On Kierkegaard's Doctrine of Love.

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The observations presented in this study are intended to be philosophical rather than historical. They attempt to throw some light on a text of Sören Kierkegaard, concerning the position of basic concepts of religious ethics in the present situation. At the same time I should like to go beyond a mere critical analysis of the text. There may also be some historical interest involved in the analysis, since the work to be discussed is one of Kierkegaard's lesser known writings. As far as I know, it is not accessible in English. It is the book *Leben und Walten der Liebe* (Works of Love), published in 1847, a collection of so-called edifying discourses linked to each other by the concept of Christian love.

Kierkegaard's literary production falls into two distinctly separate parts, the philosophical writings and the religious sermons. This rough and schematic division is justified in Kierkegaard's case: justified by himself. Whereas all his philosophical writings were published anonymously—even those with the open theological tendencies of his later period, such as the *Krankheit zum Tode* (Sickness unto Death) and the *Einübung im Christentum* (Training in Christianity) —he published the religious sermons under his own name. This distinction was made most methodically. He alternated between these two methods of publication from the very beginning of his literary career, since *Entweder/Oder* (Either/Or). He was guided in this procedure by the basic idea that one ought to lure man into Truth. That is to say, truth, according to Kierkegaard, is no "result," no objectivity independent of the process of its subjective appropriation, but really consists in the process of subjective appropriation itself. In his philosophical writings, Kierkegaard goes so far as to say that subjectivity is the truth. This sentence is not, of course, to be understood in the sense of philosophical subjectivism, such as Fichte's, of whose language it reminds one. Its intrinsic meaning is that Truth exists in the living process of Faith, theologically speaking, in the imitation of Christ. Kierkegaard's philosophical writings attempt to express this process of existential appropriation through its different stages—which he calls aesthetic, ethical and religious—and to guide

the reader by the dialectics of these stages to the theological truth. But he deemed it necessary to contrast as the "corrective" to this process the positive Christianity which one should achieve, though Kierkegaard never pretended to have achieved it himself. This contrast is provided by religious sermons. One may safely assume that Kierkegaard, who did not share philosophy's optimism of being able to produce the Absolute from itself, rebuffed this optimism even where his own philosophy was involved. In other words, he did not believe that a pure movement of thought could possibly lead up to Christianity, but only, in Kierkegaard's language, to the border of Christianity. He regards that Christian standpoint as being based on revelation. Hence, it maintains a transcendence of the movement of thought which does not permit philosophy to reach Christianity by a procedure of gradual transitions. According to this conviction, the Christian, from the very beginning, must face philosophy independently and distinctly. With Kierkegaard philosophy assumes the paradoxical task of regaining the lost position of an *Ancilla theologiae* and, in the last analysis, must abdicate. One may just as easily formulate the relation in the reverse way. The idea of a reason which attains the Absolute not by maintaining itself in complete consistency of thinking, but by sacrificing itself, indicates not so much the expropriation of philosophy by theology as the transplantation of theology into the philosophical realm. Indeed, the Christian, as a stage, fits perfectly into the hierarchy of Kierkegaard's philosophy, and all the categories which Kierkegaard regards as specifically Christian appear within the context of his philosophical deductions. They are, as it were, invested only post festum with the insignia of Christian revelation. This is particularly true of the doctrine of the radically different, of the qualitative jump, and of the paradox. These questions, however, can be settled only in connection with an actual text of Kierkegaard's.

The text to be discussed here has a particular bearing upon these questions. What is introduced here as an exegesis of Christian Love, is revealed, through a more intimate knowledge of Kierkegaard's philosophy, as supplementing his negative theology with a positive one, his criticism with something edifying in the literal sense, his dialectics with simplicity. It is this very aim which makes Kierkegaard's sermons such tiresome and unpleasant reading. At every point, they bear the hallmarks of his trend of thought. Yet at the same time, they deny this strain and affect a sort of preaching naiveté. This naiveté, being produced dialectically and by no means primarily, threatens to slip into loquacious boredom at any moment. Verbosity is the danger of all Kierkegaard's writings. It is the ver-

bosity of an interminable monologue which, so to speak, does not tolerate any protest and continually repeats itself, without any real articulation. This loquaciousness is intensified in his religious writings to the point of being painful. A Hegelian philosopher deliberately talks circumstantially, imagining himself a Socrates conducting his conversations in the streets of Athens. There is reason to suspect that even the pain and the boredom are planned by the cunning theologian, as Kierkegaard repeatedly styled himself. If the philosophical writings wish to "cheat" the reader into truth, the theological ones, in turn, wish to make it as difficult, as uninteresting, as insipid to him as possible. In one passage of the *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard says that he actually intends to warn us against Christianity. It is one of the basic aims of all his writings to rejuvenate Christianity into what it was supposed to have been during St. Paul's times: a scandal to the Jews and a folly to the Greeks. The scandal is Kierkegaard's Christian paradox. The folly to the Greeks, however, is the laborious simplicity which Kierkegaard stubbornly upholds throughout the religious sermons.

