifies suicide as the only way out of this horrid predicament. Despair also leads to the belief that man is experiencing the wrath of God and condemnation from above.

Tillich identifies five characteristics of suicide. First, suicide as a literal act of bringing about one’s death does not account for suicidal tendencies that only seek to relieve oneself from this despair temporarily. Tillich points out the human desire for intoxication as a suicidal tendency. Second, at every moment of suffering, there is a desire to escape the pain by getting rid of oneself. Third, despair awakens in man the desire for suicide. Fourth, there are unconscious actions such that the will to life is undermined—psychological suicide occurs in terms of non-resistance to a threat of annihilation. Fifth, some cultures—notably Buddhist ones—preach not psychological or physical suicide, but in terms of “emptying of life of all finite contents so that the entrance into the ultimate identity is possible” (p. 76). This is asceticism and Tillich will later reject this as a valid formulation for self-salvation.

Man is estranged from himself, others, and God. This estrangement separates man from what is good and leads him into sin. The absoluteness of finitude—confirmed by man’s inevitable death—and its consequences on his being in the world leads him into a horrible anxiety. In his anxiety, he falls into despair. In his despair, he suffers even more in suicidal ideation.

Acknowledging his condemnation leads man into hoping for salvation. Man tries to rid himself of this estrangement and its consequences by seeking salvation. In various ways, man seeks the possibility of saving himself in order to overcome estrangement. These ways tend toward failure.

The Ways and Failings of Self-salvation

According to Tillich, there are four main methodologies of man's search for self-salvation. They are: legalistic; ascetic; mystical; doctrinal, sacramental, and emotional. Each of these methods tends towards failure. The main reason they fail is because man becomes determined towards a single method which causes him to try to force his salvation in an inauthentic manner. Each of these methods fails to save the individual because the individual fails to reconcile himself from estrangement into a true relationship with God and the New Being (Christ).

The first way Tillich discusses of fallible self-salvation is the pursuit of salvation through legalism. The law is a divine gift. It shows man his essential nature and true relationship to God, other men, and himself. Law becomes commandment through the self's estrangement. In estrangement, man sees what he ought to be and so he seeks legalist self-salvation. Tillich says, "Man, seeing what he ought to be, driven by the anxiety of losing himself, believing in his strength to actualize his essential being, disregarding the bondage of the will, tries to attain again what he has lost." (p. 81). Estrangement leads to the impossibility of fulfilling the law. In estrangement, love becomes the commandment. Love cannot be commanded because it precedes and fulfills

the command before it is given. Consequences of legalism's failings: attitude of compromising half-seriousness, a rejection of the law, despair, or the quest for a New Being.

The second method Tillich lists is the ascetic way of self-salvation. Asceticism is the dialectic middle term between legalism and mysticism, which Tillich discusses in the third method of self-salvation. Asceticism is found in legalism insofar as the ascetic seeks to eliminate desire as much as possible because man sees concupiscence—lust—as lawlessness. Tillich suggests that asceticism is, to a certain extent, wise. Tillich says, asceticism is “admissible if it is a disciplinary exercise and does not claim to be more” (p. 82). Asceticism is permissible if it is not merely an attempt to salvation. The ascetic believes he is overcoming estrangement since he believes he is overcoming his human nature of tending towards sinfulness in terms of temptation.

Tillich distinguishes between two main examples of asceticism. The asceticism of Puritanism was thought of as a means of control over economics and nature; therefore a divine blessing. However, the more profound instance of asceticism is ontological asceticism. In ontological asceticism, the ascetic disavows anything finite because it is identified with the Fall. In order to save himself from finitude, man must negate everything belonging to it. In this way, man falls into a Manichean belief system. Everything worldly belongs to the battle of good and evil, and so, in order to save himself, man needs to elevate himself above the finite world into pure goodness. Asceticism fails insofar as it attempts reunion with the infinite by acts of negation.

Concupiscence does not disappear; it is merely repressed. Asceticism is a “dangerous distortion and a failure” (p. 83).

