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Romantic Perception

A Kierkegaardian Re-formation of the Appearances via
Existential Arrest Towards Conscious Imaginative Relation

by

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in Theology.

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
Saint John's University
Collegeville, Minnesota

March 4th, 1996

This Paper was written under the direction of

William J Cahoy

Signature of Director

Professor William Cahoy

Form of Disclosure

Romantic Perception


A Kierkegaardian Re-formation of the Appearances via Existential Arrest Towards Conscious Imaginative Relation

Description:

The focus of this paper is to attempt to analyze how, in Kierkegaard's paradigm of what constitutes "a self", the representations of the phenomena change in the eyes of the perceiver from a state of "no self" - lacking this consciousness and active engagement of spirit-, to the moment of existential arrest, to a state of being "a self" - new and ever-growing consciousness as a result of this arrest. The primary source for this endeavour is Kierkegaard's text, The Concept of Anxiety. Methodology for this endeavour will involve explication of the text itself with nuances from other post-enlightenment literature - ie: authors such as Dostoevsky, Kafka, and Camus. Part one will address a state of existence which Kierkegaard believes is a state lacking "a self," focusing on the unconscious crisis of no self, and the resultant effect this has on one's imaging of the world - a brief look at idolatry. Part two will focus primarily on that which ultimately brings on an existential arrest: anxiety - the challenge of death, imminent and living. Finally, part three will deal with "self" established through active consciousness, and how it enables one to *re-form* the appearances via dialectical tension within the awesome creative power of responsibility and relation - the freedom to act upon, and to suffer, the phenomena.

Purpose of Disclosure: For others to read or consult but not for publication or quotation.

Party or class of parties to whom the disclosure may be made:
No restrictions

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Wolke", is written over a horizontal dashed line. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning.

March 4th, 1996

Introduction

By way of introduction, it seems necessary to engage in a defining of terms as they are used in the rather lengthy title of this paper. The term "Romantic" adhered to Kierkegaard is precisely an attempt to show how Kierkegaard's paradigm of what constitutes a "self" brings one to the same way of perceiving and engaging reality as the Romantics: conscious imaginative relation.¹ The phrase "Re-formation of the Appearances" qualifies this relation. What is implied here is not that "objects" themselves change- ie: molecular structure- rather, that the perceiver shifts one's central position of perception. That is, one sees the same appearances differently.² The phrase, "Via Existential Arrest" bespeaks the catalyst which is responsible for this shift in perception. More precisely, in

¹ Romantics, as used here, refers primarily to a world view, not specific authors and poets, that the Romantics adhered to in opposition to major trends of Cartesianism born of the Enlightenment. It is the world view that sees the perceiver as an integral part of what is perceived - connected and participating in the phenomena, as opposed to a disposition of subject/object split, entertaining the positivistic modernist perspective of "absolute objectivity." More on this later.

² The terms "phenomena" and "appearances" are used interchangeably in this paper. It is well to note, however, that some schools of thought hold these to be different. The main difference is the view that phenomena per se involve that act of perception, and is therefore more an activity. For instance, one may ask if a rainbow exists without the perceiver; strictly speaking, it is not a phenomenon if there is no perceiver. In essence, this is the topic being discussed in this paper - holding that both appearances and phenomena entail, to one degree or another, the activity of imaginative relation.

Kierkegaardian terms, the existential arrest is that actual event of heightened consciousness of self, self-transcendence.³ If the existential arrest is the event that initiates a disposition towards re-formation of the appearances, what is the actual means to this event? This is where the primary Kierkegaardian text for this paper comes into play: The Concept of Anxiety.

