

1. This thinksheet ponders the old Hegel/SK controversy for payoff in "doing liberation theology," assuming the reader will make the applications of the former to the latter.
2. God is (1) the only systematic thinker who is (2) both inside and outside of existence. To create a system, we have to commit the crime of abstraction and victimize ourselves to the illusion that our consciousness can operate outside of existence and history. On one side of the scale put idealism [and accordingly ideological notions, such as "equality"]; on the other, existentialism. Pari passu are the following polars: finality/transitoriness; integration/separation into "moments"; left/right brain-hemispheres; upper/lower coils; hard/soft revolution [e.g., socialism (including "liberation theology")/charismatic revival and/or human potential movement]; Marx [collective yes-sayer to Hegel]/SK [contemporary of Marx, but individual no-sayer to Hegel].
3. SK would be delighted with what Ralph Nader says in NYTMag 18 Jan 76: We teach how to think, but history is shaped by those who teach how to believe. SK's "infinite passion" or "passion for the infinite" did not disparage assiduous and acute thinking, but pointed to what the dessicated intelligensia of his time had neglected, viz. what I call "the lower coil" and "right brain," i.e. the sensing-feeling-affective dimension reaching out with trembling and longing toward the transcendent--on which, says Andrew Greeley in the same NYT [feature in "Arts and Leisure"], Hollywood has never made a film, for the reason that the American intelligensia and entertainment worlds, since the invention of film, have not considered the God question a serious question and so, when not prostituting it, have trivialized it...a Kierkegaardian article!
4. SK's thinking direction was action-reflection: "I always reason from existence, not toward" (PF.31). QUESTION: Can social change come this way, or do we need also the reverse...and does liberation theology do both in balance, or chiefly the latter? Must liberation theology be "vulgar Marxism" (Greeley, above)?
5. The best that witness can do is 'merely afford an occasion' for faith: "God" provides the condition that makes faith possible (PF.85) in the infinite demand for a criterionless decision suspending both the esthetic and the ethical, as in Abraham's absurd offering of Isaac. This will involve anxiety [see THE CONCEPT OF DREAD] and despair [see THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH] as negative effects of the confrontation toward individuation. Positively, the PURITY OF HEART to commit oneself beyond skepticism with its effete desire for peace of mind [PF.68], its Stoic self-restraint [pp.67f], and its "fear of being caught in a conclusion" [p.68].
6. SK's stance is not rationalism [Hegel's illusion that reason can be crowned without loss of passion and freedom] nor romanticism [the illusion that freedom can be found only/chiefly in feeling], but existentialism [the conviction that "man must renounce his reason" (PF.86) not as a process, but as a substitute for the choice that risks all, the choice before [i.e., in the presence of] God--a thoroughly biblical affirmation, from Abraham through Jesus and the apostolic kerygma. SK's life-question, accordingly, is Who/what is "a Christian"? His structural answer: "the individual," by which he meant not necessarily the isolate, though he was that, but the one who knows him/herself as standing "before God" in the discovery that "truth is subjectivity": "I am I" is the pure ego and makes one only a philosopher in (CUP.202B) "speculative low-comedy licentiousness"; but "I am I am I am" is the empirical ego, (CUP.200B) "human enough not to forget he is an existing individual" [cp. the big feet on Giacometti sculpture]. God can say "I am I" [YHWH, Ex.3]: if Moses does, he becomes a Brahmin, an idealist under the illusion of the "unity of thought and being," the "identity of subject and object" [CUP.203B). We constitute ourselves by free choice,

Consonant with SK: Husserl's Dasein phenomenology and Heidegger's Verwurfung ["thrownness"]

OVER

but we may in this choice either reject God's Word and become a philosopher [as had the Danish Church as well as the intelligensia] or accept God's Word and become [SK's self-designation] "essentially a humorist." [Personal note: My romanticism is not as submerged as was SK's, nor my intellect as bright, but I "identify" with him in this pregnant, numinous understanding of humor.]

7. The function of the figure of Socrates is dual: to critique the preSocratic intellectual atmosphere of his time, and "to make an advance on Socrates" by adding revelation [centrally, in Jesus] to Platonic "recollection." Whereas "mediation" is bad in Buber, because persons' "meeting" [Begegnung] is I/Thou only when it is Immediate, in SK "mediation" is a multiplex interstitial put-down on the pure ego, a humilification-exaltation before God: "the immediate relationship to God is paganism" [B222]. Buber and SK are not as far apart here as this only interface would indicate; but the difference, constituted chiefly by SK's christology, is not only real but central. [See Brunner's THE MEDIATOR (DER MITLER).] "The absurd," without God's incarnation in Jesus, is the absence of meaning: face to face with the Christ Event, the absurd is the fulness of meaning ["The absurd is--that the truth has come into being in time" (CUP.220B)].

8. What "makes an advance upon Socrates" (PF.93) is "a new organ: Faith; a new presupposition: the consciousness of Sin; a new decision: the Moment; and a new Teacher: God in Time," i.e. in the Jewish revelation culminating in the incarnation. Nature and "existence" mediate the divine (nature, B.223); we are grounded in history-as-decision, and thus in actuality as both reality and potentiality. "Socrates' infinite merit is to have been an existing thinker; not a speculative philosopher who forgets what it means to exist" (CUP.217B)--though, I add, he did forget to be husband and father in all his consciousness-raising and contextualizing and liberating! But Socrates was only "educing," drawing forth from within the hearer the implicit truth innate within the soul [Plato's doctrine of "recollection," with its ontology of the pre-existent soul as explanation of both recognition and learning]. "The historical made eternal" is only paradox: God's incarnation in Jesus is "the eternal made historical" (PF.49). Hegel is in the nonrevelational condition in saying that at best the individual can only experience, not transcend, his time; for transcendence is God-given in the "mediation" of revelation, supremely in his personal coming to us in Jesus, teaching us, as servant-man, what is not implicit in us....an "Einbruch" [break-in absolute break-off of reflection; and thus against Hegel's "immediate," the infinite regress of the act of abstraction]. This is the famous "leap" of faith to meet God's leap to us in Jesus. Further, (B.225) "a direct relationship" between two spiritual beings is impossible, "unthinkable" because of the nature of "spirit" as inwardness requiring mediation.

9. Doctrine "both conceals and reveals" (PF.25), so the teacher should, like Socrates, be "ignorant" as "an expression of love for the learner" (PF.23). Here we should not try to go beyond Socrates, that most-out-of-place [atopotos, Theaetetus.149] teacher who understood himself as "midwife...because he perceived that this relationship is the highest that one human being can sustain to another...subjected to a divine examination; his work was in fulfilment of a divine mission (Plato's Apology)"(PF.6). Therefore, in any world Socrates would do nothing other than ask questions.

10. "The ideal of a persistent striving is the only view of life that does not carry with it an inevitable disillusionment" (CUP.203B). Yet this striving can reach its goal only through divine mediation: Immanuel, God come among us to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, viz. effect reconciliation, and to give us what we cannot achieve by ourselves, viz. humanization "before God."