The third method Tillich discusses is mystical way of self-salvation. The mystical is the concept that the divine is present in experience. Tillich says this is essential to all religion. This is of course true except for a notable exception: Deism. However, using mysticism as a method of self-salvation is a failure. Tillich says that “Mysticism or the ‘felt presence of God’, is a category essential to the nature of religion and has nothing to do with self-salvation.” (p. 83). However, he clarifies saying:

Self-salvation is evident if one tries to reach reunion through bodily and mental exercises. [. . .] In this sense, mysticism is largely, though not fully, an attempt at self-salvation, at trying to transcend all realms of finite being in order to unite the finite being with the infinite. (p. 83)

The mystic seeks salvation through an attempt to unite the finite with the infinite. Union between the mystic and God is impossible. If it were possible, it would still not escape estrangement of ordinary existence.

One of the major problems with mystic experience is that there are moments of ecstatic, religious experience followed by long periods of “dryness of the soul” (p. 83). Tillich, however, is not totally critical of mysticism. He thinks Protestant criticism of mysticism overlooks some of the benefits of it. If the mystic does not try to induce the appearance of the “new reality” and instead allows it to appear, then it is not as perverse as the critics assume. However, this mysticism is not a search for self-salvation.

The fourth and final method of self-salvation Tillich identifies is the sacramental, doctrinal, and emotional ways of self-salvation. Tillich identifies the sacramental as primarily adopted by the Catholic, the doctrinal in the Lutheran Protestant, and emotional with Pietism and revivalism (evangelical). They are, of course, intermingled, and each tends towards failure. The sacrament is a rite given to us by God via the Church. Therefore, sacramental salvation is somewhat justified in Catholicism because the Church is the official mediator between the individual and God, if we accept the premise that the Church is the totality of the legacy of St. Peter who was ordained by Christ as the foundation of his kingdom on Earth—which Catholicism presupposes. Thus, the Church is the synthesis of salvation by God and self-salvation. However, sacramental self-salvation tends towards a distortion of receptivity. Tillich points out that anxiety sometimes interferes with the sacrament – “Have I done the sacrament right? Have I done it with the right attitude?” This is evidence that the reunion with God’s salvation has failed. Sacramental self-salvation is impossible. Sacramental salvation is only possible insofar as God grants the validity of the sacrament. This is not self-salvation.

Doctrinal self-salvation has an inherent flaw in it. As Tillich points out, obedience to doctrine relies on obedience to a dated, special interpretation of the bible. Orthodoxy demands that the individual believe in a doctrine. However, demanding obedience to a doctrine is flawed if the individual is unable to see the reason in the belief. Like sacramental self-salvation, doctrinal self-salvation has a certain anxiety present. “Do I really believe?” Man cannot authentically force himself into a particular

belief if it seems unreasonable to him. If salvation is contingent upon belief in a particular doctrine, obsession and anxiety take over. The possibility of damnation being contingent on a certain belief that does not appeal to the individual's intuition leads to despair.

Emotional self-salvation has the problems of forced emotions—just as doctrinal self-salvation has forced belief. Emotional self-salvation demands a radical conversion experience and a continued commitment to this new-found faith. These are inauthentic insofar as they are often artificially created. Some wish to attribute this to divine acts of salvation; the Holy Spirit coming to them and transforming them. However, the distinction between the Holy Spirit entering into man, leading to authentic conversion, and the subconscious inkling of damnation, leading to inauthentic conversion, is significant—the distinction of the conscious experience of the two is often not.

Self-salvation tries in various ways to redeem the individual from his estrangement from God. It distorts the truth revealed to man by Christ and his estrangement leads him to believe that his actions can reunite him with God, when, in truth, it is God who reunites man with Him. Because of alienation and existential anxiety, man's actions and beliefs fail to reunite him with God who offers salvation.