A brief summary of the book on Love is pertinent at this point. Kierkegaard speaks of Christian Love for man, but in pointed contrast to natural love. He defines love as Christian, if it is not "immediate" or "natural," or as Kierkegaard puts it, if one loves each man for God's sake and in a "God-relationship." Kierkegaard never concretely states what this love means. He comments upon it only by means of analogy. Negatively, however, his concept of love is distinct enough. He regards love as a matter of pure inwardness. He starts from the Christian command "Thou shalt love." He interprets this command by emphasizing its abstract generality. Speaking exaggeratedly, in Kierkegaard's doctrine of Love the object of love is, in a way, irrelevant. According to Kierkegaard, the differences between individual men and one's attitude towards men are, in the Christian sense, of no importance whatever. The only element of "this man" which is of interest to the Christian is "the human," as revealed in this person. In love, the other person becomes a mere "stumbling block" to subjective inwardness. This has no object in the proper sense, and the substantial quality of love is "object-less." In Kierkegaard's doctrine the "Christian" content of love, its justification in eternity, is determined only by the subjective qualities of the loving one, such as disinterestedness, unlimited confidence, unobtrusiveness, mercifulness, even if one is helpless oneself, self-denial and fidelity. In Kierkegaard's doctrine of love, the individual is important only with respect to the universal human. But the universal consists in the very fact of individualization. Hence love can

grasp the universal only in love for the individual, but without yielding to the differences between individuals. In other words, the loving one is supposed to love the individual particularities of each man, but regardless of the differences between men. Any "preference" is excluded with a rigor comparable only to the Kantian Ethics of Duty. Love, for Kierkegaard, is Christian only as a "breaking down" of nature. It is, first of all, a breaking down of one's own immediate inclination which is supposed to be replaced by the God-relationship. Hence the Kierkegaardian love applies to the farthest as well as to the nearest. The concept of the neighbor which Kierkegaard makes the measure of love is, in a certain sense, that of the farthest: whomever one happens to meet is contrasted, in the very abstractness of such a possibility, with the "preference" for the friend or for the beloved one. Kierkegaard's love is a breaking down of nature, moreover, as a breaking down of any individual interest of the lover, however sublimated it may be. The idea of happiness is kept aloof from this love as its worst disfigurement. Kierkegaard even speaks of the happiness of eternity in such gloomy tones that it appears to consist of nothing but the giving away of any real claim to happiness. Finally, this doctrine of love is a breaking down of nature by demanding from the simple lover the same characteristics Kierkegaard's doctrine of Faith demands from the summit of consciousness. The *credo quia absurdum* is translated into the *amo quia absurdum*. Thus Kierkegaard admonishes the loving person to maintain faith in a once beloved person, even if this faith has lost any rational justification. He ought to believe in the person in spite of any psychological experience which is taboo, according to Kierkegaard, as being "secular." Here, the transformation of love into mere inwardness is striking. This Christian love cannot be disappointed, because it is practiced for the sake of God's command to Love. The rigorousness of the love advocated by Kierkegaard partially devaluates the beloved person. There is a line of Goethe: *Wenn ich dich liebe, was geht's dich an*—if I love you, what concern is it of yours? Kierkegaard would certainly have rejected this dictum as "aesthetic": one may say that it is the implicit theme of the *Tagebuch des Verführers* (Diary of the Seducer). This "erotic immediacy," however, reproduces itself, as it were, in Kierkegaard's religious doctrine of love. It is of no concern, to the Christian beloved one, whether or not he is loved. He has no power over this love. Incidentally, the reproduction of Kierkegaard's "aesthetic" standpoint in his religious stage, for which this example has been given, recurs throughout his work. It is unnecessary to point out how close this love comes to callousness. Perhaps one may most accurately sum-

marize Kierkegaard's doctrine of love by saying that he demands that love behave towards all men as if they were dead. Indeed, the book culminates in the speech *Wie wir in Liebe Verstorbener gedenken* (How to think with love of those who passed away). There is good reason to regard this speech as one of the most important pieces he ever wrote. I should like to emphasize, even at this point, that the death-like aspect of Kierkegaard's love comprises the best and the worst of his philosophy. The attempt to explain this will be made later.