For Kierkegaard anxiety is the inevitable concomitant of the reality of freedom brought on by one's consciousness of self as both infinitude and finitude, possibility and necessity. As Reidar Thomte writes in the introduction to The Concept of Anxiety:

Man stands at the juncture of nature and spirit; he is involved both in freedom and necessity; he is both limited and limitless. 'Anxiety is the inevitable concomitant of freedom and finiteness in which man is involved...It is the inevitable spiritual state of man, standing in the paradoxical situation of freedom and finiteness.' Anxiety is the permanent internal preconditioning of sin as well as of creativity. (xvii)⁴

Anxiety can lead one to become a self by becoming a synthesis, or an active agent, that is in constant interplay between infinitude and finitude. This activity, this third element, is what

³ The term "event" is chosen carefully, for Kierkegaard views the "moment" as a process itself. In fact, for Kierkegaard, within the present moment eternity is to be found.

⁴ The present writer is sensitive to the gender exclusive language used in this literature. Though the citations cannot be altered, the writer will use inclusive language.

Kierkegaard calls "spirit." It is, then, the synthesis of these two elements that constitutes a "self." "Man is a synthesis of the psychical and the physical; however, a synthesis is unthinkable if the two are not united in a third. This third is spirit" (Kierkegaard 43).

As a "self", anxiety will lead one to either a position of faith, or a position of despair.⁵ Notwithstanding, a position of despair can be closer to a position of faith than a "non-self", for the one in despair is conscious of it, and therefore a "self." However, due to the limited scope of this paper, the focus will be primarily on the means to a position of faith, not despair.

The last phrase of the title, "Towards Conscious Imaginative Relation," bespeaks how the self can creatively engage the act of perceiving and literally transform the appearances via imagination. Imagination awakens infinitude, infuses hope, and transforms the appearances for the perceiver. Being self is to be empowered by the co-creativity of imagination to have a powerfully transformative impact on the appearances. Kierkegaard's paradigm cautions, however, that the self is still partially constituted by necessity and finitude - by its limits.

⁵ For Kierkegaard, there are two kinds of despair - defiance and weakness -, and both are the opposite of faith.

Since the self is a synthesis, it is not only spirit and infinitude, and therefore one's necessity bears down on the self with certain parameters. For instance, although a paralyzed child can actively engage the possibility of being a ballerina, the child's necessity would not allow it. Nonetheless, Kierkegaard would argue that no one is without possibility, no matter how dreadful the necessity of their self. If one's necessity is not used as an invincible barrier, rather, as a challenge to growth, therefore, the way the appearances are perceived and engaged is still fluid and subject to the perceiver. Northrop Frye writes, "the conscious subject is not really perceiving until it recognizes itself as part of what it perceives"(23).⁶ For Frye, the world that we image is more real than the one we stare at. It is in this spirit that this exploration is undertaken.

One other introductory qualifier: the main title, "Romantic Perception," is stated thus vis á vis modernity. The impact that "the Enlightenment" has had on modern western civilization cannot be over-estimated in this study - particularly in the sciences. The deep trends of a Cartesian Subject-Object-split way of perceiving the appearances - claiming to be immune to

⁶ In the extreme, one can make one's own life heaven or hell. That is, since one is actually part of what one perceives, one can inject positive or negative images, and thus, change the appearances.

participation - has penetrated every area of human life in the past three centuries; creating major shifts in epistemology and the notion of "absolute objectivity" - most evident in "positivism." Lurking behind the crevasses of "absolute objectivity" is the problem of idolatry. Obviously, idolatry was not born of the Enlightenment. However, to consciously sever the subject (self), though never entirely possible, from the perceived "object" is to fixate the dynamism of the ever-changing dialectic of subject-object relation - this is to engage in idolatry consciously. Post-Enlightenment idolatry pushes its roots much deeper than pre-Enlightenment, for it is engaged consciously.⁷ Idolatry will be treated briefly in this paper. However, unable to deal with these mammoth issues in this study, let it suffice to say that this paper is advocating a post-critical reclaiming of conscious imaginative participation with the phenomena. Owen Barfield called this "Final Participation," yet others have named it "Second Naivete." Whatever the label, inherent behind all this is the acceptance that, as post-