The Meaning of Salvation

Salvation, in most common understanding, is the preventing of the ultimate negativity—"condemnation or eternal death the loss of the inner *telos* of one's being, the exclusion from the universal unity of the Kingdom of God, and the exclusion from

eternal life” (p. 165). However, each church has its own attitude towards salvation. In the Greek Church, it means saving from death and error; Catholic, from “guilt and its consequences in this and the next life”; Protestantism, from “the law and its anxiety producing and condemning power”; Pietism and revivalism, the “conquest of the godless state through conversion”; in liberal Protestantism the “conquest of special sins and towards moral perfection” (p. 166). Tillich believes that salvation in his system is the healing power of the New Being over our estrangement. He says:

Healing means reuniting that which is estranged, giving a center to what is split, overcoming the split between God and man, man and his world, man and himself. Out of this interpretation of salvation, the concept of the New Being has grown. (p. 166)

Tillich identifies revelation as having an integral part in salvation. Christ is not the only revelatory event in history. Tillich says that “there is a history of revelation, the center of which is the event Jesus the Christ; but the center is not without a line which leads to it (preparatory revelation) and a line which leads from it (receiving revelation)” (p. 166). Tillich believes that revelation is not information about divine things, but an “ecstatic manifestation of the Ground of Being in events, persons and things” (p. 166-7). Revelatory events have a healing and transforming power. These events give evidence to the saving power of the New Being. These revelatory events prevent the “self-destructive structures of existence from plunging mankind into complete annihilation” (p. 167).

Tillich says there is an unbiblical but ecclesiastical view of salvation, which is divided into total or non-existent. Total salvation is “identical with being taken into the state of ultimate blessedness” (p. 167). If salvation is only possible through the encounter with Jesus and acceptance of his saving power, only a small number of human beings are saved. Universalist theologians try to escape this absurd view. Tillich believes the issue can be placed on an altogether different level if salvation is understood as healing power through the New Being. Tillich believes that unless all men participate in the healing power of the New Being, they would have no being—estrangement would have destroyed them. Even those who have had the encounter with Jesus are not totally healed.

What does salvation mean if it is interpreted through the healing power of Jesus if he is accepted as Christ? Tillich says it cannot be that there is only saving power in Him, but that He is the criterion for every healing process. Again, even those who accept Him as Christ are only fragmentarily healed. The Christian only has a relative relationship to salvation. It must be the case that, in Christ, the healing quality is complete and unlimited. The “New Being in Christ transcends every relativity in its quality and power of healing” (p. 168). This is what makes Him Christ.

Theology has tried to distinguish Jesus as a person from His work as Christ. Whereas the person is a matter for Christology and the work a matter for soteriology, this scheme is avoided in the concept of the New Being. Tillich argues that we should associate Christ’s being with His work and His work with His being—this is the origin of Tillich’s use of the term “New Being”.

Doctrines of Atonement

Atonement is the effect of the New Being in Jesus on those who are grasped by it in their state of estrangement. There are two sides to the process—manifestation of the New Being having an atoning effect and what happens to man under this atonement. There is a divine action and a human reaction. In the divine action, atonement removes guilt as a factor in the separation between man and God. In the human reaction, man accepts the removal of guilt. Therefore, there is an objective and subjective side to atonement. Because of the ambiguity of the subjective side of atonement, the Church refused to state a definite doctrine of atonement but accepted various interpretations. Tillich identifies a few of these types.

There is the objective doctrine proposed by Origen and Anselm. For Origen, man was liberated from guilt because of a deal between God, Satan, and Christ. Satan was given power but unable to use it because of Christ's absolute innocence. Tillich says that "in this formulation of the doctrine of atonement, any relation to man is completely lacking" (p. 171). This view does not acknowledge the subjective reaction of man in his acceptance of Christ. Anselm's objective doctrine showed that despite the tension between God's wrath and love, God can exercise mercy through Christ. Christ makes it unnecessary to punish man. Man, then, can pray that God forgives his sins because he can, at the same time, accept the need for punishment and accept that Christ has made the sacrifice as substitutional punishment for man's sins. This is a legalist doctrine and does not account for the subjective side.

Then, there is the subjective doctrine proposed by Abélard—Christ’s crucifixion awakens in man the certainty that, in God, love is the last word. The impression on men by the picture of Christ is the liberating impression of His self-surrendering love. However, it is not sufficient to do away with anxiety about guilt and the “feeling to undergo punishment” (p. 172). Divine love cannot reestablish the violated justice. Love becomes a weakness if it does not account for justice. Tillich compares this to depth psychology saying “with its practice of making the patient go through the torment of existential insight into his being [. . .] before promising any healing” (p. 172). Subjective doctrines of atonement miss the point and cannot be adequately accepted in theology.