Theologians will not overlook the close connection of this doctrine of love with the wording of the Gospel and also with certain Christian traditions such as the distinction between Eros and Agape. But nor will they overlook the transformation of these motives, which it is difficult to call anything but demonic. The overstraining of the transcendence of love threatens, at any given moment, to become transformed into the darkest hatred of man. Similarly, the humiliation of the human spirit before God comes close to the naked hybris of the same spirit. By means of its radical inwardness, it is prone to conceive itself as the sole ground of the world. In spite of all the talk of the neighbor, the latter is nothing but the stumbling-block to prove one's own creative omnipotence as one of love. The forces of annihilation are scarcely tamed by this doctrine of love. The relapse into mythology and the lordly demonology of asceticism is enhanced by Kierkegaard's reckless spiritualization of love. He sets out to expel nature with a pitchfork, only to become Nature's prey himself. Let us take Kierkegaard's interpretation of the command "Thou shalt love." In its proper place, this command means the suspension of universal "justice." It "sublates" the concept of moral life as a closed interrelation of guilt and punishment insofar as they are regarded as equivalents which can be exchanged for one another. Christian love takes a stand against the mythological notion of destiny as one of an infinite relationship of guilt. It protests against the justice—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth—in the name of Grace. The Christian "Thou shalt love" puts a stop to the mythical law of atonement. Kierkegaard, too, attacks the principle of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." But he hardly ever mentions the idea of grace. He "mythifies" the "Thou shalt love" itself. I have previously stated that it means, in its Christian sense, the barrier against the universal relationship of atonement. Kierkegaard does not understand it as such a barrier. He makes it dialectical in itself. The Hegelian in Kierkegaard dwells on the contradiction of the "Thou shalt" of the command and its content: love cannot be commanded.

This very impossibility becomes to him the core of the command. "Thou shalt love" just because the "Shalt" cannot be applied to love. This is the absurd, the wreckage of the finite by the infinite which Kierkegaard hypostatizes. The command to love is commanded because of its impossibility. This, however, amounts to nothing less than the annihilation of love and the installment of sinister domination. The command to love degenerates into a mythical taboo against preference and natural love. The protest of love against law is dropped. Love itself becomes a matter of mere law, even if it may be cloaked as the law of God. Kierkegaard's super-Christianity tilts over into paganism.

By so doing, Kierkegaard's doctrine of love offers itself to the smuggest sort of criticism. It is one single provocation, folly in reality and scandal. As far as my knowledge of the literature goes, only Christoph Schrempf has dealt with the doctrine of love in detail. As a matter of fact, he honorably stumbles at every stone Kierkegaard throws in his way. He objects to Kierkegaard on the ground that he neglects the preceding internal relationship between two persons, which he regards the necessary condition of love. He further objects in that love cannot be commanded, whereas this very impossibility makes the paradoxical center or perhaps the blind spot in Kierkegaard's doctrine. Opposing Kierkegaard, he defends preference as something beautiful; he attacks the theory of self-denial, maintaining that no lover ever denies himself but just "realizes" himself in love. At this point, I do not wish to judge the truth or falsity of this criticism. The points made by Schrempf are necessary consequences of that demonic "mythification" of Christianity which I have tried to make clear. It is senseless to discuss the theses on the basis of common sense since, according to Kierkegaard, they presuppose the suspension of common sense. But I would go beyond that. In a way, Schrempf's objections are too cursory. Closer examination shows that Kierkegaard's rigorousness which Schrempf naively takes for granted is not quite rigorous. One might almost say: that it is not rigorous enough. Kierkegaard's doctrine of love remains totally abstract. Of course, he repeatedly gives examples such as that of the obedient child. But he always remains on the level of the metaphorical, of illustrations from the treasure of his autobiographical experience, such as the motive of the "poet," or his relation to Regina Olsen. And he never goes into any real, non-symbolical, non-metaphorical case of human love in order to apply his doctrine to it. On the other hand, he always insists on the "practice of real life." His failure to reach this practice by his concepts, and the unyielding abstractness of

his doctrine, are symptoms that it is not quite as substantial as it pretends to be. Hence Schrempf's objections bear so little fruit, and it is therefore important critically to analyze the actual presuppositions of Kierkegaard's doctrine. Then I shall try to show the critical elements of Kierkegaard's rigorousness which goes far beyond the limits of that narrowness which it deliberately exhibits.