⁷ It is well to note here that the Enlightenment - with this subject-object split - has given birth to much wealth in human history. For instance, medicine. The ability to treat the body less mythically, and with more objectivity, had resulted in great advances in medical treatment. Capitalism, the Scientific and Industrial revolution, etc. are also positive and unprecedented advancements not unrelated to this new (Cartesian) way of perceiving the phenomena. The point is, that though greater goods have resulted, so too greater evils. An idolatry with depths unprecedented prior to the Enlightenment.

enlightenment humanity, it is impossible to re-capture a pre-conscious romantic participation. Therefore, the only way into a participating relational mode of perception, in modern day, is consciously.⁸ Now to the deliberation at hand.

The focus of this paper is to attempt to analyze how, in Kierkegaard's paradigm of what constitutes "a self", the representations of the phenomena change in the eyes of the perceiver from a state of "no self" - lacking this consciousness and active engagement of spirit-, to the moment of existential arrest, to a state of being "a self" - new and ever-growing consciousness as a result of this arrest. The primary source for this endeavour is Kierkegaard's text, The Concept of Anxiety. Methodology for this endeavour will involve explication of the text itself with nuances from other post-enlightenment literature - ie: authors such as Dostoevsky, Kafka, and Camus. Part one will address a state of existence which Kierkegaard believes is a state lacking "a self," focusing on the unconscious crisis of no

⁸ To understand the state of the post-modern, take the analogy of a theatrical production. Pre-modernity - pre-enlightenment - was a disposition that could enjoy a theatrical production without knowing all the mechanics used backstage. Modernity unveiled the production, taking away the back curtain exposing all the mechanical equipment, production crew, scaffolding, etc., working behind the scene to create this pseudo-reality for the audience. Finally, post-modernity is the ability to replace the back curtain, aware of all the mechanics at play, and consciously re-enter the romantic, second-naive perception that makes the reality of the theatre a delight once again.

self, and the resultant effect this has on one's imaging of the world - a brief look at idolatry. Part two will focus primarily on that which ultimately brings on an existential arrest: anxiety - the challenge of death, imminent and living. Finally, part three will deal with "self" established through active consciousness, and how it enables one to *re-form* the appearances via dialectical tension within the awesome creative power of responsibility and relation - the freedom to act upon, and to suffer, the phenomena.

PART I

A State Lacking Conscious Relation: "No Self"

The biggest danger, that of losing self, can pass off in the world as quietly as if it were nothing; every other loss, an arm, a leg, five dollars, a wife, etc. is bound to be noticed. (Kierkegaard pp 62-63)

Does a person gain anything if he wins the whole world but loses his life? (Mark 8:36)

Søren Kierkegaard, writing in his assumed pseudonym Anti-Climacus in Sickness unto Death, believes that loss of self, or not ever being a self at all, is the greatest danger within the human condition. From this viewpoint, in order to be a self one must be conscious that one exists. If, as Northrop Frye and the Romantics claim, the world is imaged by the perceiver via

imagination, then, the perceiver must first exist consciously, and, moreover, must engage their capacity to image and relate to the world. Consequently, this active relative consciousness assumes and engages the capacity to relate. In existential thought, one might say there is no true life without knowing you are alive, and actively engaging this consciousness. In this way, the state of "no self" lacks the third element of what constitutes a self: spirit (that which makes life more than unconscious and finite existence). "It [spiritlessness] worships sometimes a dunce and sometimes a hero. But nothing impresses it more than a charlatan. However, one fetish is soon replaced by another" (Kierkegaard 199). Kierkegaard qualifies his description of this state:

The lostness of spiritlessness, as well as security, consists in its understanding nothing spiritually and comprehending nothing as a task, even if it is able to fumble after everything with its limp clamminess.(95)

Most disturbing for Kierkegaard, however, is that for him the state of spiritlessness, is a state without anxiety. "In spiritlessness there is no anxiety, because it is too happy, too content, and too spiritless for that" (95). Lack of spirit, lack of active consciousness, therefore, results in fixed images (idolatry), loss of relation, and loss of self (or lack of self); "it is the perfect idol worshipper" (95). How, precisely, is

this idolatry? A brief interjectory on idolatry may be appropriate and helpful here.