The objective doctrines do not account for the subjective side of atonement; the subjective doctrines do not account for the objective side of atonement. Tillich believes Aquinas’ view balances the objective and subjective. If we consider Anselm’s view and add the participation of the Christian in, we replace substitution with participation. This balances the two sides.

Principles of the Doctrine of Atonement

In addition to a doctrine of atonement, it is necessary to deduce principles of the doctrine. Tillich identifies 6 principles of atonement.

First: The atonement process is created by God and God alone. God is not dependent on Christ. Instead, Christ is the bearer of the New Being and so He mediates the reconciling act of God to man.

Second: There is no conflict between God's love and His retributive justice. Justice is not a calculated act of punishment, but an act through which He lets the consequences of estrangement go their way. The consequences are essential to being insofar as God cannot remove them without ceasing to be God. Justice is the structural form of love, without it love would be mere sentimentality. His justice is the exercise of love; it resists and breaks what is against love.

Third: Divine removal of guilt and punishment does not overlook the true depth of man's estrangement. Man's forgiveness among men is mutual and is always implicitly a participation in guilt. God, on the other hand, "represents the order of being which is violated by reparation from God; his forgiveness is no private matter" (p. 174).

Fourth: God's atoning activity is His participation in man's estrangement and its destructive consequences. God cannot remove the consequences, but He can take them upon himself. Those who participate in the New Being are transformed by God's participation in estrangement. It is necessary to understand that His participation in the sorrow of the world does not contradict His aseity. This, Tillich, argues is at the heart of the doctrine of atonement and it coincides with the doctrine of the living God.

Fifth: Divine participation in estrangement is manifested in the Cross of Christ. It is the central actualization of God's participation in suffering of the world. The Cross is the effective manifestation of God taking human guilt upon Himself. The Cross is the expression in which the guilty conscience can witness God's atoning act.

Sixth: Through participation in the New Being—Jesus—men also participate in the atoning act of God. They participate in the suffering of Christ. The suffering of God

is the power of overcoming man's self-destruction by participation and transformation. In this principle, we see a criticism of the principle of substitutional atonement. Tillich says, "God participates in the suffering of existential estrangement, but his suffering is not a substitute for the suffering of man" (p. 176). Free participation is the character of the divine suffering. Accepting and being transformed by divine participation is the "threefold character of the state of salvation".

The Threefold Character of Salvation

Following the doctrines and the principles of the doctrines, Tillich describes the three characteristics of salvation: regeneration, justification, and sanctification.

Regeneration is salvation through the participation in the New Being. The saving power is dependent on man's participation in it. This has to do with, as Paul called it, "being in Christ". The characteristics of the New Being are opposite of estrangement—faith instead of unbelief, surrender instead of pride, and love instead of lust.

Regeneration is the new eon which Christ brought. Man participates in the New Being; he enters into the new eon—this is conversion. Regeneration is the reunion of God and man.

Justification is salvation through acceptance of the New Being—the eternal act of God where He accepts the estranged as not estranged and His unification with them. It is the only way man can overcome the anxiety of guilt. It allows man to look away from his estrangement and into the justifying act of God. God releases the guilty because He chooses to do so, and man accepts this. Tillich criticizes Luther's characteristic of

justification because it is too objective. Melanchthon adopted Luther's stance and developed the forensic doctrine. Tillich says:

He compared God with a judge who releases a guilty one in spite of his guilt, simply because he decides to do so. But this is a way of stating a doctrine of Justification which leaves out of consideration the subjective side, namely, acceptance. (p. 179).

Faith is possible because the individual is drawn into the New Being of Christ. Faith is the channel through which man is accepted, and man accepts his acceptance. Justification is the paradoxical character of reunion as acceptable and unacceptable. Further, Tillich warns against the abbreviated "Justification by grace through faith", because it implies that faith alone justifies man, when it is through the grace of God that man is justified through faith.

Sanctification is salvation through the transformation of the person and the community through the power of the New Being. Tillich says, "Both the individual Christian and the church, both the religious and the secular realm, are objects of the sanctifying work of the divine Spirit" (p. 180). Sanctification is through Spirit, who is the "actuality of the New Being".