The main presupposition is the category of the neighbor and the historical changes it has undergone. Let us discuss this more closely. Kierkegaard asks: who is man's neighbor? He answers, according to his idea of absolute inwardness: "The neighbor, strictly speaking, is the reduplication of one's own ego. It is what philosophers would call 'the otherness,' that is, where the selfish element in one's love for oneself is to be revealed. As far as the abstract idea is concerned, the neighbor must not even be here" (23).[1]) The abstractness of the neighbor, which has been mentioned earlier, is explicitly acknowledged by Kierkegaard. He even makes it a postulate, as an expression of the equality of men in the eyes of God: "The neighbor is everybody . . . He is your neighbor by being your equal before God, but this equality is due unconditionally to every man, and everybody has it unconditionally" (65). Thus the neighbor is reduced to the general principle of the otherness or of the universal human. Therewith, the individual neighbor, despite Kierkegaard's incessant talk of "that particular individual" (hiin Enkelte, dieser Einzelne) definitely assumes the character of contingency. "When you open the door behind which you have prayed to God and walk out, the first man whom you see is the neighbor whom thou shalt love" (56). The particular reality which I encounter in my neighbor is thus rendered totally accidental. This implies one thing from the very beginning: that I must accept the neighbor whom I happened to meet as something *given* which ought not to be questioned: "To love thy neighbor means to be essentially and unconditionally present to each person according to the particular position in time given to him" (90)—given to him externally, independent of oneself. In other words, Kierkegaard's doctrine of the neighbor presupposes a providence or, as Kierkegaard states, a "governance" which regulates human relationships and gives one a certain person and no other as a neighbor. In one passage, he frankly demands that one should "put oneself in the place where one may be used by governance" (91). This necessarily gives rise to the objection of how one can maintain the concept of the practice of real life as a measuring rod

[1]) The references are to the page numbers in Kierkegaard's *Leben und Walten der Liebe*, Jena 1924.

of the love for the neighbor, if one excludes from this practice the specific being of the world? How is practice possible without the acting person's initiative in the very sphere that Kierkegaard takes for granted as a matter of Providence? It is of particular interest to observe how Kierkegaard surreptitiously raises this objection against himself and how he compromises with it. This happens in the discourse on mercifulness. Here he puts the question to himself of how the love to the neighbor is possible, if the loving person is powerless; that is to say, if this love cannot alter reality given by "Providence." The method he makes use of is exceedingly characteristic. For he is struck by the fact that this possibility of powerless love of the neighbor is actually not thought of in the Gospels. Hence he employs a device hardly compatible with his orthodox dogmatism. He modifies, as it were, biblical parables, in order to make them fit present reality. He tells the story of the Samaritan with the alteration that the Samaritan is incapable of saving the unfortunate man. Or he assumes that the sacrifice of the poor widow, which is supposed to be worth more than that of the rich, has been stolen without her being aware of it. Of course he maintains that her behavior is still that of true love. I should like to emphasize the configuration of the motives at hand. Pure inwardness is made the only criterion of action at the very moment at which the world no longer permits an immediate realization of love. Kierkegaard is unaware of the demonic consequence that his insistence on inwardness actually leaves the world to the devil. For what can loving one's neighbor mean, if one can neither help him nor interfere with a setting of the world which makes such help impossible? Kierkegaard's doctrine of impotent mercifulness brings to the fore the deadlock which the concept of the neighbor necessarily meets today. The neighbor no longer exists. In modern society, the relations of men have been "reified" to such an extent that the neighbor cannot behave spontaneously to the neighbor for longer than an instant. Nor does the mere disposition of love suffice to help the neighbor. Nothing is left to "that particular individual" but to cope with the very presuppositions which Kierkegaard excludes from practice as a product of providence. Kierkegaard denies reification. As a matter of fact the whole personalism of his philosophy aims at this denial, for a thing, "an object is always something dangerous, if one has to move forward. An object, being a fixed point in a finite world, is a barrier and break and therewith a dangerous thing for infinity. For love can become an 'object' to itself only by becoming something finite" (190). In other words, it becomes impossible, if, on the basis of the material presuppositions of their relations, men