"Idolatry begins in the substitution (usually unconscious, but always at least partly so - for full consciousness of idolatry ends it) of some experienced form of God's presence for the presence itself" (Ridd 8).

This substitution means that the human component in the experience comes to dominate the transcendent: the idolater remembers the God he has known, not YHWH ("I will be who I will be"). Emphasis is thrown on the human end of the relation. The living God is lost in the deadened memory - and may eventually degenerate into an 'ism' or a principle or an entity. The advantage of an idol is that it can be placed, controlled and appealed to by the egocentric self (as the Biblical God cannot be). There is little wonder in this, for it is, increasingly, the self objectified... Moreover, it looks like "the real thing": it bears the marks of its origin in the biblical God, transcendent, free, loving; yet without the draw-backs of uncertainty with regard to Him, and judgment from Him upon the very idols in which He is imaged. It gains in superficial plausibility what it loses in fundamental reality. It makes for believers who belong-again terribly-to themselves.⁹ (Ridd 8)

⁹ Idolatry is not just something ancient. The modern Christian periodically (several times a day - habitually) recognizes that the world as he is inclined to construe it is not reality itself but a constellation of images ordered somewhat egocentrically in the course of his well-meaning but inevitably distorted stewardship. He calls this distortion sin. The remembrance that "the earth is the LORD's" constitutes a critique of his idolatry, a renewal of his capacity to let God be God, and a refurbishing of the world in a new realism: he can let it alone, now, in his mind - desist from having to dominate it. Mentally and physically he can let it be as perhaps he would say) "itself"; though what he then perceives is never "itself" in a crude sense, but a new image that arises out of his renewed relation with God and therefore with all "things." But the world is shining and lovely and real when this happens (Ridd 6).

Idolatry - fixed images - for Kierkegaard, then, is one of the major problems with a state lacking "self" - a state lacking active consciousness. Fixed images not only effects one's relationship with YHWH, but with all phenomena. "The reason why idolatry is dangerous is that... we may collapse into the preconscious state from which we have been trying to emerge" (Frye 27). When one is unaware of their creative and responsible capacity to image the world, the world becomes fixed. When one abandons their creative relational powers, one abandons the world to frozen objectification. The flow of life between the perceiver and the perceived ceases. Idolatry is blindness in the sense that one's way of seeing is fixed and all that is perceived must conform to this assumed rigid lens, illusion.

In a similar way, loss of an engaged capacity to relate with the phenomena is another major defect of a "no self." The lure of sleepy, complacent, and fixed images is very strong for it requires no effort to relate. Relation requires creative energy, it requires spirit; a state of rejected relation does not. Hence, a fixed, non-fluid perception is very comfortable and non-threatening. At times in history, for instance, this has been the indictment to the Catholic Church, that through occasional excessive mediatorship, she has undermined the individual's capacity and desire to relate, as Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor,

in The Brothers Karamazov, argues:

Behold what Thou didst further. And all again in the name of freedom! I tell Thee that man [sic] is tormented by no greater anxiety than to find someone [church] quickly to whom he can hand over that gift of freedom with which the ill fated creature is born" (Dostoevsky 235).

The reformation protested that the Catholic Church had in certain instances in its history - eg: indulgences - far too willingly, and conveniently, taken away the responsibility of her members to relate, and create, the world; a burden and freedom beyond the masses, argues the Grand Inquisitor. This is one of the fundamental reasons for the ecclesiastical re-formation. As John S. Dunne, in A Search for God in Time and Memory, calls humankind to a relation modelled by Christ, namely one with no mediator. "Modern men [sic] have no mediators. For the mediator himself has no mediator- Christ's own relationship to God was an unmediated one" (75). "Who do you say I am" (Mark 8:29b). The mediation that is called for in relation to God is love and faith, the Holy Spirit. What is required is a consciousness of the necessity of relation and a willingness to embrace the responsibility of this relation. For Kierkegaard this requires "a self." Does a "non-self", then, end in nothingness?