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death*, analysis showed that the self is its relation to the relation among the finite/infinite and necessary/possible syntheses, culminating in the ultimate qualification of the self as spirit. Man, as spirit, is eternal, and therefore corporeal sickness is not unto death. However, there is a sickness which is unto death; that sickness is despair.

The self must stand in correct relation to its dialectical syntheses in order to remain stable. This superstructure is frail, and, at any moment, man can slip out of proper proportion and cause a misrelation to emerge (and this misrelation is despair). Despair manifests itself psychologically in unconsciousness and consciousness. First, man was unconscious that he was in despair—either out of anxious naïvete or out of willful ignorance. Then, he was toppled into conscious despair. In despair, he either willed not to be himself—out of weakness or because of his weakness—or he willed to be himself—because he clung to his despair.

Since man is before God, despair fractures the vital relation and sentences man to the most horrible of deaths that is oblivion. Despair is sin, and the only way out is through repentance. But, in repentance, man lost himself even more to his despair. At this point, his doom is all but certain, unless he can forgive himself and accept that the son of God offers him forgiveness.

Man is indeed a synthesis. Man has the faculty of imagination (infinite) and the means of becoming (finite). Man has the faculty of free will (possible) as well as the constraints of multiple factors of the world (necessary). In order to be fulfilled and maximize his potential, man must remain within proper relations to those syntheses. Man must imagine just as much as become. Man must recognize the possibilities of free will just as much as the determinants that limit it. If we accept these syntheses, we can easily conclude that man is a complex system of relations and therefore the fullest ontology of man qualifies him as something more than merely being in the world—the animalistic. The powers of consciousness of man—as well as the further possibility to rise to a higher consciousness of the nature of the world—indeed elevate man above the merely animalistic and into philosophy.

Kierkegaard's argument is problematic in a few respects. First, the complex dialectical system of the ontology of the self is incomplete. Kierkegaard is famous for his criticism of his contemporary Hegelians. So, his insistence on second and third order syntheses—relations relating themselves to themselves in their relation—in order to qualify man as spirit could be somewhat specious. His failure to be more explicit in how the synthesis relates itself to itself in the third order synthesis could be attributed to the fact that this specific ontology is a tongue-in-cheek criticism of his contemporary, Danish Hegelians that were obsessed with dialectical frameworks. This does not deprecate the whole system, however. The remainder of his metaphysics of despair does not rely on a third order synthesis—first order is sufficient. Second, the metaphysics of despair to sin, sin to repentance, and repentance to salvation deserves more explanation

from Kierkegaard. The exact, metaphysical processes of acceptance of forgiveness to salvation from despair is not explicit enough and warrants further exploration in order to thoroughly resolve Kierkegaard's system.

As was stated in the introduction, existentialism—in the atheistic points of view—has been characterized as a philosophy of despair. The chapters on Kierkegaard and Tillich show that despair is a particularly essential concept to religious existentialism as well. Existentialism—both atheist and religious perspectives—believes that, if man fails to actualize the true potentiality given to him by these syntheses, he is in a diminished state. It may not be fully apparent how being out of proper relation is despair—in its common usage—or how unconscious despair is possible (psychoanalytic topology of the conscious and unconscious aside). But, if we proceed with the definition that despair is the “sickness unto death”, and that this death is the death of our self's august potential, then yes, these misrelations are unconscious despair. Merely being in the world or wasting away in the mind is not a profound state of becoming—it is living death. The man of immediacy is qualitatively no higher than any animal, and the man lost in the mind has squandered himself and has lost himself from actuality.

If man goes so far as to progress to conscious despair, he indeed sorrows over the world and over himself. Just as Sartre's Antoine Roquentin was overcome by nausea and Camus' Meursault was struck by the absurd, so also is man toppled into conscious despair. The man of nausea, the man of the absurd, and the man of despair lose their footing in the world and they remain lost as long as they fail to progress past it.

Any man can despair over the worldly; a more profound man will take a step further and sorrow over the fact he let himself despair in the first place. The man of nausea, absurd, and despair can either will to do away with themselves—suicide—or will to be themselves with their despair, and even relish in it. The nobler man will accept it, but not define himself by it.