have become objects, as is the case in our epoch. One could even go further. The form in which the concept of the neighbor is used by Kierkegaard is a reification itself compared with the Gospels. The neighbor of the Gospels implies fishermen and peasants, herdsmen and publicans, people whom one knows and who have their established locus in a life of simple production which can be realized adequately by immediate experience. One cannot imagine the Gospels taking the step from this concrete, unproblematic neighbor to the abstract, universal idea of neighborhood. Kierkegaard has the abstract concept of man of his own period and substitutes it for the Christian neighbor who belongs to a different society. Hence, he deprives both of their sense. The Christian neighbor loses the concreteness which alone made it possible to behave concretely towards him. Modern man is deprived of the last chance of love by moulding love after the pattern of frugal conditions which are not valid any longer. This contradiction is mastered only by Kierkegaard's stubborn maintenance of the "givenness" of social order. The maintenance is socially conformist and ready to lend its arm to oppression and misanthropy. Kierkegaard demands that one should "find the given or chosen object worthy of one's love" (174). Such a demand is not only impossible to fulfill; by its acceptance of the given, it acknowledges the very same reification of man against which Kierkegaard's doctrine of love is directed. It is evident that Kierkegaard here follows the Lutheran doctrine of absolute obedience to the authority of the State. In the face of Kierkegaard's radical theological subjectivism, however, this spiteful orthodoxy leads to absurd inconsistencies and even to insincerity. The presuppositions of this doctrine of the neighbor and, at the same time, of love itself, are untenable.

A doctrine of love which calls itself practical cannot be severed from social insight. Such an insight is denied to Kierkegaard. Instead of any real criticism of inequality in society, he has a fictitious, merely inward doctrine of equality: "Christianity . . . has deeply and eternally impressed the kinship between man and man. Christianity establishes it by teaching that in Christ each particular individual is equally akin to God and stands in the same relation to God. For Christianity teaches each individual without any difference that he is created by God and redeemed by Christ" (74f.). Sometimes Kierkegaard's way of speaking of the equality of men before God assumes the character of involuntary irony: "The times are gone when only the powerful and noble ones were men and the other people slaves and serfs" (79). The irony cannot escape Kierkegaard's attention. He uses it as a medium of his religious paradox. With some haughti-

ness, he says: "Christianity simply does not enter into such things. It applies eternity and is at once at its goal. It leaves all differences in existence, yet teaches eternal equality" (77). The more liberty and equality are interiorized, the more they are denounced in the external world: "Externally everything, so to speak, remains as it was before. The man is to be the wife's lord and she is to be subservient to him. Within the inwardness, however, everything is changed, changed by this little question to the wife, if she consulted her conscience whether she wants this man as her lord . . . What Christ said of this realm, that it is not of this world, applies to everything Christian. Foolish people have tried foolishly, in the name of Christianity, to make it secularly manifest that the wife is empowered with the same rights as the man. Christian religion never demanded or wished anything of that sort. It has done everything for the woman, if she is ready to content herself in a Christian way with the Christian. If she does not want that, the mean external position she might obtain in the world is nothing but a poor substitute for what she loses" (145). Such theorems bring to the fore what was hinted at earlier, namely, that in a certain sense Kierkegaard's religious rigorousness is not seriously meant and that it is better to analyze its presuppositions than sentimentally to criticize it. Kierkegaard raises the objection against himself which is due in a state of universal injustice: "Is it not a fundamental demand that there should be every possible help for the needy and that, if possible, want itself should be abolished?" (335). Kierkegaard dismisses this question all too easily: "Eternity says however: there is only one danger: the danger that mercifulness is not practiced. Even if every want had disappeared, it must not have necessarily disappeared through mercifulness. In such a case, the misery that no mercifulness has been practiced would be a greater misery than any other secular one" (ibd). The following is symptomatic of the flippancy of a rigorousness which is ready to leave everything in its status quo. Kierkegaard is insatiable in condemning the world, worldliness, and its limited worldly aims. He does not hesitate, however, to qualify his own rigorousness as soon as he speaks, as it were, as a social pedagogue. "Indeed, we do not intend to make an adolescent conceited, and to excite him to condemn the world in a quick, busy way" (202). Kierkegaard's ascetic rigorousness is carried through only abstractly. It is soft-pedaled as soon as it could lead to serious conflicts with the "existing" condemned by Kierkegaard in abstracto. At such a moment, wordliness must not be condemned under any circumstances.

Kierkegaard's doctrine of love keeps itself within the existent.