For Kierkegaard, not to be "a self" is the greatest of tragedies, and even worse that it goes unnoticed. Some writers, like Franz Kafka, attempt to depict this great tragedy, as is

well exemplified in the character K., in Franz Kafka's The Castle. This is the story of a man relentlessly embarked on a futile pursuit to reach the castle, unsuccessful due to his lack of consciousness of self, lack of authenticity. That is, he was too fragmented to reach that which he desired, wholeness; and was unaware of it. To K., "the castle hill was hidden, veiled in mist and darkness" (Kafka 3). Yet, "on the whole this distant prospect of the castle satisfied K.'s expectations [fragmented]" (Kafka 11). One might say that every time K. came closer to experiencing an existential arrest (a heightened consciousness of self), it threatened him, "as if to threaten him with the fulfilment of his vague desire" (Kafka 21). Similarly, as the young rich man in Matthew's gospel was threatened by the fulfilment of his vague desire: eternal life.

Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; then come and follow me." When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he was very rich. (Matt 19:21-22)

In light of this, one may ask what it is, ultimately, that brings on an existential arrest and thus enables one to become a "self" and to experience the fulfilment of one's vague desires - to transcend spiritlessness. In other words, what is the catalyst, for Kierkegaard, which brings on this arrest, and consequently, a

new consciousness? Moreover, how does this existential arrest transform the representations?

PART II

A Catalyst to Existential Arrest: Anxiety of Death

"Even though there is no anxiety in spiritlessness, because it is excluded as spirit, anxiety is nevertheless present, except it is waiting" (Kierkegaard 96). Here, Kierkegaard is speaking from the perspective of ~~a~~ one with spirit. As he qualifies, "Viewed from the standpoint of spirit, anxiety is also present in spiritlessness, but hidden and disguised" (96). Nonetheless, it is still necessary to experience anxiety to become a self.

Kierkegaard writes:

I will say that this is an adventure that every human being must go through - to learn to be anxious in order that he may not perish either by never having been in anxiety or by succumbing in anxiety. (Kierkegaard 155)

If anxiety lies dormant in one who is spiritless, and is necessary to become a self, the question become, "how can it be awakened?"

One catalyst to existential arrest is death - experienced in different manifestations:

When death appears in its true form as the lean and dismal

reaper, one does not look at it without terror; however, when it appears disguised in order to mock the men who fancy they can mock death, when the observer sees that the unknown figure who captivates all by his courtesy and causes all to exult in the wild gaiety of desires is death, then he is seized by a profound terror. (Kierkegaard 96)

The anxiety of the presence of death in the world manifests itself in three pre-eminent existential experiences: **imminent death**, (the personal experience of knowing the actual moment before death); **the threat of death**, (the experience of knowing death is potentially very close, though not inevitable); **living death**, (the personal experience of the total meaninglessness and futility of existence). As evident from Kierkegaard, and the cross-section of literature cited below, it can be said that the reality of death has possibly been the single most effective catalyst to the awakening of anxiety, engagement of spirit, dawning of consciousness, and, consequently the re-formation of the appearances.