The analysis of Tillich, on the other hand, showed a systematic breakdown between the nature of estrangement and the ways in which salvation is possible. First, he gave a detailed account on the variations of estrangement and its macabre consequences for man's existence in the world. Estrangement leads to despair, regardless of whether it is conscious or not. Tillich's concept of despair is informed by Kierkegaard's concept of despair. Then, upon seeing the horrifying consequences of despair, man seeks salvation. In man's attempt to save himself, he fails insofar as he is incapable of rectifying the power of estrangement over himself. Instead, man must understand that the horrifying anxiety is resolved by God who gave mankind Christ, who introduced the New Being in which mankind participates. Tillich identifies the concept of salvation before he identifies the doctrines and principles of Christ's atonement. Only through the participation with the New Being is man regenerated, justified, and sanctified. This is the threefold characteristic of salvation.

Tillich's assessment of estrangement and its horrifying consequences correlates to the existentialist assessment of the problems of man's existence not inherent in his essence. Man is not estranged essentially—this means a failing of God's power of creation. Man is estranged existentially—insofar as he is a victim of the Fall. The world

man has created has been a hostile environment that fosters and induces estrangement from infancy. In man's estrangement, he sought rectification and salvation. Tillich's analysis of the failings of self-salvation illuminates the impact of estrangement on salvation.

The failings of the last section are the exact process of God's offer of salvation. Understanding the theology Christ promoted in life seems to offer man a way out of estrangement. Man may participate in the New Being if man comes to understand the message Christ brings. However, Tillich does not demonstrate the necessity that Jesus be crucified. His doctrines of atonement do not account for the way in which man's estrangement is atoned for. God, as Christ, participates in estrangement. In that sense, God can forgive man for his estrangement. In Tillich's theology, it is not immediately clear why Jesus must be crucified for this sake. Why does God need Jesus to be Christ and sacrificed to atone for man's estrangement when a life among men seems a sufficient condition for the possibility of forgiveness? Tillich does not answer this adequately. We either need an answer to rid ourselves of this issue, or perhaps we need to consider the crucifixion in a traditional sense. Jesus as the God-man understands and participates in estrangement, and accordingly preaches his message that the Father seeks unconditional love between man and himself, man and his neighbor, and man and God. In that sense alone is He the New Being in which man may participate. However, the accumulation of transgressions of the law requires God's justice. Man's sins—in the traditional sense—must be atoned for. So Jesus' absolute, divine innocence is a sufficient offering for divine justice. His punishment alone is enough to balance the

equation. In this sense, substitutionary atonement seems to me to be ideal; Tillich criticized the theory. The Father can forgive estrangement by offering his Son to reveal the New Being to the world so man can begin to rectify his estrangement and turn towards God without the need for the agony of Christ. Existential estrangement is not a violation of the old law—although it is the primary cause for violations—so it being the primary sin that requires atonement is incomplete, ambiguous, or absent in Tillich's system.

Linking Kierkegaard and Tillich

Now that both positions have been thoroughly explicated, it remains to be seen how the two authors can be thought of as unified; they discussed two very different aspects of man's existence—Kierkegaard discussing despair and its consequences; Tillich discussing estrangement, the failings of self-salvation, and atonement.

Both discuss the consequences of their topics of deliberation as ultimately constituting sin. Despair is sin insofar as man either unconsciously squanders himself or consciously wills to do away with himself (suicidal ideation) or consciously wills to be himself in his despair, where both conscious and unconscious despair are an affront to God. Estrangement is sin insofar as it is constituted by the vices of unbelief, hubris, and concupiscence. This estrangement is cognized by the individual, and the individual is thus left to despair—Tillich's concept of despair is informed by Kierkegaard's despair.

Both discuss the manner in which man tries to rectify his affront to God. For both Kierkegaard and Tillich, these ultimately fail. For Kierkegaard, it was mere repentance.

Mere repentance fails insofar as man has the tendency to lose himself in his repentance, which then furthers his despair. For Tillich, he discussed multiple methods. The methods unilaterally fail to rectify estrangement, and even further the estrangement. Man is incapable of saving himself, because he has an imperfect relationship with himself and with God—either out of despair or estrangement.