Its content is oppression: the oppression of the drive which is not to be fulfilled and the oppression of the mind which is not allowed to question. Kierkegaard's love is a love that takes away instead of giving. Such he formulates himself: "Then the woman was taken from the man's flank and given to him as company; for love and community first takes something away from man before giving anything" (161). But, at the same time, this oppression of the individual implies a criticism of what could be called, in Hegelian language, bad individuality. The individual, in his self-assertion and isolation, is visualized as something contingent and even as a mere veneer. The thesis underlying the present study, the thesis which I should like to put forward for discussion, may be expressed as follows: Kierkegaard's misanthropy, the paradoxical callousness of his doctrine of love enables him, like few other writers, to perceive decisive character features of the typical individual of modern society. Even if one goes so far as to admit that Kierkegaard's love is actually demonic hatred, one may well imagine certain situations where hatred contains more of love than the latter's immediate manifestations. All Kierkegaard's gloomy motives have good critical sense as soon as they are interpreted in terms of social critique. Many of his positive assertions gain the concrete significance they otherwise lack as soon as one translates them into concepts of a right society.

Before going into further detail, I should like to comment on an objection which might be raised at this point. One might consider that the critical insight for which I give Kierkegaard credit is as abstract from the reality as his doctrine of the neighbor. It is possible, perhaps, to attribute this critical insight to his general idea of worldliness, instead of to a specific coinage of it for the present situation. This however, would oversimplify matters. The abstract generality of his doctrine of the neighbor is not altogether voluntary. It is due to a position of constraint: to the incompatibility of the Christian command to love in its pure form with present society. Kierkegaard's philosophy, however, aims in all its stages—even in the aesthetic one—at the "instant," which is supposed to be the paradoxical unity of the historical and the eternal. It is probably uncertain whether Kierkegaard was ever capable of "filling out" this paradox or whether it merely remained a program. This much, however, is certain: as a critic, he actually grasped the instant, that is to say, his own historical situation. It is highly significant that his polemic chef d'oeuvre bears the title *Der Augenblick* (The Instant). Kierkegaard was Hegelian enough to have a clean-cut idea of history. He is not satisfied by simply contrasting the eternal with an abstract

contemporariness which, at any given moment, is supposedly equally far and near to the eternal. He conceives history to be related to Christianity. His concept of this relation, however, turns the Hegelian idea of the self-realization of the world-spirit upside down. To him the history of Christianity is, roughly speaking, the history of an apostasy from Christianity. He contrasts the conviction of the loss of all human substance to the current conviction of progress, or rather, he conceives progress itself as the history of advancing decay. It is at this point that critics of modern culture such as Karl Kraus followed Kierkegaard most closely. Kierkegaard regards the criticism of progress and civilization: as the criticism of the reification of man. He belongs to the very few thinkers of his epoch (apart from him I know only Edgar Allan Poe and Baudelaire) who were aware of the truly chthonian changes undergone by men, as it were, anthropologically, at the beginning of the modern industrial age: by human behavior and the total setting of human experience. It is this awareness which invests Kierkegaard's critical motives with their genuine earnestness and dignity. His *Works of Love* contains an extraordinary testimony to that awareness. For here Kierkegaard gives an account of a tendency in today's mass society which, during his time, must have been very latent: the substitution of spontaneous thinking by "reflectory" adaptation taking place in connection with modern forms of mass information. Kierkegaard's hatred of the mass, however conservatively it styles itself, contains something of an inkling of the mutilation of men by the very mechanisms of domination which actually change men into a mass. "It is as if the time of thinkers had gone" (377). The following quotation most clearly shows Kierkegaard's realization of the abolition of thinking by information and "conditioned reflexes": "All communication is supposed to assume the comfortable tone of the easy pamphlet or to be supported by falsehood after falsehood. Indeed, it is as if, in the last instance, every communication ought to be manipulated in such a way as to make it possible to promulgate it in an hour's time at a public meeting. Half an hour is spent in noisy expressions of applause and opposition, and during the other half hour one is so dizzy that one is incapable of collecting one's own thoughts" (ibd). Kierkegaard, in speaking of the mass meetings of the 1848 period, seems to have heard those loudspeakers which filled the Berlin Sportspalast one hundred years later.