Anxiety of Imminent Death

Death remains as that which, itself unexplained, explains that the whole of life was a game that came to an end, ...And so there is also a muteness of annihilation found in the fact that the whole was merely a children's game, and now the game is over. (Kierkegaard 93)

Not the real thing. Everything you lived by and still live

by is a lie, a deception that blinds you from the reality of life and death... the awareness of inevitable, imminent destruction. (Tolstoy pp 128-129)

Depicting in dramatic form the same experience Kierkegaard writes about above, Leo Tolstoy has Ivan Ilyich, in The Death of Ivan Ilyich, struggle through the final moments of life - Ivan comes to a new consciousness of the deception of his life. The final moments of life, as he knows it, force him to this realization - an existential arrest. Only after awakened anxiety of the realization of the falsity of their lives, the lack of authentic self, does a re-formation of the appearances begin. "Yes, all of it was simply *not the real thing*. But no matter. I can still make it *the real thing* - I can" (Tolstoy 132). Just before his death he realizes that what he feared so greatly was not death, but life. Consequently, because of this new consciousness resulting from his existential arrest, Ivan can embrace life, and, thus, embrace a re-formed perception of death. "And death? Where is it? ... Instead of death there was light. 'So that's it!' he exclaimed. 'What bliss!'" (Tolstoy 133). Could this be the shift in perception that Luke depicts Jesus as recognizing in the criminal hanging on the cross next to Jesus? "Jesus said to the dying criminal, 'I promise you that today you will be in Paradise with me'" (Luke 23:43).

Anxiety of the Threat of Death

And this is the moment of culmination, the moment when he is greatest, not the moment when the sight of his piety is like the festivity of a special holiday, but when by himself he sinks before himself in the depth of sin-consciousness. (Kierkegaard 110)

The anxiety of the sheer threat of literal death can also bring a sudden heightened self-consciousness, the anxiety towards existential arrest. For example, in Albert Camus' The Plague, several of the characters of the novel slowly realize that the plague is among them. It is this very threat of death that stirs the people of Oran from their complacent sleep of habitual "life", "a matter of lucidly recognizing what has to be recognized" (Camus 37).¹⁰ As Kierkegaard would put it, "Anxiety takes swift action, instantly plays the trump card of infinity, of the category, and the individual cannot take the trick" (160). The threat of physical death, however, leads to a much more profound and frightening experience of anxiety towards existential arrest, the moment of living death.

Anxiety of Living Death

¹⁰ In truth, the anxiety of death is also the anxiety of life itself. This will be qualified in the following section.

The moment signifies the present as that which has no past and no future, and precisely in this lies the imperfection of the sensuous life. The eternal also signifies the present as that which has no past and no future, and this is the perfection of the eternal. (Kierkegaard 87)¹¹

It is to the existential arrest of the eternal present that Kierkegaard hopes anxiety will lead one.¹² In a very similar way, as Albert Camus writes in The Myth of Sisyphus, the most profoundly acute, yet evasive, catalyst to the experience of existential arrest is the anxiety of living death, (the personal experience of total meaninglessness and futility of eternal existence). "The absurd man [sic], when he contemplates his torment, silences all the idols" (Camus 123). Camus claims, in The Myth of Sisyphus, in order for this existential arrest to occur and the appearances to be re-formed, "the mind must meet the night" (65). "There is no sun without shadow, and it is

¹¹ For Kierkegaard "the present is the eternal, or rather, the eternal is the present, and the present is full" (86). "The present, however, is not a concept of time, except precisely as something infinitely countless, which again is infinitely vanishing. If this is not kept in mind, no matter how quickly it may disappear, the present is posited, and being posited it again appears in the categories: the past and the future" (Kierkegaard 86).

¹² Kierkegaard recognizes, however, that this is not the necessary end. He writes, "men are not willing to think eternity earnestly but are anxious about it, and anxiety can contrive a hundred evasions. And this is precisely demonic" (154). Unfortunately, due to the parameters of this paper, these evasions cannot be dealt with directly.

essential to know the night" (123). Hence, it is in the moment of knowing the night (despair), that one is thrust into a new consciousness. "Kierkegaard thinks despair offers the only avenue to 'truth and deliverance'" (Hannay 5).¹³ That is, it is the moment when one is experiencing both the human condition, and the consciousness of self experiencing the human condition. This is to become an authentic self, and, consequently, it is this disposition which emancipates one's capacity to reform/transfigure the appearances. Likely for this reason, "Kierkegaard saw his own mission as a writer as that of assisting his readers to the consciousness of their own despair" (Hannay 6). "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). Undergirding all this, however, remains the gnawing question of exactly how the pain and "angst" of anxiety can ultimately lead one to fullness of self, fullness of life.