Finally, both discuss the true manner in which man's sin can be rectified. Sin can be canceled only through the acceptance of Christ's forgiveness and the acknowledgment that it is through the grace of God that He forgives man for his trespasses against Him. While Kierkegaard was very brief on this important facet of the process of despair, Tillich was significantly more detailed in the theological accounts for atonement and salvation.

However, the most significant difference between the two is that general existential principles can be extrapolated from Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death*—as discussed earlier in this chapter. The same cannot be said for Tillich's *Systematic Theology Vol. II*. Its material is too laden with theology and Christian principles to make any import for general existentialism other than a sociological survey of a particular subset of men.

Questions Answered and Questions Raised

The analysis of Kierkegaard and Tillich offers some insight into some important questions of existentialism.

First: How can man save himself from despair, estrangement, and sin? The only way is through repentance and acceptance of the grace of God. Mere repentance is insufficient insofar as man is tempted to go further down the path of despair and estrangement, which consequently furthers his despair and estrangement. The popular methods in which man attempts to resolve his estrangement (as Tillich showed) only further his estrangement insofar as they are antecedently qualified as estranged and, therefore are compromised in facilitating the resolution of his estrangement. Man is insufficiently qualified to rectify his sin considering that, since he is in a state of sin, he cannot elevate himself from sin. Only God can raise man out of his state of sin through divine grace. Man must, however, accept God's grace in order to resolve his despair over his sin.

Second: How is man ontologically qualified as spirit? Through the syntheses of the infinite/finite and possible/necessary, which were instilled in him by God. Furthermore, the synthesis is not the ultimate consequence, but the relation of the synthesis to other syntheses—between the syntheses as well as in relation to God—is the ultimate consequence. The self is the culmination of a positive unity, and therefore is eternal as God is. This raises man from being merely psychological-physical.

Third: In what ways are religious and atheistic existentialism incompatible? Only insofar as one examines the relationships between the man and himself and man and God, and the other examines the relationships between man and himself and man and society. The same concepts and strategies from atheistic existentialism can be extrapolated and altered to present a new perspective on the problems faced in religious

existentialism. Atheistic concepts of alienation can inform religious existentialism on the impacts of society and self-obsession on the soul of man. Secular society can further estrange man from God. Self-obsession can alienate man from others, whereas men, as Christ preached, should form a loving community in order to bring about the Kingdom of God on Earth. Furthermore, religious concepts of alienation can inform atheistic existentialism insofar as it is a sociological survey of a facet of a particular subset of man's existence. For example, the atheist existentialist can use Tillich's analysis of the failings of self-salvation as an example of living in Sartre's "bad faith".

These are just a few of the questions that have been answered in this thesis. However, this thesis also raises four groups of new questions that warrant further research.

First: Is it possible to elaborate on Kierkegaard's assertion that the ontology of the self is reliant on a third order synthesis such that it is indeed a third order synthesis? Or, is it merely one way that he was slyly criticizing his contemporary Hegelians?

Second: What other facets of man's experience can be analyzed using Kierkegaard's metaphysics? Can existential metaphysics be an avenue of interpreting alienation? Can it be used to analyze the transitioning of self between Kierkegaard's own spheres of existence? Can it be used to analyze the qualitative leap of faith? Can it be used in conjunction with Camus' concept of the absurd or Heidegger's *Dasein*?

Third: As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Kierkegaard's metaphysics is incomplete insofar as it does not explain the resolution of despair through acceptance. So, what would the metaphysics of the resolution of despair look like? How would this

metaphysics explain despair's resolution in respect to the emergent misrelations? How does the man overcome the misrelations after he knows that the sin of despair is forgiven?

Fourth: What is the exact process of God's offer of salvation from estrangement in Tillich's system? Why does God need Jesus crucified to atone for man's estrangement when a life among men seems sufficient for forgiveness? Although existential estrangement is not primarily a sin, why is it treated as one that needs to be atoned for in Tillich's system?

Religious existentialism need not be a vacant, ignored field of inquiry. It opens up an intriguing arena of discussion between atheist existentialists and theologians that can help mediate the dissonance between atheists and theists.

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