To return to the social aspect of Kierkegaard's doctrine of love, let me give the following examples. Kierkegaard, to be certain, does not touch on secular injustice and inequality. But the misanthrop

Kierkegaard has a very sharp eye for discovering them—the eye of love, one should say. He suspects, for example, that the doctrine of civic equality has an ideological element. He is familiar with the fact that members of different classes who behave towards each other in the name of Christianity as if they were nothing but men, do so, generally, only in order to maintain the fiction of civic equality and thus better to reserve civic inequality. Kierkegaard is full of mockery for what he calls "welfare"—a mockery which easily can be understood as plainly reactionary. But by denouncing the worldly happiness which is aimed at through welfare as something poor compared with eternity, he does not merely mean a postponement ad Kalendas Graecas. He knows something of the wretchedness of that very happiness welfare provides to men. This becomes particularly evident in a demand that Kierkegaard raises again and again: "In order to get into a relation with the Christian, one must first become sober" (61). Of course, the demand of soberness first takes something away: the happiness gained through drunken ecstasy. But does not this happiness only cheat us of another happiness which is absolutely denied to us in the world as it is? Kierkegaard's demand for sobriety is not that of the Philistine. It attacks the shams of mere individuality, the making absolute of accidental "differences," and all the false happiness connected with them. Behind this sobriety lies the profound knowledge that in the last analysis the differences between men are not decisive. For all the features of individualization and specification owe their very existence to the universal injustice which makes this man thus and not otherwise—whereas he could be different.

The significance of "could be different" is the measure of the "taking away" of Kierkegaard's love. The counter-concept that he contrasts to the worldly which he intends taking away is that of possibility. The possibility, according to Kierkegaard, is to be maintained against mere existence. He means by that the paradox Eternal, the Christian *absurdum*. But it is directed at the same time against the typical character I mentioned previously: the character which is no longer capable of the experience of possibility. The theory of possibility is, first of all, directed against knowledge, particularly against empirical knowledge. This, however, is not to be taken as "anti-intellectual." The knowledge against which Kierkegaard struggles is the knowledge of the man who is positive as regards what has taken place since the beginning of the world and what will take place for all the future. It is the knowledge of mere after-construction, the principle of which excludes anything radically new. This is the point attacked by Kierkegaard's criticism of psychology and,

as one would call it today, of positivism. To him, psychology is distrust of the possibility. He formulates his attitude towards it as follows: "What is the enticing secret of distrust? It is an abuse of knowledge: by a resolute ergo, that one transforms knowledge[1]) into faith. As if this ergo were nothing! As if it ought not to be noticed at all, for everyone has the same knowledge and necessarily draws the same conclusion from it, as if it were eternally certain and settled that preexisting knowledge necessarily determines the act of inference" (234). Against this knowledge there is possibility which he interprets as hope. Hope is, according to Kierkegaard, the "sense for the possibility" (257). "But the hope that remained did so only with the loving one" (276). "The man who knows mankind, who knows its past and future, has a secret affinity to Evil. To believe nothing at all is the very border where the belief in evil begins. For the good is the object of the belief and therefore whoever believes nothing is ready to believe the bad" (241). Kierkegaard goes even beyond that. Fundamentally (and this reveals an Utopian tendency aided even by his conservatism which denies it) he cannot even imagine that one could breathe for one moment without the consciousness of possibility, that is to say, without hope of the transfiguration of the world. "Truly, anyone who does not wish to understand that man's entire life-time is the time of hope, is in despair" (259). The worldliness that Kierkegaard wants to "remove" is actually the stage of despair. Kierkegaard has introduced the concept of the existential seriousness into philosophy. In the name of hope, he becomes the foe of seriousness itself, of the absorption by practical aims which is not suspended by the thought of what is possible. The following passage could very well be used against Kierkegaard's present successors, the German existential philosophers, particularly against Heidegger. Nothing serves to better differentiate between Kierkegaard and his heirs than his turning against "seriousness." "Alas, how often reconciliation has failed, because one handled the matter too seriously and also because one did not learn from God the art (which one must learn from God) of achieving something with deep inner seriousness and yet as easily and playfully as truth permits. Never believe that seriousness is peevishness; never believe that the distorted face which makes you sick is seriousness. No one can know seriousness unless he has learnt from seriousness that one can be too serious" (348f). The seriousness rejected by Kierkegaard is the bourgeois seriousness of business and competition: "They judge that such a man"—that is, one who hopes—"is not serious. Making money, however, is serious. To

[1]) in the sense of past experience, TWA.

make a great deal of money, even through the slave-trade, is serious. To promulgate some truth, if one makes ample money by doing so, (since this and not the truth matters): is serious" (329). Kierkegaard's doctrine of hope protests against the seriousness of a mere reproduction of life which mutilates man. It protests against a world which is determined by barter and gives nothing without an equivalent.