Kierkegaard writes:

The relation, as always with the relation of anxiety, is sympathetic and antipathetic. This in turn seems paradoxical, yet such is not the case, because while anxiety fears, it maintains a subtle communication with its object, cannot look away from it, indeed will not, for if the individual wills it, repentance is there. (103).

¹³ Kierkegaard sees despair as the opposite of faith. Therefore, despair as it is used in this context, implies more the culmination of anxiety before God, not the explicit rejection of God.

This, then, leads to the activity of being "a self," the action of conscious imaginative relation.

Part III

To Be "a Self": Conscious Imaginative Relation

"Man [self] is a synthesis of psyche and body that is constituted and sustained by spirit" (Kierkegaard 81). The third element, spirit, is the activity of interaction which was brought on by anxiety, through existential arrest. Thus, Kierkegaard confidently posits:

That anxiety makes its appearance is the pivot upon which everything turns. Man is a synthesis of the psychical and physical; however, a synthesis is unthinkable if the two are not united in a third. This third is spirit. (43)

However, what is meant by spirit? Kierkegaard defines "spirit is a friendly power, since it is precisely that which constitutes relation" (44). This given, however, does relation only entail the interaction between the psychical and the physical?

Evidently not only in an isolated autonomous sense, for elsewhere Kierkegaard writes, "At every moment, the individual is both himself and the race. This is man's perfection viewed as a state" (28). Going even further, on the last page of The Concept of Anxiety, Kierkegaard writes on the transformative power of

relation:

Because the significant actuality is after all not so terrible as the possibility he himself had fashioned, and which he used his strength to fashion, whereas he can now use all his strength against actuality. (162)

As a result of establishing an authentic self, this new consciousness and perception, as well as the representations, engage their capacity to be creatively re-formed; as Sisyphus could do, only in the whole knowledge of his wretched condition:

Sisyphus ... knows the whole extent of his wretched condition. It is what he thinks of during his descent ... If the descent is thus sometimes performed in sorrow, it can also take place in joy. (Camus 121)

This is the emancipating freedom of *response-ability* and relation. Within responsibility is the freedom of choice. "Your eyes will be opened ... knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). Hence, *knowing* good and evil, one can, and must, choose one or the other. Like the Older Testament writer scribes, "I am offering you life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life" (Deut.31:19). The ability to respond consciously enables one to establish that whose loss Kierkegaard so greatly feared: the self. "Selfhood is constituted in consciousness; it is itself, if you like, a degree of consciousness" (Hannay 7). Thus, when one is conscious that they can be a responding member of the dialogue with the phenomena they perceive, they are free to

systematically engage their imagination creatively. Owen Barfield, in Saving the Appearances, describes it as the ability "to experience the representations as idols, and then to be able to perform an act of figuration consciously" (147). Notwithstanding, there is a great onus in recognizing the responsibility of relation. Northrop Frye proposes that the conscious subject is not really perceiving until it recognizes itself as part of what it perceives (23). In this sense, then, everyone is responsible for everyone, for within everyone is part of oneself. As Paul writes to the Corinthians, "all of us, though many, are one body" (10:17). That is, the freedom of relation which enables one to respond as co-creator of the representations also requires one to *suffer* the representations in order to maintain the dialectical tension that relation, by its very nature, requires. This is, in essence, a suffering relation - putting love and building up of community above one's personal desires and freedoms - as Paul so urgently calls for in Romans chapters 14-15.¹⁴ Indeed, even scripture must be read within this dialectical relation, as Luke T. Johnson writes in the very last sentence of The Writings of the New Testament, "living conversation with all the writings in all their diversity

¹⁴ There are places in Pauline and deuterio-Pauline writings that summon this type of behaviour.

and divergence... Only so can they continue to speak" (548).