Kierkegaard's view of our love for the dead derives from this protest. I have already mentioned that it is both the worst and the best part of his doctrine of love. Perhaps an explanation can now be attempted. The bad side is obvious: love for the dead is the one which most rigidly excludes the reciprocity of love that necessarily takes the beloved one as living himself. Thus it appears to be the reified and fetish love kat'exochen. But, at the same time, it is love absolutely void of any barter, of any "requital," and, therefore, the only unmutilated love permitted by our society. The paradox that the only true love is love for the dead is the perfect expression of our situation. Let me try to interpret the real experience behind Kierkegaard's theology of love for the dead in the words of a secular philosopher of our own time: "On the death bed, when death is certainty, the rich and the poor are alike in many regards. For with death a man loses his 'relationships': he becomes nothing. The proudest kings of France had to have this experience. The enlightened and humane physician who tries to help the lonely dying man in the hour of his last ordeal, not for the sake of economic or technical interest but out of pity—this physician represents the citizen of a future society. His situation is the present image of a true humanity." What Kierkegaard says of God as the last one who remains with the dying man is in deepest accordance with the "present image" of a true humanity, however little Kierkegaard might have interpreted his idea of the Eternal as such an image.

I should like to conclude with a selection of passages from that sermon *Wie wir in Liebe Verstorbener gedenken* (How to think in love of those who passed away). After the above remarks, they hardly need any interpretation. Kierkegaard calls death the "powerful thinker who does not only think through any sense illusion down to the bottom, but actually thinks to the bottom" (353). This reminds one of that poem of Baudelaire's which invokes Death as *vieux capitaine*. The relation to the dead is characterized as one free of aims: "Truly, if you thoroughly wish to ascertain, how much love is in you or in another person: watch only the behavior to a dead one . . . For the dead man is cunning. He has really drawn himself

totally out of any entanglements. He has not the slightest influence which could aid or hinder his opposite neighbor, the loving one . . . That we think lovingly of those who passed away is a deed of truly unselfish love" (355f). Kierkegaard describes mourning as follows: "We must not disturb the dead by wailing and crying. We must treat a dead person as a sleeper whom we do not dare to awaken, because we hope he will awake voluntarily . . . No, we ought to think of him who passed away, we ought to weep softly but weep for a long, long time" (356). Kierkegaard realizes the enigmatic interweaving of death and childhood: "It is true that he does not cause any troubles, as the child sometimes does. He is not the cause of any sleepless nights, at least not by the troubles he causes. For, oddly enough, the good child causes no sleepless nights; the better the dead man was, however, the more sleepless nights he causes" (358f). To Kierkegaard's contemplation, even death assumes the expression of paradox. The thesis is: Yes, the loving memory must . . . defend itself against reality, lest reality should become too powerful by ever new impressions and blot out the memory. It also has to struggle against time. In brief, it must not allow itself to be induced to forget and must fight for the liberty of maintaining memory in love. . . . Certainly, no one is as helpless as the dead man" (362f). Now the opposite: "For a dead man is very strong though he does not seem so. It is his strength that does not change. And the dead man is very proud. Did you not notice that the proud man tries to show nothing to him whom he holds in most profound contempt; that he does everything to appear absolutely unchanged as if nothing had happened, just in order the more deeply to let down the one held in contempt?" (365). And, finally, the lofty bridge between Kierkegaard's criticism of seriousness and the love for those who have died: "If it would not sound so merry (as it can sound only to him who does not know what seriousness is) I should say one could put this inscription over the door of the cemetery: 'Here no one is urged' or: 'We do not urge anybody.' And yet I shall say so and shall firmly stick to what I have said. For I have thought so much about death that I know well: no one can talk seriously about death who is incapable of utilizing the cunning lying in death, the whole deep-thinking roguishness of death —the roguishness to resurrection. The seriousness of death is not the seriousness of the eternal. To the seriousness of death belongs this particular awakening, this deep-thinking jesting overtone. Of course, apart from the thought of eternity, it is often an empty, often cheeky jest, but in connection with the thought of eternity, it is what it ought to be; and then, indeed, something radically different from that in-

sipid seriousness. The latter is least of all capable of conceiving and maintaining something of the tension and bearing of the thought of death" (361). The hope that Kierkegaard puts against the "seriousness of the eternal" is nothing but the hope of the reality of redemption.