Relation entails the paradox of the freedom to suffer. Freedom to suffer may seem like an oxymoron, however, it simply implies that, in order for an authentic creative relationship to exist, both "subject" and "object" must act and suffer one another.¹⁵ Owen Barfield described this type of vulnerability as "an extra-sensory link between the percipient and the representation" (34). This vulnerability, as evident in the Romantics, can run many risks, Kierkegaard maintains: "He who has not suffered under human bestiality will not become spirit" (Hannay 7). It seems quite possible that this open vulnerability to relation is what inspired Luke to have Jesus utter from the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

From the foregoing, it seems quite apparent that anxiety induced existential arrest has a definite impact on the re-formation of the appearances. One may even conclude that without anxiety towards this arrest, the images, to the unconscious

¹⁵ This is, by no means, an attempt to justify or glorify the presence of suffering in the world, particularly that of the innocent. Suffering in the world remains a great theological issue of relentless debate - particularly in the concerns of Liberation Theology. To suffer, as it is implied here, is to be vulnerably open to relation. It is to have the willingness to allot another the same creative freedom to image the world. Freedom can only be realized in relation. Tragically, this awesome freedom has been so terribly abused throughout history, as it continues to be abused in modern day.

percipient, are bound to remain fixed (idolatry).

Notwithstanding, within this new consciousness of one's extended, responsive, and relative presence in the phenomena - an authentic self -, one is ultimately brought to a re-formation of the appearances which engages the potential to move even beyond "Barfield's rainbow," which Fyodor Dostoevsky, in The Brothers Karamazov, so sagaciously captures in Mitya's exclamation from prison:

Yes, life is full, there is even life underground...You wouldn't believe, Alexey, how I want to live now, what a thirst for existence and consciousness has sprung up in me within these peeling walls...And what is suffering? I am not afraid of it...I exist. In thousands of agonies - I exist. I'm tormented on the rack - but I exist! Though I sit alone on a post - I exist! I see the sun, and if I don't see the sun, I know it's there. And there's a whole life in that, in knowing that the sun is there (pp.560-561).

This is Romantic Perception, to actively engage the creative transformation of the appearances.¹⁶ For the post-modern, romantic perception can only be re-claimed consciously - that is, to enter a second-naivete. Similarly, for Kierkegaard, when an

¹⁶ This is very similar to how Karl Rahner understands "self as Subject", and God's presence in the world. In our "fundamental option," - the capacity to orient ourselves through the radical nature of freedom (irrevocable actions) - we have the co-creative capacity to make ourselves. In the dimension of faith, romantic perception is another way of describing the capacity to see God in all the appearances - not to see God as simply another category, rather a mode, a way of perception that opens one to an entirely new dimension.

authentic self has been established - through anxiety, through existential arrest, to conscious imaginative relation - one has shifted in locus of perception of the appearances. This leads to either despair or faith.¹⁷ In the latter, however, anxiety is extricated. "As soon as the actuality of freedom and of spirit is posited, anxiety is cancelled" (Kierkegaard 96). Thus, on the romantic perception of a stance of faith, Kierkegaard then writes:

[Faith gives] courage to renounce anxiety without anxiety, which only faith can do; faith does not thereby annihilate anxiety, but, itself eternally young, it extricates itself from anxiety's moment of death. Only faith is able to do this, for only in faith is the synthesis eternal and at every moment possible. (117)

¹⁷ Again, in Kierkegaard's Christian anthropology, he sees the individual without spirit in active relation with God as an inauthentic self. As Reidar Thomte writes on Kierkegaard, "The God-relation is an ontological quality of the self, apart from which the self cannot fully actualize or know itself as the infinite self" (xvii).

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